



# From Dēsī to Pārdēsī

(Home and Away)

## The Journey

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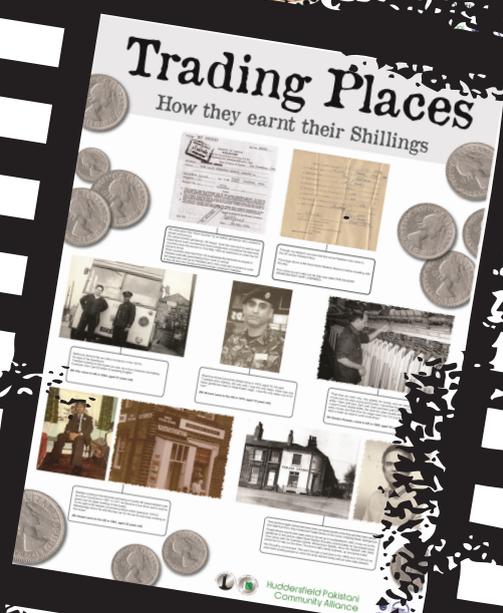


Huddersfield Pakistani  
Community Alliance



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## Foreword

The Desi to Pardesi project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). It was aimed at researching, recording, sharing and archiving the experiences of first generation Pakistani arrivals in Huddersfield and neighbouring towns. These people lived, worked and contributed enormously to the prosperity of the town and continue to enrich it's in different ways. There is, however, very little known about the experiences of these early settlers beyond general stereotypes and clichés. An almost forgotten and invisible minority that was greatly misunderstood who never had an opportunity to put their point of view across.

Young people rightfully resent the negative image attached to their parents and grand parents coming to the UK. They strongly object to their forefathers being described as parasites, scroungers and 'not fit' for anything and an undesired 'burden' on the state. They wanted to put this record straight: the arrival of the first generation Pakistanis to the UK was no accident. They were invited by the UK Government to work in mills and factories in order to bolster the British economy. They became the backbone of British textile and heavy industry, taking up jobs considered not worthy by the white indigenous workforce- low paid, dirty, night work, shift work and long hours.

British young people of Pakistani origin strongly feel that the legacy of negative stereotyping of their first generation is being transferred on to them. Old myths and prejudices continue to survive and impact on their image and life chances. They felt passionately about putting the record by rediscovering the experiences, tribulations and achievements of their elders in Huddersfield.

The entire project from the start to finish was a rewarding experience for all involved- young people, facilitators and interviewees. The project team was able to learn from the first hand experiences of all the interviewees, be challenged and compelled to revise their perceptions and understanding of different aspects of this fascinating continuum, in their journey to appreciating their identity.

*"...in the immediate aftermath of the (second world) war, Britain in particular was experiencing shortage of manpower for its many mills and factories. Immigration from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh was the need of the time. The country and its economy had to be rebuilt. We from the South Asia were invited to rebuild the country and its economy"* **Sher Azam arriving in 1961.**

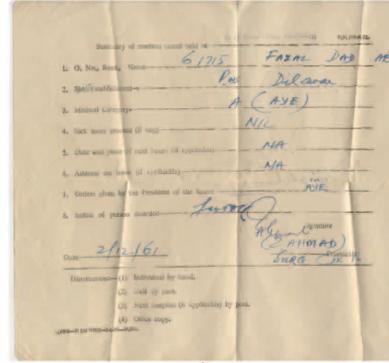
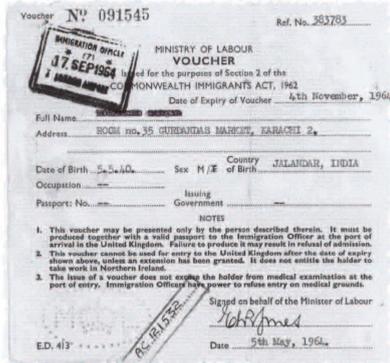
## Aims of the project

- To enable young people to engage with members of the first generation arrivals from Pakistan in order to capture their experiences of settling in the UK.
- To provide opportunities for young people to gain skills in project management, research and interactive heritage event co-ordination.
- To create a mobile and static resource for young people of Pakistani heritage with the aim of enabling them to have a better understanding of their roots and their stake in the British society as a basis for more inclusive life here.
- To produce a website for the 'Desi to Pardesi' project that will give information about the process and rationale behind the project as well as hosting the exhibition material so that further contributions can be made over time.

