

OUR HERITAGE

edited by

Ahmad Gul OBE



Gujarati Writers Forum

27, James Street

Batley WF17 7PS

UK

OUR HERITAGE: THE FIRST GENERATION OF MIGRANTS
FROM GUJARAT, INDIA IN BATLEY: HISTORY AND HERITAGE

Edited By: Ahmad Gul OBE

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We are grateful to all the interviewees for sharing their experiences with us.

Dear Mr Lunat

As a Batley lass born 'n' bred 'n' proud, and now having the great honour of being the Mayor of Kirklees 2018-19, I was delighted when I received a request to write a brief foreword for this new book by the Gujarati Writers of Batley.

For many years I have admired the incredible range of work of the Gujarati Writers of all ages, and once again they have produced here a another magnificent book. We read first hand from the first generation of migrants from Gujarat, India and their journey and the history of their settlement in Batley. But most importantly they speak from the heart. It is vital that we preserve your stories in written words to be treasured and to ensure they are preserved for future generations.

I thank you for the contribution that you bring with you from your own backgrounds – be it your skills, your talents, your customs – your BRAVERY – which it undoubtedly takes, along with enthusiasm, to embrace life in a different country. I also want to thank you for what you have contributed as you continue your life here.

Bringing different cultures, ideas and backgrounds together allows us to forge new beginnings and to develop a deeper understanding of ourselves, and most importantly..... brings us new friendships.

Councillor Gwen Lowe

Mayor of Kirklees



“I was delighted to learn that youngsters were part of the interviewing process in compiling the evidence base for this book. It’s important that our future generations know their roots and understand the journey their grandparent and great grandparent undertook from the Indian Sub-Continent in not only travelling to the UK, but also the struggles they had to go through the journey of life which has resulted in how they live today. We can never repay the debt we owe them for the sacrifices they made for a better future for us”.

Kind regards,

Shabir

Councillor Shabir Pandor

Leader of Kirklees Council



Dear Ahmad,

I first had the pleasure of meeting Ahmad Lunat and the Gujarati Writers Forum in 2015 when we were campaigning with my predecessor Jo Cox to stop the closure of Batley Library.

Our campaign was a success and the library remains open to this day, a victory that is testament to the dedication of Mr Lunat, the Gujarati Writers Forum and all who joined us to fight for such a vital community resource, sanctuary and place of learning.

Following our first meeting Mr Lunat kindly sent me a volume of their insightful and important work, which I enjoyed reading enormously.

The work of Mr Lunat and the wise and kind men who form the Gujarati Writers Forum brings the experience of new arrivals to our country alive and is truly something to be celebrated.

‘Our Heritage’ is immensely valuable, not only as a historical record, but in educating the next generation about the struggles, joys and triumphs of those first Gujarati migrants to make Batley their home.

This volume is a continuation of Mr Lunat and the Gujarati Writers Forum’s dedication to bringing young people from different backgrounds and communities together through participation in the arts, and long may it continue.

Kind regards,



Tracy Brabin

Member of Parliament for Batley & Spen
Shadow Minister for Early Years

Dear Mr Lunat,

We are very grateful that the memories and experiences of the early settlers from Gujarat, India have been documented in this extraordinary book. The interviews you will read are moving, emotional, funny and deeply personal and we are deeply indebted to those who took part in sharing their story. At Batley Girls' High School we recognise the importance of reflecting upon our shared history in order to build a more inclusive and empathetic society. This book is a celebration of the rich and diverse history of our community which emphasises our community's core values of co-operation and respect.

Julie Haigh and **David Cooper**

Co-Head's at Batley Girls' High School

ABOUT THIS PROJECT

During the past 25 years, the young people of our community have asked me numerous questions regarding the first settlers from Gujarat in Batley. *“Who were these people? Why did they come to Britain? How did they manage without the knowledge of English? What types of jobs did they do? How did they cope in a foreign land?”* In short, the young people were curious about the lifestyle of the first settlers.

For the answers to these questions, we have to talk to the first settlers themselves. Most of them have passed away and the remaining who are very old have a poor memory. Therefore, we decided to take up the project under the auspices of Gujarati Writers Forum, Batley as a priority. This kind of documentation was needed to enlighten our future generations and preserve our heritage.

We prepared a list of the immigrants who came to Batley in the 1950s. We planned to interview them to collect the information we need. We formed a team of five young people and trained them to conduct the interviews and collect the relevant information. The data obtained through the interviews was edited. The questions which were posed to these people were

regarding their lifestyle in India before they migrated to Britain, the struggle they had to endure during the initial period in Batley, how they adapted to the UK lifestyle and most importantly, what aspects of British society they like the most. In addition, we have invited their suggestions to preserve our heritage in Batley.

The information collected from the first-generation settlers is valuable in itself because it depicts the history of our settlement in Batley. In addition, it is interesting and thrilling. The lifestyle of the first generation was so much different from the lifestyle today that the youth of our community cannot even imagine. The following are some of the conclusions we have drawn from the materials we have collected:

- During 1953-55, the total population of Gujarati Muslims in Batley was 15-20 people.
- These people had migrated from the remote villages of Chikhli Taluka in Gujarat to come to Britain which is 5000 miles away from home.
- They were travelling by air for the first time.
- Some of them came by sea in steamer.
- When they came from India, each one had £3 in their pockets.
- Initially, men came alone. Wives and children followed much later.
- Most of them did not know any English. Some of them had broken English but did not understand the local British accent. Communication was through gestures.

