

MRS HUSNEARA MOOBIN

1. When did you first come to Britain? (What was the reason, why choose Britain?)

1968, after my marriage I rejoined with my family

2. Where did you settle and why? (If not Westminster where was it? What made you come to Westminster?)

First I stayed at Gloucester Terrace in Westminster, my husband has flat there so I joined with him.

3. Did you come on your own? (If not who were you accompanied by anybody? With relative? With your children?)

I came with my husband, that time I had no children

4. Did you come to join other members of your village/neighbourhood/ family who had previously migrated to the UK?

There were some people who were friends with my husband

UK

1. When coming to the UK what were you thinking? Were you excited (about?) or fearful (of coming to a new country-environment?)

New country, different language, our language is Bengali. though I studied English but it was not for spoken language therefore it may be difficult to this country. Were little bit worried but was not much worried as I had some confidence that at least I know some English but still there were some concern.

2. What were your first impressions of the UK?

Feeling was very good, people were very nice and neighbors were cooperative. Where ever I went such as shops or any where else everyone was nice and received me very well. Only thing I missed the family members, relatives and friends.

3. What did you find different (to Bangladesh-

people/accommodation/weather/transport/built environment?)- (Any familiarities with Bangladesh?)

No relatives, no friends or close members of the family. So firstly I felt loneliness but slowly I overcome this. Weather was different it was very cold but I enjoyed the weather here as first time I had seen snow and felt a cold climate. It looks nice, so often I went out to see the beauty of the weather. The situation in Bangladesh was different, in our country there was not much electricity or cookers etc. Many other

things were rare in our country. Standard of living of this country was completely different and nicer than our country so I liked it.

4. Did you bring anything from Bangladesh to remind you of back home? (For your children? What items?)

No I could not bring anything significant I only have memory. I have some photographs of my family members and a portrait showing how we resided back home.

5. What were your expectations of the UK if any? (Expectations from relatives/people who had been to the UK/images/media/films etc)

There was no special expectation only had some hesitation what would happen in life. In Bangladesh I did some work and I had some confidence that I would be able to do something but here in UK I thought that I have to start my life from scratch.

Westminster

1. How did you find Westminster at the time? What was it like?

We were living in Gloucester terrace, a beautiful place, very clean, there was a park near by, and everything was very pleasant. Shop keepers or any other service providers were very polite, especially I remarked the politeness of English people, and they helped me in many ways.

2. Were there other Bengalis settled? Asians, Blacks, other non-Bengalis (their numbers, single men, women, children, families?)

No, there were no Bengalis near my residence. Some of them were in Westminster but not near by us. We had some friends in Baker Street. We always keep contact each other. At once in week or fortnightly we met and spent time together.

3. Did you know English? (Level-fluent, to get by, none?)

I studied English, I can speak but level of fluency was not enough for spoken English, as I never interacted using the English language in my own country. Slowly I realize that my spoken English has to be improve as I have to live in this country. Of course, first time I thought that within a short period I will be back in Bangladesh, never realized that rest of my life will be here. My husband had a good job here, he was a government employee and his future is here therefore, I started thinking that I also have to do something.

4. If not, how did you communicate with non-Bengalis? Learn English? (Class, course, friends, relatives, neighbours, community groups, TV, radio, cinema)?

I normally communicate with people in English with hesitation but not as like as today because of poor confidence, very simple English. I never went to any classes.

Language barriers, cultural differences and religious obligations

1. Were your neighbours helpful? (Who else?)

Neighbors were helpful when ever we asked for any help. One of the Irish family were very friendly, sometimes they visit us we also visit them. Their daughter and my daughter were friend. They always care of us.

2. What clothes did you wear (for women was sari a problem-how was it viewed by English people?) How did you cope in cold weather coming from a hot country?

I always ware sharees, even during my employment along with other cloths to cope in cold. Recently I have been waring trousers with Kamiz as I have to look after my husband and accompanied with him to hospital or doctor appointment etc. This type of dress is convenient.

3. Did you face any difficulties (What were they? How did you overcome?)

I could not recollect any difficulties as I have had help from the people of different race and cultures.

If Muslim

4. Was halal food easily available? No – What did you eat?

There was halal food in Asian shops. There were some Asian shops near by us and they had halal meat.

5. Did you find any difficulty in practicing your religion? Did you have to make compromises? How do you feel about that?

Regent park mosque was the nearest mosque of us. On eid day we went there with our children. There was no other mosque around this area except Regent Park. Occasionally, on Friday I went there but I never faced any difficulties.

6. Do you feel you are able to freely practice your religion in the public sphere in the UK.

Thanks Allah, I performed my religious activities even in my work place, no one protects or destruct me to do so, even they supported me in doing my religious practice.

7. What was Eid day like when you first came here, and has it changed now?

Big difference, very lonely even today I feel that celebration of Eid not like in our country. Because on Eid day in our country, relatives or neighbors visiting group by group and doing salam and eating different foods, those things are not here. I still miss this part of celebration. Yes now a day sometimes some family members or relatives coming to visit on Eid day but the very happy feelings are absent.