*"The entire experience was an eye opener. Very impressed by the resilience of our parents"* **Maria Saleem (young person).**

# Trading Places

## How they earned their Shillings



We were given this "Work Voucher" by an elderly gentleman who wanted to remain anonymous. We asked another gentleman, Mr Assad what this was and he said he had heard about work vouchers but never actually seen one before! He said work vouchers were introduced on 31st May 1962 as restrictions to enter the UK became firmer. Work vouchers were sent from UK businesses like factories to people in Pakistan basically guaranteeing them work on arrival. Mr Assad also told us ex-Pakistani army men could get vouchers to work in the UK from the "Employment Exchange" scheme in Pakistan.

Through our research we were told that some Pakistani men came to the UK with the Pakistani Navy. The image above is Mr Fazal Dad's Medical clearance before travelling with the ship. From what we can make out his ship was called PNS DILAWAR (PAKISTANI NAVY SHIP: CHERISED).



Mehboob Ahmed Cler as a Bus Conductor in the 1970's  
He says of his experience:  
"I started working on the buses you see, as a bus conductor and talking to people, then I get bit better at speaking English".  
(Mr Cler came to UK in 1962, aged 27 years old).

Shamime Ahmed joined the British Army in 1979, aged 19. He said:  
"I passed army training, did very well. I was the only Asian, there was one black gentleman there of West Indian origin. I was the only Asian out of 55 men".  
(Mr Ahmed came to the UK in 1974, aged 13 years old).

"That time we were very, very greedy for money and we needed a lot of money and we were young and honest. I remember there used to be three shifts - 6pm until 2am, 2am until 10am and then until 6 in the afternoon and I used to work double shifts. We done for years double shifts to have some extra money and that time the wage were only 5-8 pound a week. Seven days a week we used to work most times."  
Mr Ghulam Hussain, came to UK in 1965, aged 16 years old



Besides working in the factories and being a Courier, Mr Assad started work as a Bus Conductor in 1967. In 1971 he became a bus driver and in total he spent over 20 years working on the buses. To the right is Mr Asaads convenience Store which opened in 1979 in Milesbridge which his wife Mumtaz ran for him as he was busy working on the buses.  
(Mr Asaad came to the UK in 1961, aged 22 years old)

Time and time again during interviews when we asked people where they got their Asian spices and halal food from, they mentioned Punjab Stores on the corner of Spring Street, Springwood. Punjab Stores was the first Asian store to be set up in Huddersfield in 1963. It was run by the gentleman in the picture called AbdJ Rashid Choudhry (unfortunately he has passed away now) along side his business partner Mohammed Sadiq. Soon Mr Rashid's wife Zakia joined him to help run the store. The store is still a family business, up and going today!  
Mr Choudhry commented: "We went through a hard time in the 1960s and 1970s but we were hard working people so when the shop started doing well we were really pleased."



# Key elements of project delivery

- The outlines of the project were discussed and agreed by members of the Pakistani Youth Forum (PYF) at several meetings.
- A team of young people from the PYF membership were nominated to lead on the project.
- An article about the project was placed in the 'Huddersfield Examiner' contributing towards raising awareness about the project and identifying potential interviewees.
- It was agreed to record and present the experiences of first generation arrivals and their life witnesses in a DVD format.
- The members of the project led team visited other projects in the neighbouring areas that had done something similar. Useful advice and help was also sought from the Bagshaw and Tolson Museum.
- The local Reference library was used to access, study and assemble old archived articles from the Huddersfield Examiner, in order to understand what was being written about the first arrivals back then.
- Training sessions were organised for the project team members regarding researching, recording and archiving of information. Adequate use of camera equipment for interviewing and recording interviews, and editing of material for the final DVD was also covered.
- Potential interviewees were identified through personal contacts and referrals by the members of the community. Pre- interview/ recording discussions were organised with interviewees individually to discuss the project and to allay any fears.
- Interviews were conducted and recording at either interviewees' homes or mutually agreed community venues.
- All interviews were compiled and edited for a final 20min DVD presentation.
- Young people also put together an accompanying display based on old photographs, artefacts and newspaper cuttings for a project celebration event at Tolson Museum.