- 8-10 people lived as lodgers in a two-bedroom house.
- They did the cooking, house cleaning and washing by themselves.
- There were no bathrooms in the house. They had to use a public bath.
- Toilet was outside the house in the yard.
- There was no heating or gas facilities. They used coal and log fire.
- No one owned a car. They used public transport.
- Most of them were factory workers working night shifts.
- They worked sixty hours per week and the wage was 6-8 pounds.
- They spent £1 on lodging, £1 on food, £1 on transport and £1 for pocket expenses. They could save £2 per week if they lived frugally.
- Black and White Television set was rented at weekends for entertainment.
- The cost of a chicken was 2 shillings (10 pence). Chicken was bought from the farm, it was cooked and lasted for four days. On the fifth day, some water was added to the remaining portion and eaten. They ate only omelette on the remaining two days.
- Indian spices such as ginger, garlic, or Indian vegetables were not available.

- Rice was available but very few people could cook rice. One or two people knew how to cook rice, so they were in great demand. Their appointment was made two weeks in advance.
- One of the first weddings in our community in Batley was attended by 10 men and 4 women. Two chickens were cooked for the wedding feast, and the total expenditure of the wedding was about thirty pounds.
- The first generation of our community paid the highest attention to creating Islamic institutions. 4-5 children who had come from India were taught Islamic studies by an Alim at their home. In 1960, an old factory on Bradford Road was bought for Namaz and Madressa facilities.
- If the Madressa Teacher was a Hafiz, his wage was £1 per week, and for a Molvi it was £2.
- The building at 206 Bradford Road was later converted into a Mosque. This was the first Mosque in Yorkshire and the fourth in the whole of Britain.

We invite our young people to read this and compare their own lifestyle with that of the early settlers. This will make them realise what their elders had gone through, what sacrifices they gave and how hard they worked to settle in a foreign land and to provide a good life for their future generations. In addition, the young people will become aware of our roots, our identity, and our cultural heritage.

Our elders came to the UK empty handed. They were economic migrants. Their main purpose was to earn livelihood in a foreign land. Most of them were illiterate or semi-literate. They were working class people. This great nation gave them full opportunities to drive forward. Within this short period of a half century our community became prosperous. This is possible because of the political and social system of Britain. This book will make our young people appreciate what Britain has done for us and will inspire them to payback by contributing to the advancement of this nation.

Batley, UK

Ahmad Gul OBE

1

Name: AHMAD MOHAMMAD BADAT

Date of Birth: 1926

Native Place: Khokhar-Ambheta

Arrival in the UK: August 1953

(Ahmad Badat passed away on 16-01-2006).

This information was obtained from his brother Ibrahim Badat through interview.

Ahmad Badat was born in Khokhar village in 1926. In the 19th century, many families from the neighbouring villages of Alipore and Amaliya had migrated to South Africa. They were economically well off and this was evident when they visited their native place. This inspired the young people to go to a foreign land and try their luck.

Ahmad Badat was also influenced by this trend. He had got his passport ready. Some people had migrated to Britain and Ahmad was desperate to get more information about the UK. He did not know who to ask. During this time Master Mohammad

Ladha of Khergam often visited Khokhar. Ahmad and Mohammad used to talk about Britain because Ahmad was also kin to migrate to the UK. Together they decided to collect as much information as possible.

This opportunity came suddenly. There was a cloth vendor who used to visit Khokhar every two weeks. He was aware of Ahmad's desire to go to Britain. He said, "I visit Talangpur village to sell cloth and I know a Rajput family whose member is in the UK. I shall bring the information and his address in the UK next time." Later, when he visited Khokhar he brought the information about the Rajput gentleman who was in the UK. Ahmad wrote a letter to him. In reply the Rajput gentleman sent information regarding the weather, job opportunities, etc. He also wrote that when they come to the UK they could stay with him. Ahmad Badat and Mohammad Ladha arrived in Batley. They came to Batley in August 1953.

They travelled by Sindhiya Steam Navigation Company's steamer 'Jal Jawahar' and landed at the Liverpool Dock. This was their first journey by sea, but this was the last trip for Jal Jawahar because it was soon bought by the Madras Shipping Corporation of India and was renamed State of Madras. Finally, in 1983 it was dismantled and went out of service.

After landing in Liverpool, they went to London by train and stayed with the Rajput gentleman. From London they came to Leicester, and then to Bradford and finally to Dewsbury in search of jobs. They found

jobs in Dormi Britannia Mill in Dewsbury. For sometime they commuted from Bradford and then moved to Batley to live with Shah Iqbal. Shah Iqbal was an Indian who had come to Britain in 1935 as a student. At that time India was not divided. In 1947 India was divided and Shah Iqbal's village became part of Pakistan. Shah Iqbal had married a British woman and had settled in Batley. The present mosque in Taylor Street was his former residence. Ahmad lived with Shah Iqbal for some time and then bought his own house at 80-A Huddersfield Road, Batley.

