

## KHALEDA QURESHI

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

I first came to Westminster and two days we were here than I went to Manchester and next day I have been taken to the hospital by Lucie (one our family friend and neighbor), straightway they admitted me. I don't know what to do. She (Lucie) has taken me a room and changed my cloths. She went out, told me somethings but I did not understand, I thought she is coming back. Doctors and nurses started to see me. I don't understand anything and there is not to interact with therefore I was crying. All day they look after me but I was very upset. Evening suddenly my husband pushed the door and enter in the room so I felt so relieved, it seems I was born again. Two days I was in hospital, they gave me some blood and sent me home,

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

I came in this country in April and Murad born next month in May.

## UK

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

When I left Bangladesh I had an impression that London would be beautiful country I will be enjoying the beauty of this country but when I landed I saw the surrounding areas are dark.

### **2. What were your first impressions of the UK?**

All the buildings looked black; my first impression was that our country is much nicer than this country

### **3. What did you find different (to Bangladesh- people/accommodation/weather/transport/built environment?)- (Any familiarities with Bangladesh?)**

That time most of the houses were old and toilets were outside, no baths were in the house so we had to go to public baths. Not many things were similar with Bangladesh only one thing I remember that my husband every week brought some chickens which looks like Bangladesh. That time Bomby duck was very popular. I always did fry Bombay Duck for my meal, I was not used with the meat during that time and still not much.

## Westminster

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

Yes, there were some other Bengalis, one of my brother-in-law was here and I stepped to his house but sadly on that day he was in hospital due to Asthma attack. There was a grocery shop of a Patel. Next day my husband asked him for a room and he said he has a room and it will be free for us. He offered us a room and everything was in one room, Kitchen sit in and bed but toilet was outside. Toilet bath was outside of the building. I came with my three children in one room. More than two years I was in one room with 3 of my children. Then I moved to Edgware Road Braitewaite tower.

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

When I came to Westminster I was able to speak or understand English. Whatever the language problems were in the beginning, it was overcome. In the beginning I only used Yes or No. I only passed primary school in Bangladesh, my father never allowed girls to go for further education, on the other hand we were not in town area, and therefore, it was very difficult. But my husband helped me a lot during that time.

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

Mostly my husband took me to doctors or any other appointments, he normally taught me how to speak, what to say. But most of the languages I picked up from my children when they started school. I never went to any English classes, just to interact with children and watching TV and speaking with neighbours.

## Language barriers, cultural differences and religious obligations

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

That time elderly people helped us a lot. Though we were not able to speak English yet they try to understand what we are trying to say. When I get out with my children they always talked with them but I was always try to avoid them as I could not speak. My next door neighbour was very good.

**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 wore Sharee, I never changed my tradition. On top of Sharee, of course I used to wear coats or cardigans to protect cold but not without Sharee. English people always looked at me because of Sharee.

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

I had no problems with Sharee, only once before the birth of Joya I fell down because of a slippery road. I did not feel much cold for some reasons I don't know. Most of the time people would complain but it was ok with me.

If Muslim

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

It was very difficult to get halal food. In Manchester every weekend my husband managed it but here it was a little problem. We eat mostly Herring fish during that time. After 70s, slowly some halal shops have started and availability of Halal food came in to market. That time haram and halal was not followed seriously like now.

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

No I did not find any difficulties to practice my religious duty. This is a personal matter, there was no interruption.

**6. How do you worship? e.g. how do you pray?**

Mostly I did my worship at home.

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

On first Eid day, in the beginning I was very upset, as it was not even easy to contact with relatives in Bangladesh. If you send a letter it would take ages. Telephone communication was not an easy access. At least one week before, you have to notice the operator that you are intending to call someone in your own country. Even the telephone conversation would not be clear.

**8. Do you have any family traditions, or foods you associate with Eid?**

Yes I did. My husband asked me to do Kurma Pilow on Eid day. He brought all the appropriate spices. Ghee was not available during that time so he brought butter instead. On the day he always invited his friends to have their meal with us.

**9. 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 and I did not feel much different. First year Ramadan was in short days so it was another advantage. Iftar was about 3.30pm.

Experiences of service providers in integrating the Bengali community

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

I start sowing very early of my London life and am still continuing. Murad was a little baby. One day my husband took me an Italian shop as they had an advert for a sowing person. They showed me how to sow with this machine asked me to go for a trail. I did sowing with my mum so without any problem I did it then. To see my work the owner lady commented that the people who are skilled can be recognised easily. I am sure you will be able to do this. First time she gave a trouser to do. That time making charge of a trouser was 14 shillings. I continued this for 35 years.

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

Very rarely this type event has happened. Even in some occasion my husband asked me but because of my children I could not attempt to go.

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?)**

It was amazing experience. At last I have to leave hospital forcefully. They were so nice and kind even I was fine still they did not want me to leave hospital. I was not aware what type of cloths needs to buy for baby. Lucie brought most of the important things but when I left hospital my luggage was full with free items from companies. Approximately 10/12 days I was in hospital, during time they cared me a lots. Though I was not able to speak yet they did every effort to help and support me. They provided fantastic services.

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

We both take them to nursery and their services were fantastic.

**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?)**

It was not necessary

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

Two more Bengali parents were also sending off their children in same school. Mostly they played with English children. We were little bit worried that the children may lost their culture thus why in 1970 we went to Bangladesh. Our aim was that I

will stay with my children in Bangladesh for a period of time so that they can obtain our cultural knowledge first.

- 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?)**

Our greatest fear was that they might change their identity, they will adopt English culture. There were no mosques or Bengali cultural education here, how they will keep their religion or culture as we are not able to educate them on their own culture.

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

Mostly they have been interacting with English people, not many Bengalis were here so easily they will divert to English culture. It was a big headache for us that there is no religious teacher available how we can teach them about our religion.

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

I never given in-depth thought about this (culture) but we were always ready for this that anything could be happened.

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

Our aim was to raised them and educate them,

### Settling in Westminster

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

Honestly I did not face much trouble in raising them. However, I heard about others who faced some problems. Even after Bangladesh liberation, we came back from Bangladesh and admit them again in school without any hesitation. I did not feel much because my husband was very open minded and played a main role by himself.

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

I mainly maintained our culture inside of our household and look after them but all the outside affairs were dealt with my husband. I was little bit strong on them but my husband asked me to allow them to move freely. He said – if you don't allow them to do certain things by themselves than you loss control upon them. Just give them awareness and understanding of outside environment.

## Future

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

Lots of differences can be identified in term of people behavior. When I first time came in this country I have seen very much love and affection as well as good relationship amongst the people but now a days those things seems disappeared. For this changes we can't just blame others but we are also responsible.

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

The have been maintaining both culture

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

In terms of religious practice we never persuaded them, neither me not of my husband. But sometimes I asked my husband to engage an Islamic teacher for them but it that time it was really tough to get someone. But as much as we know helped they to learn and they are doing Namaz and Ramadan.

- 4. How do you see their future? Would you be happy or disappointed?**

Whatever they attained is enough. I am very happy.