*"I was the team's camera man. I had to stand, listen and capture. I cannot but feel proud of my parent generation"*  
**Aadil Yousaf (young person)**



# Make Believe

## Stories of Success



Pino Khan, Fazal Hussain & Haq Nawaz in England, 1968



Pino Khan, Anayat Begum & Mohammed Hussain in Rashcliffe Hill Park, 1973



Hanif Assad in Greenhead Park with wife Mumtaz Begum in the early 1980's



Mr Hanif in Pakistan in 1966. He went back after 5 years of being in the UK. He is standing next to a sugar cane crushing machine which is driven by Bullocks.



Nasreen Akhtar & Shafina Kauser standing on stools in Pakistan in 1978



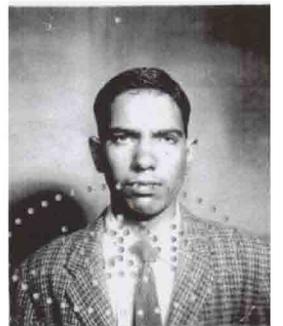
Abdul Ghafoor & Family at Ravensknowle Park on Wakefield Road in 1969



Mr Cler near Greenhead Park entrance in 1972



Mr Cler in 1963



Mr M.S (Wanted to remain anonymous) Picture taken in Pakistan, 1964



Zainab Bi with her family outside a terrace house in Birmingham



Balqees Begum Photographed in Pakistan, 1960



Manga Khan with son in Pakistan, 1975



Pino Khan having a professional photograph taken in Huddersfield, 1973



Huddersfield Pakistani Community Alliance

heritage lottery fund  
LOTTERY FUNDED

# Yöung peöplë's leärning

## Creative learning:

- Young people improved their understanding of local community history.
- Young people learnt about the immigration process.
- The third and the fourth generation young people learned about the challenges and tribulations faced by the first generation community in their transition to Huddersfield, for example, adapting to weather conditions, life style, housing, food, work, language, discrimination and displacement.
- Inspirational stories- positive role models from the first arrivals.
- For young people to be inspired by the resilience of the first generation arrivals and the fact that they were dynamic, focused, hard working and law abiding.
- The project helped break down communication barriers between the third and fourth generation young people and their first generation arrivals.

## Skills based learning:

- Researching, recording and developing oral and visual history.
- Citizenship skills- contact with other organisations, established dialogue with elders from different.
- Social and communication skills: team work, leadership, peer mentoring etc.
- Management skills: Budgets, time scales, interview deadlines, making appointments, developing interview techniques.
- Communication skills: Using community languages, radio interviews, preparing press releases, liaising with other providers.

## Technical skills gained:

- Filming: Camera use, type of shots, camera angles, colour harmonisation, sounds, and lighting.
- Editing and production of DVD, digital camera photographs, down loading of recorded interviews, scanning of photographs, articles etc.
- Numeracy skills, maintain diaries and managing budgets.
- Project planning, project monitoring and project evaluation.

*"We have a legacy in the town we can be proud of and a stake in the town."* **Adil Ali (Young person)**



# Ḍeṣj tō Pārdēṣj

(Home and Away)

## Wise Words and Their Stories

"Comparatively the life was difficult but at the same time we could earn and commit more money. Spend on ourselves, send back with the hope that one day we will become rich enough to go back, build a house there, get married and start our own business."

"The sooner we decide that this is our home, the better it will be for ourselves, for our coming generations because we continue to instil this sort of confusion in the minds of young people, this is not their country. At the same time when you take them there they feel it's also not their country. I go there and meet some young people, Dadyal and Mirpur where is my area. And I ask them 'Hello son, how are you? Do you like to be here?' 'Yes, it's okay! What does that mean? It means they don't. You know from the body language."