In 1954, Haji Ibrahim Patel of Harangam came to live with him. In 1955 Ibrahim Bilakhadi of Alipore also joined them. Ahmad Fakir Patel of Telada also came to live with them. Thus, the five people of Indian origin who had settled in Batley, initially lived at 80-A Huddersfield Road-Dewsbury together for some time. They worked day and night shifts. The beds were limited so they took turns to use the beds. When the person doing night shift returned from work, the person doing day shift vacated the bed. This arrangement continued for some time when Master Ladha bought a house in Wharf Street in Saville town and Ahmad bought his own house in Batley. This was in Provident Street behind the library. One part of this street has now been demolished but the other part is still there. Thus, Ahmad's house in Provident Street was the first house owned by a Gujarati settler in Batley.

Sixty-four years have passed since Ahmad Badat's arrival in Batley. Our settlement in Batley started with a handful of people, and today the population of Muslim settlers of Indian origin in Batley is around 12,000.

2

Name: MOULANA IBRAHIM NAOSARKA
Date of Birth: 1927
Native Place: Kalakachha
Arrival in the UK: 1952

I was a student at Darul Uloom, Dabhel. In those days a graduate from Darul Uloom had good opportunities to find a job in South Africa. I qualified as Alim in 1948. My paternal cousin had also obtained the same degree in that year. Some of our family members had settled in South Africa for many years. In the year I completed my Islamic education, my grandfather and uncle had come to India from Africa. They had promised to sponsor me to go to Africa, but they sponsored my cousin first. My cousin and I were classmates and close friends. I felt lonely after he went to Africa. So, I took up a job at a Madressa and continued to teach there for three years.

Another cousin of mine was in Burma. They had to leave Burma after the World War II. They very much wanted to go and settle abroad. We came to know about

the shortage of labour in Britain at that time. So, in 1951 these four friends of mine came to Britain and found jobs at a foundry in Coventry.

I had sent a letter to them expressing my desire to come to UK. In reply they made me aware of the difficulties of living in Britain, such as the cold weather and non-availability of Indian foods. People from India normally carried with them rice, dal, and wheat flour. They also brought beddings with them. People normally travelled by sea, so the weight was no problem.

I started the process to obtain my passport. I had to apply at the police station in Navsari. A policeman came to me with the application form and asked me to send it to the Collector Office in Surat. I was called for investigation and was asked why I wanted to go to Britain. They were satisfied with my answers and sent my form to the Passport Office in Mumbai. I received my passport in a week's time. The passport fee in those days was Rs. 10.

The postman of my village had a very strange habit. He went around in the village shouting that so and so has received passport to go to Britain. If there was a letter from abroad he used to announce. He shouted and told people that I had received my passport and was preparing to go to Britain. So, the whole village came to know about it. I had not told my father about my application to get the passport. So, when he came to know about this he said, "It is good that you have

received your passport but you should have told me before sending your application." Our family was poor and in those days a Madressa teacher's salary was Rs. 10 per month.

I travelled by sea. This was my first experience. There were four young people in my cabin who were going to Britain as students. I was received at Southampton port by my cousin and his friend who spoke good English.

As I set my foot in Britain, I started wondering where I had come. I did not know any English. This thought made me nervous. From Southampton we travelled to Coventry by train. I lived in the house at 47 Fossil Road. The owner of the house was a Pakistani. Along with four or five people of Pakistani origin, my cousin Hasan, and Babu Saleh of Kholvad also lived there. Babu had come to study in Britain and had married a German woman. We all lived together in the same house.

When I went out for the first time I was surprised to see the white people. I did not speak any English so I was worried. But I found the English people very helpful. I was amused to see men and women in long coats.

Babu Saleh spoke good English so, he had found a job in Nottingham. My brother Ahmad had joined him. I had no job so they invited me to Nottingham and I found a job at a factory in Derby. We lived in

Nottingham and worked in Derby. At the interview for this job, I was asked, "how long have you been living here?" I did not understand the question so, in response I said, "I don't know." Then I was shown a piece of cloth and asked what colour it was. I randomly said blue, brown, white. But I got the job. My job was to make a bundle of the cloth and carry it to the cart.

The first wage I got was seven pounds. I could save two pounds from this. In those days we got the food items from the food office. We had to register at the food office and we got a packet of tea leaves, a packet of sugar and a white bread.

In 1955 I visited India and returned to Britain in 1956. This time I went to live in Batley because my brother had moved to Batley. We lived in Tetneller Street. I found a job at Foxen Textile Mill. We received our wage every Thursday. They used to keep a metal pot in which they put the amount of our wage. My wage was six pounds per week.

I worked for a year and bought my own house in 1957. The price was £500. I had a mortgage from the Town Hall and paid five pounds in instalment per month.

After arriving in the UK, I felt that I did not know the language and therefore I did not want to stay here permanently. At the same time, I also felt that as I have already arrived in the UK, I will continue to live here. Finally, I made up my mind to live in the UK. In those

days no Asian would think of bringing their family to the UK. But eventually, people decided to bring their families too. I brought my family in 1959. This included my wife Khairunnisha, and my two daughters Farida and Saleha.

