

MOHAMMAD KHALIL MIAH

When did you first come to Britain?

1967

Who told you to come to Britain?

My dad was here , my uncle was here. My uncle was in this country before I was born and my father came here when I was 6 to 7 years old.

So they brought you here. What did you know about London?

My dad and uncle where very interested in this country so I thought it would be very nice to come here. I thought by coming here I would have a nice life.

Was London what you thought it would be?

At that time it was quite difficult, because we were not so experienced and also at that time there wasn't many of us, we didn't have our families and I didn't have my mother. Most of us were around the West End and Aldgate, there were about 20 to 25 of us who were the young generation.

How did you cope ?

Our parents and uncles were at work so we had fun, we went clubbing (Giggles). There was a club in Piccadilly called Mecca where mostly the young generation went. All the young Bengalis, Chinese and Africans went.

And what was your age at that time?

I was about 14/15 .

So how did you cope? You had said there were not any Bengalis.

No there were some Bengalis, but there were not many families. And the families were here the parents were not around because they were always working. I got a part time job to make money; I travelled 8 miles for a job which paid me £4. I also worked in an Indian restaurant. Although I was interested in this country I always wanted to back to Bangladesh, After 2 years I pressured my dad to send me to Bangladesh so he cut me a ticket and I stayed in Bangladesh for about 8 to 9 months sometimes 12.

At that time did you settle in Westminster?

Yes I was settled in Westminster, My life was Westminster, My dad and mum came to Westminster and so did everybody.

How did you learn English?

I learnt English through daily interactions but also I went to language school which helped.

Where there facilities to learn English?

Yes there was, at that time there were facilities to learn English. We didn't go all that time but we went some times.

Did you get married in this country?

No I got married in Bangladesh, my wife wasn't from Sylhet she was actually from Dhaka and she came in 1972 and my first child was born in 1979.

At the time you brought your wife over did you have any fears?

No! The word fear doesn't even come to mind. My wife had studied in Bangladesh and passed here Matriculation exam, so for here there were no problems. She picked up the culture really quick so on my days off we went out and about.

My neighbour was an Irish lady, her name was Margret and she was a good friend. She was a very nice lady and she used to really take care of my wife and me also. She lived next door to us, we were number 7 and she was number 8.

What affection she show you and your wife?

Well I used to work full time so she used to always tell me and my wife "If you need any help or have any problems call me" and slowly by slowly we became really close. There was never a problem, the area was nice. Margret used to take my wife sometimes but also my wife used to go out by herself.

At that time what type of clothing did you wear? How was your style ?

I had style back then and I still have style today (giggles) my life was stylish. I have a beard I pray Namaaz (Islamic Prayer) no problem, but also I have always wore expensive suits and shoes. Now I have children and 9 grandchildren. My grandchildren like the way I dress and I just tell them this is my habit.

At that time was it a struggle to be stylish?

No because I didn't have the burden to give money back to Bangladesh because I lived in a joint family with my father and uncles and cousins and out of the whole family I was the youngest so I had no pressure to send money nor did anybody pressure me , actually they paid for me to go Bangladesh. So I was really comfortable.

Was there any point where you struggled?

No, actually there was one time when I did struggle, it wasn't much it was just a little but there was a time when I didn't really know how to work so I moved from Job to Job, it was okay because I had my father and uncle however when my wife came over and when I had my first

son I had to get a job with plenty of hours which I could not leave. I used to work for 3 to 4 months than leave but when my wife came I had to keep the job. My wife is a really nice women, she gave me plenty of guidance, by debating with me she helped me adapt to this culture.

Romena: Did you have any fears sending your brothers and sisters to school?

No, at that time my wife was doing a course in nursing and I was working fulltime. At 1979 I moved to Lisson Green with my eldest son at that time I was given a home with two bedrooms and in 1980 my younger son moved in. At that time I was working and my wife was doing a course however she used to mainly look after the children and when I came back from work I used to also help.

In terms of food my wife used to cook and my eldest daughter used to also help, I used to work in a restaurant so I had an interest in cooking so I helped when I could. In 1967 when we first came there was hallal food and hallal shops, and the workers in restaurants used to eat in the restaurants. I used to mainly eat in the restaurant and on my days off I used to eat at home with my wife.

When your children where at school who did they play, did they play with children from other cultures?

I used to look after my kids, on my days off I used to take my children to the park and play with them, I also enrolled both my sons into Karate, and send my daughter into Islamic club where she learned how to pray and read the quran . Im very happy with children both my sons where married in Bangladesh and till today they still ask how I am.

What where your fears sending your kids to school, and what where your hopes?

Children in this country where nice, I had no fears. My children went to gateway. Sometimes I picked my children from school and sometimes my wife used to pick them from school. Gateway was very safe I never ever had any problems, nor did my children get into any trouble. The reason I didn't fear was because I know I raised my children right, children only become naughty when they have no guidance and we gave our children guidance.