"I personally, strongly believe its fate. I never wanted to be a politician. I never wanted to be a Counsellor or Magistrate. By nature, I am very shy but I think you don't get more training than trade union. One of the best trainings you get is trade unions. Because people know you, what you done today, not yesterday, or the day before. You get tremendous criticism and I enjoy it.... Workforce was still 70-80% white. When elections come, I always got 90%. Even once, there was a BNP member. I never spoke to him but one lad came and when he was working, he said he's voted for me. So I went to him and I said 'I thought you don't like black people and you voted for me?' He said 'I know it's a sad thing but I believe you won't sell me out'. I really enjoyed it that people have a confidence on me."

"I was brought up in Pakistan my education was expensive so my parents had to pay for this. There are opportunities in England for the young Pakistanis to get the best possible education when they are in school and college and also to stay close spiritually because in the end this world is going to finish. You will need to go back to your creator and answer questions but will you be spiritually ready. Islam encourages you to adopt another occupation and become a good Muslim as well as a citizen of whatever country you are in. Not only to have a better life in this world but in the next one as well."

"Be good with everybody. Respect everybody; they all belong to Allah (god). Your neighbours, English, Indian, no matter what they are. Because if you respect human being, you will respect everybody."

"There was six young people at the airport in London. All Pakistani's used to bring their quilts with them, so we were carrying our quilts (points to head) and they said 'come here, are you coming from Pakistan, yes, you must be hungry', (because we were only given £5 by Pakistan government), so they took us to the railway station cafeteria and gave us a cup of tea and biscuits, the same thing happened when were going to board the train, two young people came and said 'where are you going' and we said 'Glasgow', 'oh we are going to Glasgow and we recognized you when you were carrying your bistra's' (duvets)so they took us in their own compartment, so after that I don't know. The train was right near Glasgow when I woke up, because we were so much tired"

"In school, I stood in the corner alone because of the language barrier and I was like an alien because I was the only one Asian in the school."

"They (young people) have opportunity and money and do not have 5 or 6 dependents on them. They should respect elders and get as better education"

On moving to the U.K "It was terrible. Obviously, I didn't have anybody. I knew; just the one young lad I knew and it were terrible to be honest. I cried my eyes out for weeks."

"People who returned from England we went to meet them and they looked so white and clean and we used to think in our hearts and wish if we could also go to England. At night we wished to be in England in the morning"

"I missed my friends and my family. I missed the sunshine, the open environment. I missed my normal career."

"The main thing I want to say to youngsters is; if they want to be successful, respect their parents. That's the main thing. If you respect your parents, your parents always think better for you. I'm not saying if they say anything wrong you have to respect that, but I mean to say if you respect your parents and do as you're told, you will be successful. Parents will never think bad for you, just better for you."

"It was totally my decision; I was fed up of working for £20. I was fed up of walking, especially in winter, a mile and a half, especially at half 6 in the morning but it taught me a very big useful lesson."

"We worked 12 hour shifts to make money, make house, and purchase land. We did that and we are still not happy. Our children have turned into druggies and are uneducated because we worked 12 hour shifts and didn't give time to our children"

He remembers watching 'Amitabh Bachan' saying 'Main apnay pairon pay karah hona chahta hoon' and this is what motivated him to stand on his own feet.

# Case Studies

Trials, tribulations, and achievements of first generation arrival to Huddersfield from Pakistan

- Mehboob Ahmed Cler: Arrival 1962
- Shahien Masood: Arrival 1968
- Mohammed Haneef Asad: Arrival 1961
- Sher Azam: Arrival 1961
- Mohammed Shafi: Arrival 1964
- Shamime Ahmed: Arrival 1974
- Mohammed Ajeeb (CBE): Arrival 1958
- Jamil Akhtar: Arrival 1962

*"I was greatly moved by the experiences of some of the people. I never knew what they had to put up with."*  
Nazmana Marriyah (Young person)



## **Mehboob Ahmed Cler: 1962 - 2011**

I arrived in the UK on 1st March 1962 at the Heathrow Airport at the age of 27. This was my first journey of any significance away from home, taken to better my life chances-employment and money. In those days no visas or work permits were required. The passport was sufficient. The trip was partly paid by my parents and partly by me. I had a clerical job before coming here and was able to save a small amount. This became handy when I decided to come to the UK.