When we went to the Town Centre, we had language problems and used sign language, but the British shopkeepers were very kind and treated us with respect. Some time we made mistakes, but they were never angry.

When we came to Britain from India we had brought rice, lentils, and bedding with us. In addition, we had also brought our language-Gujarati, our proverbs, stories and poems. We also brought our customs and our festivals with us. As the Asian population in Batley increased, our community was formed and there was hope to preserve our cultural heritage.

3

Name: HAJI IBRAHIM PATEL

Date of Birth: 1933

Native Place: Harangam

Arrival in the UK: 1954

Before I came to Britain, I was a student at Pipardi High School in Rander and later at Progressive High School in Bharuch. I wanted to take up a job after completing my studies. During that period some people from my village had started migrating to Britain and this was the talk of the town. This made me curious about Britain. I started thinking about the kind of work our people did in Britain and I discussed this with my classmate Ismail Baga.

Ismail Baga had a relative in London. Ismail wrote a letter requesting more information from his relative. His relative sent an encouraging reply saying that even a newspaper delivery man made a good earning in London. This encouraged me to think seriously about going to Britain.

My friend Hasim Patel of Jogwad and I applied for the passport. We soon got our passports. I was 20 years old. In 1954 Hasim and I took the Batori Steamer to come to the UK and landed at Southampton Port. Hafiz Adam Lunat of Alipore had come to receive me. Yusuf Patel Chansawala was there to receive Hasim. They insisted that I should go to Dewsbury with them. So Hasim and I went to Yusuf Patel's house in Dewsbury. Six people lived in that house including ourselves.

My first job was at Watner and Walker Textile Mill. I had found this with the help of Iqbal Shah. Iqbal Shah was very helpful to the new arrivals in Dewsbury and helped them find work and accommodation. I worked there for six months and then moved to BBA – British Belting Asbestos where I worked for two years. Then I started my own business, and set up a bakery and shop at Vulcan Road, Dewsbury.

When I came to Dewsbury the total number of Asians living there was 10 or 12. The British people looked at us with curiosity and were always ready to provide help and support. The first impression I got was that the English people are very friendly and sociable. We felt very welcomed.

Slowly the number of Asians increased. It was the time for Eid. We wanted to make arrangement for Eid prayer. We hired the Textile Union Hall in Dewsbury where the first Eid prayer was held. It was led by Hafiz Mohammad Laher. Later, we hired the Liberal Hall in

Dewsbury and offered the first Friday prayer there. This was led by Hafiz Ibrahim Lambat.

In 1955, the first death occurred amongst the Asians. He was of Pakistani origin. We did not know much about the rules of Islamic burial. It was difficult to find a white cloth for the shroud. I had to enquire at several shops and finally I got a piece of cloth. Then Musabhai Karolia passed away in 1959. This was the first death in Gujarati Muslim community in Batley. In 1957, the members of our community decided to set up an organisation for Islamic and Social activities. Thus, the Muslim Society was founded. Ahmad Patel Kafletawala was selected as its President. Later, this society was renamed Indian Muslim Welfare Society (IMWS).

In 1959 I performed the Hajj which was the first Hajj performed by a Gujarati Muslim of Batley-Dewsbury.

There was only one shop in Braford which was owned by a Pakistani Hakim Khan where halal meat was available. The Muslim population in Braford in those days was about 120. If we needed saffron, we required a prescription from the Doctor. You could not buy saffron without Doctor's prescription.

When I was a student in India I took part in many activities. We played cricket. We celebrated festivals such as Eid. We read Gujarati magazines and books. After coming to Britain, I missed all this. I was also

worried about the future of our linguistic and cultural heritage. After staying in Dewsbury for six decades, I feel that some aspects of our heritage are slowly disappearing.

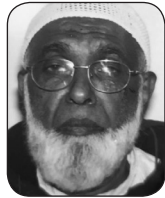
4

Name: IBRAHIM ISMAIL LUNAT
(JANATA)

Date of Birth: 1932

Native Palce: Alipore

Arrival in the UK: 1956



I left school after completing four years and took up farming. Farming kept me busy only for three to four months during the year. The rest of the time I was free and spent time wandering here and there. It was a carefree life.

Around 1954, some people from my village had migrated to the UK. I also started thinking about it. I needed four to five thousand rupees for the passport and the ticket. My father was in South Africa, so this amount was not a problem. I wrote to my father about my intention to go to England. He agreed. I obtained my passport and booked my ticket on Pan American Airline. It was my first experience travelling by air, but I had a few companions with me, so I managed.

We landed at Heathrow Airport. In those days the Heathrow Airport was very small and looked like a house.

Master Ladha and Ibrahim Bilakhadi had come to receive me. We went to the King's Cross station and from there to Dewsbury by train. The weather was cold, and it was misty. It was dark during the day time, so I felt very depressed.

After arriving in Batley, I stayed with Hafiz Mohammad Laher at 12 King Street. There were four other people including Ahmad Fakir Patel of Telada living there, so I felt a bit better.

