

## AZIZUN NESSA

- 1. When did you first come to Britain? (What was the reason, why choose Britain?)**  
1976
- 2. Where did you settle and why? (If not Westminster where was it? What made you come to Westminster?)**  
I just joined my parents in law in Church Street, Westminster.
- 3. Did you come on your own? (If not who were you accompanied by anybody? With relative? With your children?)**  
Straight away after my marriage I came 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?)**  
It was not exciting to me as I was leaving my family members; I was the eldest in my family so I am going to miss them. There were no immediate family members of my father's family. I was not fearful to be in this country as I have some confidence that at least I did my Secondary School Certificate before coming to this country. I got married after my SSC, my uncle had a hope to educate me but my father arranged this marriage so he was very upset.
- 2. What were your first impressions of the UK?**  
Biggest problem was with language, I could not speak so I felt embarrassed. One Indian family was my neighbors, they invited me to visit them, and I feel little comfort to go their house and spent some time there. My father in law realizes that I am unhappy because of language barriers. He said all most all of his life is in England without English, why in a short period of time I became so unhappy. He assured me that he will send me English classes to learn English.
- 3. What did you find different (to Bangladesh- people/accommodation/weather/transport/built environment?)- (Any familiarities with Bangladesh?)**  
The significant difference I noticed that the Freedom of choice. In our country during that time we were not able to freely do anything though the situation has been changed now.  
Weather was very cold, when I came it was snowing, almost a month it was full of snow.
- 4. Did you bring anything from Bangladesh to remind you of back home? (For your children? What items?)**

Just of my memory, nothing else.

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

Only expectation was that my children would be high educated, my son has fulfilled my dream. He has bought a house, completed his education and is now being paid a high salary.

Westminster

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

First couple months I did not get out from home but when my children start to be born then I start to go out and see the area properly.

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

Not many Bengali families were here, I have seen only three families near by us. Very hardly we see any Bengali in outside as well.

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

Not much

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

I have very little interaction with non- Bengalis. Later on my father in Law sent me an English class. I continued there for a period.

Language barriers, cultural differences and religious obligations

**1. If you didn't know English initially how did you communicate with neighbours, doctors, milkman, post office, on public transport, in shops?**

First time my husband took me to doctor and my parents in law also helped me. After the birth of my children I had to take them to clinics or other appointments. I got encouragement from clinics as well to learn English. They persuade me and said as I have basic education so it would be easier for me to learn English quickly.

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

Occasionally, whenever we met we exchanged greetings etc.

**3. 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?**

That time the tradition of this country was to wear either shirt pant or Skirt, no Muslim dresses were available. Those who were with their parents in law they have to follow the instruction of them. They were not willing to allow dresses like this. So I managed with Saree.

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

Main difficulties were the language. I could not express myself when ever I need to tell something even was unable to share some of the health issues. There was one similar to my age except an Indian neighbour. To overcome this, I was admitted to school but later on dropped out to see to some housekeeping problems. In me absence my mother in law had to cooked or clean the house which was very odd with me so I left school. I thought caring my parents in law is more important than my study,

If Muslim

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

We got halal food but it was not available locally. Our elders always collect halal food from Aldgate.

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

Women's did not face much trouble to practicing religion, that time not many men did religious practices.

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

People freely can practice their religion, there were no problems.

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

I was with a family and I did as much as possible, but some people who were alone missed many things on Eid day.

**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?**

First year I could not observe Ramadan, my mother in law asked me not to do this as the day was very long.

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?)**

Mostly I enjoyed my time with my children. Whenever I had an appointment in clinic I took my children earlier and spent some times with other parents.

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

During that time, very rarely those kinds of things has happened, no I did not attend any of them.

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, they helped me to bath and dry my hair, all of them were so fond of my hair. People cared so much in the Hospitals. After birth at least 10 days I had had to stay in hospital.

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

I took my child to nursery with my neighbour's child so it was ok. I was little bit worried as first time my child went to school I wondered what he was doing.

**3. 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?)**

I was worried about their education, if they became under achiever what will they will do in this country? How they can be educated, how will they grow up was one of the main worries thus why I always took them to library. During holidays I mostly we would be in the library with them.

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

I had always a fear that they can be spoiled any time even I have seen the same fear amongst the white people. Always had feelings that they might be pulled out from school without any formal education and can be influenced by bed peer group's presser.

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

Of course I have objection, all parents wish their child to be within our own culture but in spite of that, if anything had happened differently I think we would have to be positive.

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

I will not allow my children to marry someone from different religion and think no parents will be agree with this.

## Settling in Westminster

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

Secondary school age was really important. On these ages children start to go to cinema, clubs etc.

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

I always went to parents' meetings, even specially I arranged meeting with their teachers and carefully looked through their attendance and their progress. I checked their progress in every subjects.

**3. How has your child/children turned out to be? (as expected/not expected)**

I am very happy, my son did more than my expectation.

## Future

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

Lots of cultural changes have happened in Westminster. Even in employment rarely I have seen some of from our community but now there is a big change.

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

They feel they are full British.

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

At least in this generation they follow some of our culture but what would be the next generation I don't know.

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

They are believers not much practicing.

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

I am very happy with their attainment.