My first stop was at Middlesbrough with a friend. The house was shared by others. It had an outside toilet and no showers. We had to use the local public bath. I stayed there for about six months but could not find a job. I had very little money and was very much supported by others sharing the house. People in those days lived together and cared for each other. New arrivals were welcomed by those already here. I moved to Rochdale in search of work. I was able to find work in a textile mill. After about 6 months in Rochdale, I moved to Huddersfield with a friend.

I lived amongst friends. They helped out. We had very little contact with the white people. The only contact was at work. We kept ourselves to ourselves and they did likewise..

My first job involved doing 48 hours per week; all shift work on a wage of 6 or 7 pounds a week depending on the overtime. Later I was able to find a job as a bus conductor. Initially, I spoke very little English but the bus job helped me to improve it. There was no TV in the house. Our spare time was spent playing cards, sharing stories about life back home. At the weekend we went out to cinemas. Huddersfield had three cinemas in those days. On Sunday, we went to watch a Pakistani or an Indian film in Bradford and eat at restaurants there. Bradford was the hub for Pakistani and Indian films and Asian restaurants. People from the neighbouring towns descended on the city for a day out.

I found the weather most difficult to cope with, always wet and chilly. Warm clothing helped. In those days people took pride in what they wore. At weekends suits and ties were a must thing. No one could imagine going out not properly being dressed. Ties, shirts, suits were regarded as a proper mode of dress. Things have changed now. No one seems to care. People go out in their night cloths. Sad!

We mainly ate Asian food. In Huddersfield, the Punjab Stores was the only Asian shop. They had a delivery service. Everyone in the house contributed to the cost of food and we all shared in the cooking.

On reflection, I have no regrets of coming here. I did go back annually but there is no one there to go back to. I have been here for 50 years and this is my home.

## **Shahien Masood: 1968 - 2011**

I was born in Kenya. Two of my other siblings were also born there. We lived there within an extended family setup. My grandfather worked in railways.

We were forced to flee to Pakistan and settled in Faisalabad following the expulsion of South Asian British passport holders from Kenya. We could not take money out of Kenya so my grandmother brought household goods-fridges, grinders, utensils and crockery etc- to take to Pakistan. These goods were sold in Pakistan for cash.

Our plane arrived at Heathrow for about 10.00pm in the month of February. It was my first experience of "snowy and icy" conditions. My uncle was present at the airport to collect us. We had to sell all our family possessions and valuables including my mother's jewelry to pay for our trip to the UK. We had very little information about the life in UK.

My uncle and grandfather were already settled in Huddersfield. We travelled to the UK without my father. My father, being a Pakistani national, joined us a year later. Initially, we had to rely on support from my grandfather and fend for ourselves. My mother had to work which was not a common thing to do for a Pakistani Muslim women in those days. She had to work for £5.00 a week to provide for 6 of us.

The life in the UK was tough. "As soon as you got off the plane you were cast as an immigrant." Children of immigrant parents were sent to a language centre for "3 to 6 months." This was a good meeting place for newly arriving children. We got to know each other. All children were divided into small groups in accordance with their language ability from learning of alphabets to constructing sentences. I have found memories of my teacher Miss Sheared at the Out Lane School.

Women wore Salwar Kameez, a traditional Pakistani dress for women. We had difficulty in obtaining suitable cloth to make our traditional clothes. There was a clothes shop in the Springwood area owned by Bhullar brothers who sold rolls of nylon satin, a very cold material and not ideal for weather here. We also bought material from Kay's but this was too expensive, £4.50 a yard. At Bhullar brothers' store, we could buy material for a suit for about £2.00.

For Halal food, meat and poultry we had to shop at the Worldwide Store in Bradford every weekend until uncle Mulla opened his grocery shop on Bankfield Road. He used to get chicken from a farm and slaughter it Halal in the backyard. He was there for many good years.

"In many ways we felt welcomed but at the same time we also experienced some aspects of racism, for example, name calling and verbal abuse. White young people used to refer to us as 'Gollywogs'. We also heard comments like 'Yellow Paki go back to your country'."

People nowadays have many opportunities for education and other things. We never had these in our early days. I had to create my own opportunities. Nothing was handed on a plate to me. I worked for 17 years in textile. Was able to buy a shop in 1980 when my daughter was 1 years old. I have been in business for 30 years. I had to work damn hard to provide for the family. "You have to earn your own success. I did that for me. However, Success is just not about money."