After a week, Hafiz Laher took me to the Labour Office to obtain my NI number. We started looking for a job. We were told that there was a job in Burnley where they wanted to appoint a young man. I was the youngest among them, so I got the job at Thomas Burley Wool Textile Factory in Gomersal. There were many Asians working there, so I did not have any language problem. We worked 12 hours shift for five days a week. I worked sixty hours per week and was paid £7.00 wage.

In Batley, if any Asian needed support Haji Ibrahim Patel was always ready to help. He helped many new comers like me.

When I came to Batley, there were only 15 to 20 Gujarati Muslims living there. Five of us lived in a one bedroom house in King street.

I am now living a retired life. This country has given me so much. There is no discrimination here. There are job opportunities for all. We enjoy all the facilities in life. We are respected as human beings. I have a great love for this country, and I always make Duaas and pray for its prosperity and progress.

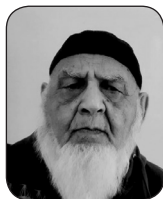
5

Name: AMOJI IBRAHIM RAVAT

Date of Birth: 1928

Native Place: Manekpor

Arrival in the UK: 1957



In India, I was a farmer and my income was limited. To supplement my income, I used to bring bamboos from the Vaghai Forest and sell in the market. The forest was 40 miles from our village and our bullock cart took 18 hours to travel. I was responsible for my family because my father was away in Maputo, Africa and for some reason we could not join him there.

In the 1950s, many people from Chikhli Taluka were planning to migrate to Britain. I also decided to go. I sent a letter to Hafiz Laher asking him whether he would give me shelter in his house. He had replied saying yes. So, I went to an agent to get my passport. He explained that the policy of the Indian Government was not in favour of Indian citizens migrating to Britain as labourers. But I could apply for the passport to go to

Iraq for Ziyarat. From there I could go to Britain which is a free port for the commonwealth citizens. Finally, I got the passport and reached Iraq by sea. I stayed in Baghdad for 11 days and again travelled to the UK by sea. Hafiz Laher and Mohammad Sidat had come to receive me at the port. We took a train to Batley.

While travelling I felt that Britain was a beautiful country full of greenery. We reached Batley and I stayed with Hafiz Laher along with Yusuf Latkan, Rasool Mulla and Ahmad Laher (Raj Kapoor).

In those days, unemployment was high, and I could not find a job. I remained jobless for one year and faced shortage of money. Someone advised me to go to the Labour Exchange and get registered. This will entitle me to get a benefit. I asked Ahmad Laher and he said, yes, I could get one pound per week.

I got my first job in 1958 at Shody Mill where rags were shredded. The manager himself had come to my place to offer this job. I was recommended by Yusuf Momaniat.

I was not educated and did not know a word of English. I could not recognise any letter of the English alphabet. I went to work on foot and as I could not read the signs in English, I kept my own signs.

After some time, I learnt to recognise the letters and numbers in English. I could read the door numbers. If I was lost, I immediately hired a taxi to reach home.

The British were very helpful people, but I could not ask for their help as I did not speak any English.

In 1959, Ahmad Laher and I bought a house. Each of us contributed £15 and paid £30 as deposit. The house was decorated. Looking at the wall paper I wondered how long it would have taken to paint this design. I did not know that the wall papers were made in factories. Once I went to the Railway Station with someone and I saw a vending machine where you put a coin and get the tea. I was amazed and did not understand how this was possible. This convinced me that I had come to an advanced country.

I left Shody Mill and took up a job at Foxen Mill where the weekly wage was £4.00. I worked there for a few years and then joined Thomas Burnley Textile Mills. I worked there for some time and then left because of the harassment by Pakistani co-workers. I could not work in an environment where I was harassed. I left that job and re-joined Foxen Mill.

In 1960, I invited my brother Musa and later my elder brother Ahmad to join me in Britain. We needed a house, so we bought 9 Holly Grove house in Batley. My wife and three children joined me in 1964. So, I bought 9 Knowles Road house. It was a three-bedroom house and the price was £850.

I am now retired and lead a contented life with my children and grandchildren. I like Britain for many reasons, especially for the excellent National Health

Service. It is my good fortune to live in a country which really cares for its citizens.

I have lived in Britain for sixty years, but we have retained some aspects of our culture. We use Gujarati at home and celebrate our festivals. When we are relaxing, we reminisce and talk about our life in India.

6

Name: YUSUF GULAM
MOHAMMAD PANDOR

Date of Birth: 1935

Native Place: Motamiyan Mangrol

Arrival in the UK: 1957



I left studies in 1955 and was planning to go to Africa. In those days one had to take an English test to go to Rhodesia, so I joined an English class. But there was a change in the political system over there, so I could not migrate. I was disappointed and took up a job in a co-operative society.

During this period, I met Dr Gulam Bobat of my village who was working at Alipore Hospital. Many people from Chikhli Taluka were migrating to the UK and there were discussions about this. Dr Bobat also participated in these discussions and shared the information with me. He advised me to go to Britain. I told him that I had no passport. The Doctor explained to me that the UK was a free port and all I needed was any passport for identification.

