

**THE  TIMES**

# Sex-slave men ruined my life, says girl, 17

**Russell Jenkins**

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A 17-year-old victim of two Asian men who ran a sex slavery ring in which they drugged and assaulted young white teenage girls said yesterday that she felt robbed of her innocence and childhood.

Her encounters with Mirza Baig, 35, and Muhammad Ditta, 39, had changed her life for ever, she said after the two men were jailed by Manchester Crown Court.

The girl, who cannot be identified, is now a virtual recluse and feels terrified when approaching an Asian man in the street. "It is not because I am racist or anything like that," she said. "It simply reminds me of those men — they took away my innocence and my childhood."

The men sought out vulnerable 15-year-old white girls in inner-city Manchester and groomed them for sex with gifts including credit for mobile phones, alcohol and drugs, the court was told.

They would impress them with their large cars — one had a safe in the boot — and then take the girls to a flat in the Hulme area of the city. The pair sexually assaulted them while they were intoxicated and, on at least one occasion, under threats of death. It is understood that at least three girls were being groomed but police believe that there may have been others who have yet to come forward.

Baig and Ditta, a convicted drug trafficker, were arrested in May last year after an investigation by social workers, detectives and community project workers. The men came under suspicion after officers set up a team to examine the problem posed by young Asian men who were grooming impressionable white teenagers for sex and prostitution, notably across the northern conurbations where there are large Asian populations.

After a 15-day trial, Baig was convicted of sexual assault and making threats to kill. Ditta was convicted of assault. The two were given indeterminate sentences for the protection of the public and told they would not be considered for release before they had served a minimum of three years, and then perhaps "not for many years".

The jury was told that Baig drove two 15-year-old girls to the flat where they were

plied with vodka, cannabis and Ecstasy until they fell unconscious. When one woke later she was punched in the face by Ditta as she fought off his sexual attentions.

Two weeks later another vulnerable 15-year-old was brought to the flat by an older girl. The younger girl heard her demanding £20 in payment and that then they could do what they wanted with her. She was also given alcohol and drugs until she fell unconscious. When she awoke she was naked in a bedroom and Baig demanded sex before threatening that he would get a gun and kill her. Ditta interrupted the assault and took her into his bedroom to assault her himself.

Judge Anthony Gee, QC, told them: “These were despicable and truly shameless offences. Neither of you have displayed the slightest hint of remorse.”

After the hearing the mother of another girl, aged 16, said that she had felt powerless to break her daughter’s fascination for the men, who offered her money and gifts, and drove her around in their cars. “They had nice houses with Jacuzzis in them and that attracted the teenagers,” the mother said. “They would pick her up round the corner and drop her off there too. So I never knew where she really was.

“I tried to talk to her so many times but she would just say, ‘They are my friends, they wouldn’t hurt me’. It did not surprise me to learn there were other girls that had been hurt. In fact, I think there are lots more who just have not come forward.”

Detective Constable Andy Spillane, who worked on the case, said: “I am pleased with today’s result, and that Baig and Ditta are now exposed as the kind of men who prey on young girls.”

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