8. Do you observe Ramadan? Does your daily life change or do you do things differently during the month? – Pray more or abstain from anything you do usually?

Yes I performed Ramadan from the beginning. Timing was the factor, long days but I adjusted and accepted it therefore, it was OK.

Experiences of service providers in integrating the Bengali community

1. Were you able to go to any agency for help? (From Whom? - CAB, Council, GP, library etc.)

I never went for any help from any agencies. I tried myself to do and if I could not do anything my husband was there. Of course he was quite busy with his job still when necessary he took time off.

2. What kind of support did you receive from the mainstream society and local service providers and your own community? (ask to be specific with examples)

Mostly my husband did office related things, even others sought help from him. Still he has been doing this for others.

3. How did you spend your spare time? (TV, radio, films, newspapers, hobby, visiting friends-who, relatives-where, park, museum, places of interest?)

There were three / four families in Baker Street; specially one of them was Mrs Reba. I mostly visited them, almost every week as our children grown up together so we met every single time. We also visited important places with children.

4. Did you go to cultural or faith events? (Where & Name the events)

Yes, went to Bangladesh centre on many occasion. They organised various cultural events.

Children

1. If you didn't come with children when & where did you have your first child? (Home, hospital? What was it like in hospital? Nurses? Doctors?)

My first child was born in St Mary's Hospital. I really appreciated their services. Fantastic services, nurses and midwife frequently visited our house and taught me many things about baby caring. Services were so good that I could not explain you, there is not a single thing that I can complain against them.

2. What was their first crèche/school like? For yourself, your child? How were the teachers?

I admit my first child to a nursery just behind our house. It was actually a play group and was just starting.

- 3. Did you get any support provided from the local community, schools, health centres, and community organisations? (If yes what kind of support did you receive?)**

I still remember that when I first dropped my son he had no appetite to eat anything in lunch time. Head mistress once called me and reported that your son is not eating anything in lunch time. If he has does not eat how can he learn. I was surprised to see that in lunch period she has taken him to her room and do her lunch and asked my son to eat with her. I could not forget her magnanimity.

- 4. Who did your child play with? Who were his/her friends? Other Bengali kids or mixed?**

My children played mostly with white children. There were very few Bengali children, one or two in one class.

- 5. What were your greatest fears (if any) in allowing your children to be integrated within the mainstream society? (your thoughts/feelings) What factors predicted their successful integration? (What would have made you proud?)**

Honestly I did not think of anything else except education. I always thought how he could be raised and to have a good education.

- 6. What were your thoughts (if any) about raising your children maintaining their own culture within the mainstream society?**

Be honest I never thought that my child will adopt different culture as I believed that its depend on me, depend how I raising them. I thought, if I give correct education about our culture and tradition he would be influenced by others. But, it is true I felt that as they have been growing in a different culture they will not be able to maintain hundred percent of their own culture.

- 7. Would you allow your children to marry outside your culture?**

I never realised that my child would marry someone outside of my culture.

- 8. Would you allow your children to marry outside your faith?**

In the beginning I had a strong feeling about it but now I realize that if they go for other culture of faith what could I do.

Settling in Westminster

- 1. What struggles and obstacles did you face in adapting your life in raising your new British born child/children?**

I did not face any difficulties. As far as I believe that if they do their lesson attentively and do good result there would not be any problem.

2. What role did you play to educate and raise your child/children between two cultures (British & Bengali)?

I taught them about the good side and bad sides of both culture and advise them to have appropriate education. Also explain them how we do our religious activities and celebration and they do etc. I never stopped them to do other cultural activities but emphasise to keep their own culture.

Future

1. What is Westminster like today compared to when you first came in ...? (biggest changes you have seen, how has it changed)?

Enormous changed. Density has been increased drastically. Not the same behavior in the shops, if you wish to buy anything you have to lined up for a long period of time. More significantly changes of attitude of Bus drivers. During that time drivers were so polite and caring when ever the sees any problem of any passenger they personally helped. Even the passenger had respect to elderly people. Currently people from different culture and background emerged in the society and sometimes I see that they occupied elderly peoples seat and not offering to a needy person. It seems that the respect, caring attitude of people has disappeared from the society.

2. How British are they? (How integrated are they? How British do they feel? Do they have many White friends?)

I still think they are Bengali but again they are brought up in this country so they are British as well.

3. How Bengali are they? (how much are they in touch with the Bengali community/Bangladesh/Bengali language?)

They have strong connection with the Bengali community

4. How religious are they? (devout/practicing/political/non practicing but culturally Muslim/secular/humanist/non-believing)

They do Eid prayer or occasional religious activities, but I still struggling with them to be regular practicing Muslim.

5. How do you see their future? Would you be happy or disappointed?

Both of children did very well in their education and even in their employment, praise to Allah but only area they need to be improved is their religious practice. I

am still advising them to be religious and keeping the legacy of our faith and culture, asking them at least they can carry on after our departure; otherwise I am happy with them.