I talked to my elders and they directed me to a passport agent whose name was Amichand. It took seven months to get the passport. I took a PIA flight to come to Britain. This was my first experience of air travel, but it did not make me nervous. Finally, I arrived at Heathrow airport.

I had the address of a Parsi gentleman given to me by a friend. I took a taxi and reached his residence. I stayed with him for one week and he treated me very well. I tried to find a job in London, but it was difficult because of the Suez Crisis.

I could not find a job in London, so I went to Coventry by train. I stayed with an acquaintance for a week and tried for a job, but I failed. At last, I decided to go to Dewsbury where I knew Ibrahim Rawat. With the help of Musabhai Dhorat I found a job in a textile mill.

In those days there were few Asians in Dewsbury and most of us did not know English. I started going to the Library to read English Newspapers. I met an English lady who invited me to a meeting of the Conservative party. Thereafter, I regularly attended the party meetings. In 1959, I worked for the Conservative candidate Morris McMillan who was the son of Prime Minister Herald McMillan. I was his interpreter at the meetings. During this period, I had opportunities to meet political leaders such as Selvin Lloyds, R A Butler, Anthony Eden, and Lady Hume.

I also met social worker Yusufbhai Momaniat who was very active in the Dewsbury Batley Muslim Society. They were trying to buy a factory building

at 206 Bradford Road for the purposes of offering Namaz. I joined the Muslim society and worked as Joint Secretary for three years. The building was turned into a Mosque and this is probably the third or fourth Mosque of England. Later, the Muslim Society was renamed as Indian Muslim Welfare Society, which is active even today.

Thus, I was a factory worker for my livelihood and did social activities at weekends. For example, I helped Ibrahimbhai Jina to obtain his British passport. I took him to the MP David Ginsburg and took him to the Bradley Solicitors who charged two shillings (16 pence) to sign the form as Notary. Others came to know about this and sought my help. I helped them as well.

In 1969, I left my factory job and took up job at the Bradford Fruit Wholesale Market. I worked there for thirty years. I am now retired.

I like so many things about Britain. Here, the justice system is fair and impartial. People are honest and helpful. Public Health Service is excellent.

I do remember my life in India. I miss the sunshine and cultural activities. Life in India is relaxed. In winter time people light a fire and sit around it talking. In summer, people sit under the shade of Neem tree. Festivals are colourful. Children play in streets. Farmers go to their farms in bullock carts. All these memories are still fresh in my mind.

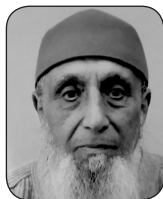
7

Name: FAKIR HASSAN DAJI

Date of Birth: 1934

Native Place: Alipore

Arrival in the UK: 1962



Not only in my village, but also in the surrounding villages, there was little education among Muslims. I was fortunate to join K P College of Commerce in Surat and reached third year of Commerce.

I had four brothers who had settled in Britain. They wanted me to join them. Many of my relatives and people of my village had migrated to Britain.

In 1962, the news came about the new immigration act which was to come in force. So, I decided to go to Britain and applied for a passport. I got the passport and travelled by the P & O Steamer. My nephews, Ismail and Shabbir were also with me. Our steamer looked like a small town with all the facilities. Four passengers shared a cabin. We saw water all around and longed to see the land. Finally, we reached Tillbury Dock.

My brother Ismail and my friend Yusuf Momaniat had come to receive us. We came to Batley in Yusufbhai's car. My brother had a house at 8 Crossbank Road in Batley. It was the month of March and the winter was not yet over. The weather was cold, and it was dark. I had brought two blankets from India which helped me a lot. I soon found a job at Thomas Burnley Textile Mill in the Combing Department. We worked in two shifts. We worked sixty-five hours per week and got £12.00 wage.

There were Pakistani workers in the factory who spoke Urdu. So, I had to interpret for them. I had to change two buses to go to the factory. The work itself was not too heavy but I felt tired working for 12 or 13 hours a day. West Yorkshire was world famous for woollen textile manufacturing because the climate and water suited this production.

In 1966, I went to India. My children were studying there so, I stayed there for nine years to supervise their education. I came back to Britain and took active part in the activities Indian Muslim Society. I had an opportunity to serve as its President.

I have lived in Britain for over fifty years and I can say that the people of Britain are very friendly and helpful. They keep their promises. The justice system is fair. The standard of education is very high. Free Healthcare is provided to every citizen.

There is a scope for the preservation and development of our cultural heritage. Government grants are available for Gujarati literary activities. Our young generation should take advantage of this and organise cultural activities. This is the only way to preserve our cultural heritage in Britain.

8

Name: IBRAHIM MOHAMMAD
BADAT (PATEL)

Date of Birth: 1934

Native Place: Ambheta

Arrival in the UK: 1957



From early childhood I had an ambition to go to a foreign land. I was convinced that I could not make my future bright unless I go to a foreign country. If it was not possible to migrate to a foreign country, I would go to Mumbai and settle there. The reason why I was so keen to go to a foreign country was because many families of my village had settled in South Africa and they had prospered.

In 1953, my elder brother Ahmad migrated to Britain. I also decided to follow his example. In those days in my village and in the surrounding villages there was a trend to go to Britain. People were talking about their plans and mentioning two or three travel agents who were very popular. One of them was Amarchand Shah. I also approached him for my passport and travel booking. The total cost was Rs. 4500.

After three months, Mr Shah sent a letter saying my passport was ready and called me to Mumbai for my booking. When I reached his office, I saw four farmers from Bardoli seated there. They were in Dhosis and Chappals, and seemed illiterate.

Amarchand told me that these people were also going to Britain. They are leaving their village for the first time. They do not know any English and they are not familiar with the city etiquette. He requested me to look after them during the journey and thereafter. Amarchand also asked me to teach them how to put on trousers and jackets. They had never worn a necktie in their life. He advised the farmers to follow me at every step. I had to spend a few days in Mumbai to train the farmers. I took them to a hotel and taught them table manners.

In the winter of 1957, we took a BOAC Flight from Mumbai and reached London. When we came out of the Heathrow Airport, it was bitterly cold. There was darkness during daytime. A friend had come to receive me and together we took a train to go to Batley. When we reached Batley, it was snowing. I had never seen snowfall in my life. It was so difficult for me to walk. I felt nervous and wanted to return to India.

After a few days, I got a day shift job at Barkinshaw Mill. When I went to start after Christmas, I was told the mill had closed down. Thereafter I remained jobless for one year.

I lived with my brother in Provident Street. I found everything strange. There was an English grocery shop near the post office. When I went to that shop, I did not understand a word of what the shopkeeper said. I did all my shopping by pointing my finger.

I tried very hard to find a job in Batley, but I failed. Eventually, I got a job in a textile mill in Great Harwood in Blackburn. I worked there for six months but I did not feel settled. Luckily, I found a job at Dormi Britannia in Savilletown. So, I moved to Batley.

I worked at Dormi Mill for some time and then took up a job at S. Lyle Textile Mill working night shift. The owner of the Mill himself used to drive the delivery van. Once while unloading, I got injured and started bleeding. The owner himself lifted me and took me to the sink, poured hot water on the wound and treated me with first aid. After some time, I left this job and took up work at Thomas Car Textile Mill in Batley.

Five years had passed since I came to Britain. I was feeling homesick. I went to India in 1963 and stayed there until 1966. I returned to Britain after my mother's death. After returning from India, I bought a house in Mount Pleasant area, Belvedere Road. It had two rooms and the toilet was outside in the yard. The price was £450. My family from India joined me in 1968 when I bought a bigger house in Denison Street.

I have been in Britain for 60 years. Initially, there were difficulties but later my life has been comfortable.

This country takes care of its citizens. There is a vast difference between our lifestyle in those days and our lifestyle today. Today, the young people of our community can hardly imagine the difficulties we went through in those days.

9

Name: IBRAHIM MOHAMMAD
BHULA

Date of Birth: 1933

Native Place: Kalakacha

Arrival in the UK: 1962



Before I came to Britain, I was a student at the High School in Vesma and later in Zagadia. I left High School after completing class 9 and took up a job at a Textile Mill in Surat. I worked there for two years. My brother and two of my cousins had come to Britain in 1952. They insisted on me joining them, so I approached an agent for my passport. I got the passport after six months and in 1962 took an Air Kuwait flight from Mumbai. It was my first experience of travelling by air, so I was rather nervous.

I was received in London by my cousin, Ismail Bhula who was a solicitor. He took me to his house where I stayed for three days and visited Buckingham Palace. I also travelled on a London Underground train and visited Piccadilly. I had read about these places in

India and now I saw them in London. It was a thrilling experience for me.

Ismailbhai took me to King Cross Railway Station and put me on the train to Batley. There was a British man in the compartment who was going to Leeds. He promised to help me. I had the experience of the helpful nature of the British people. Finally, I reached Batley.

I was received at Batley station by Ibrahimbhai Bodiya and Ibrahim Jasat. I found the atmosphere gloomy and thought that I had come to a strange country. I stayed with my brother-in-law Mohammad Makda at Warwick Road. I stayed there for one year.

I had worked in a Textile Mill in Surat. After three days I went to the Labour Exchange and told the officer that I had experience of working in a textile mill. The officer was impressed. And he directly sent me to Pitmar factory. He also gave me a letter of recommendation. The manager received me and gave me a job in the winding department. I worked there for five years. Thereafter I took up a job at a factory in Cleckheaton where I worked for six years.

In 1965, I bought a house in Talbot street for £300. I paid £100 upfront and the remaining amount in six months. There was no bathroom in the house, so we had to use a public bath. The toilet was outside in the yard.

I used to help in running the Madressa in Talbot street. I prepared the wage packages for the staff. Later,

I bought a two-bedroom house in Taylor street. The price was £250.

In 1967, my wife and our six year old son joined me from India. Before this I had to cook my own food. Initially, life was difficult without the family but now there was some relief. I also made some friends. There was no heating in those days and the bedroom was extremely cold.

I did honorary teaching at the Madressa for twenty years.

I like Britain for many reasons: There is equality in the eyes of law, most people are honest, the education system is good, and the health service is a boon.

I still miss India and its glorious weather. We have of course made remarkable progress in Britain as it is a land of opportunities. We should live in harmony with the British people, and we should inculcate this spirit in our young generation too.

10

Name: ISMAIL MUSA LUNAT

Date of Birth: 1930

Native Place: Manekpor

Arrival in the UK: 1963

Before I came to Britain, I ran a grocery shop in the village. The earning was limited but I managed. There was no scope to expand the business, so I was looking for an alternative source of income.

Some people of my village had migrated to the UK. I also decided to go to Britain and applied for a passport.

I got the passport and in 1963, I took an Air India flight from Mumbai. It was my first experience of air travel, but the Air Hostess spoke in Hindi which I could understand. We reached Heathrow Airport where Ismail Hajat had come to pick me up. I found the atmosphere and people around me very strange. This made me nervous and I wondered whether I would be able to cope in a foreign land. From London we came to Bradford. I stayed with Ismail Hajat at 13 Thornton

Terrace sharing the house with a few others as lodgers. We had to do cooking and cleaning ourselves.

I rested for one week and then started looking for a job. There was a shortage of jobs and I could not find a job in a mill. Finally, I found a job in a car wash company. Six of us washed a car. Two applied soap, two poured water and two workers wiped and polished. I was paid £1 for the day's work. I worked six days a week. I worked there for two months and then found a job in a carpet factory in Heckmondwike. I worked twelve hours shift for five days a week and earned twenty pounds. There were many Asian workers with me including some women. The atmosphere was friendly. I worked at this factory until my retirement at the age of 65.

In 1966, I bought a house in Denison Street, Batley for £200. After two years I moved to 33 Knowles Road, Batley. I am still in this house. I have been on the Executive Committee of Indian Muslim Welfare Society Batley for many years. During this period, I have served on several sub committees.

My children have received higher education in this country and have become professionals. There are many praiseworthy aspects of Britain. People are friendly, helpful, and fair minded. Government fulfils its promises. The British justice system and health services are of very high standard.

I miss my farming in India and of course the weather. I remember the relaxed atmosphere of my village.

(Ismail Musa Lunat passed away on 27-9-2018)

11

Name: MOHAMMAD AHMAD
DHORAT

Date of Birth: 1940

Native Place: Thala

Arrival in the UK: 1963



Before I came to Britain, I was a student at a high school in India. As a student I took part in various activities and was an active member of Students Council. Later, I became General Secretary. After completing my secondary education, I joined the world-famous M S University of Baroda and obtained a B. Com degree. I got the work voucher and came to Britain in 1963. I took the Middle East Airways (MEA) flight from Mumbai. Yusuf Lakhi of Manekpor was also on the same flight. Hafiz Mohammad Laher had come to pick up Yusuf Lakhi at Heathrow Airport. He asked me where I wanted to go? I said, I wanted to go to my friend Ahmad Lunat in Oldham. Hafiz Laher informed me that Ahmad had moved to Batley. So, I went to Batley by train.

I stayed with Yusuf Momaniat on Vulcan Road for two weeks and found a job at Birkbys Plastic Factory. I stayed in Northking street for some time, and then, I bought my own house at 4 Taylor Street. The price was £375. It had two rooms and the toilet was outside which froze in winter and I had to use a small lamp to keep the pipes warm. My family joined me in the same house and we found it too small for us. So, I bought house number 179 in Taylor street for £1250. The deal was done verbally and later another buyer offered to buy this house, but the English owner refused to break his promise, and honoured the original deal and sold the house to me. I was very impressed by the truthfulness of the British people.

Once, I went to the market and while returning lost my way. I asked an Englishman for directions and he accompanied me all the way to my home.

I worked at Birkbys for thirteen weeks and then I was released from my duty. So, I joined Thomas Burnley Textile Mill. I worked there for some time and then found a job at a factory in Velmar. Later, I was transferred to its branch in Pitmar. Here, a colleague came to know about my qualifications and told me that there was a vacancy in Inland Revenue. He brought an application form for me. I was called for an interview which lasted for one hour. After a week, I received a letter from Inland Revenue which said there was no vacancy in Dewsbury Tax office, but we could offer you a job in our Leeds office. An English friend of mine advised me to accept the offer, so I took up this job.

The first day was for induction. I worked here for twenty years and then left the job. In 1989, I joined Zakaria Muslim Girls High School in Batley as Head Master and Administrator. I worked there until 2002 when I retired.

During this period, I had opportunities to work for the Indian Muslim Welfare Society, Batley in various capacities. I played a role in getting permission for the registration of Muslim Marriages. I represented the community at the meetings at Home Office. But some Muslim leaders were opposed to the presence of the bride and groom together at the registration office. So, the proposal was dropped. I also took active part in the activities of Muslim Community Council.

I like three things most about Britain: National Health Service is a boon for the people of Britain. The justice system is fair, and everyone treated equally in the eyes of law. The people in Britain are tolerant and liberal minded.

I do miss the Indian sunshine and I often remember my childhood friends who are in India. I also remember the social atmosphere in India.