## Mohammed Haneef Asad: 1961 - 2011

I arrived in the UK in 1961 from Faisalabad at the age of 22. In Pakistan, I joined school at the late age of 8. No one told me to attend the school. I was pulled along by my friends. I took to the schooling life and never missed a day. I was a good student winning many scholars and regularly achieving first positions. Following, my school studies I went to a college in Faisalabad because there was no college nearby my village. My family paid for my education but in return I had to help out on the family farm in between my studies. This was hard labour cutting sugar canes and gathering fodder for the farm animals.

In the 1960's, many people from my and the surrounding areas were travelling to the UK to improve their income. The initial idea was to earn and save as much to return back to Pakistan and invest there on acquiring more farming land or set up businesses. I was in the second year of my college when I obtained my passport to come to the UK. My initial plan was to study on my coming here. However, this proved to be very difficult and I had to abandon my best laid plans. I had to pay 4000 rupees towards my travel fare and 2500 rupees of security bond for my education. The security bond was refunded back to me in 1972 despite being here 10 years.

I arrived at Heathrow with a class mate that I only met at the airport. Our plane arrived via a number of countries. On the plane we were given coffee and dry soup. My friend, not knowing the difference, mixed soup and coffee together. Our luggage included sleeping quilts which we carried on our head in 'desi' style on arriving at the airport. We were spotted by other Asians who gave us tea and biscuits. At the Victoria Cross train station, we were noticed by other Asians with our 'bistraas' on our heads. We must have made a striking impression but how were we to know? They took us to their train compartment. I was so tired that I slept all the way to Glasgow.

I stayed in Glasgow for two months with my uncle. I helped out with door to door business selling cloths. We experienced a great deal of abuse from white residents. I had a chance of proper job in Glasgow transport but failed my medical.

My uncle put me and my cousin, with our 'bistrays' (sleeping bag), on the train to Huddersfield. We met a white lady at the train station who, we were later to discover was married to a Pakistani man. Attracted by our 'bistrays', she came over to us and asked as to where we were heading. We took a taxi to the address at Water Street and paid half a crown (2.5 shillings). We were welcomed by other Pakistanis there and agreed to pay 50p a week for a bed. The next morning I went out in search of a job and found one without too much effort. In those days, people looking for jobs knocked at doors of mills and factories for vacancies.

There was very little contact with the family back home. There was no way of contacting the family besides written letters. "The weather here was cold, Smokey and smoggy". The house in which we lived had no gas heating. It was kept warm by the coal fire which also heated the water. Many houses had no bath and / or indoor toilet. People had to rely on the municipal public baths".

The Asian food was not easy to come by. There was only Bhullar's shop for groceries. For meat, we made arrangements to buy live chickens and have these slaughtered. I did not know how to cook. Back home, cooking was done by women. I even found shaving a difficult task. In Pakistan, I daily visited the barber's shop to have my shave done. So I kept cutting my face. However, I quickly adapted and learned to do things for myself. I shared cooking with others. We made chapattis daily but the curry was made once or twice a week and certainly at the weekend.

In factories and mills preference was given to white workers. They were offered better jobs. However, we were paid same for a similar type of work. I remembered going to Moxon Worsted Mill for a job. The manager came out and we got talking by sitting outside on a bench. He told me that he liked me and wanted to offer me a job but could not do so for the fear of backlash from other white workers. As I was about to walk away, he called me back and asked me to come back and start work the following Monday. One or two of my fellow workers resented me but they were challenged by other workers. Impressed by my hard work, the same mill took on a full shift of Asian workers. I worked there for about 9 months and left to join Huddersfield Corporation buses as a conductor in December 1967.

We did suffer from racial abuse. We were accused of contaminating the country. We were once sitting in a café having our tea, a group of young white lads started shouting "smallpox". People felt that we carried diseases with us from the sub-continent. White people resented Pakistanis getting any kind of promotion. There was much racism which went unchallenged. Most people didn't have decent income jobs; they did not own a house and were living in overcrowded houses, often 20/ 30 people at a time. They were too much occupied with their daily survival. Didn't have time to do or think about the bigger picture.

It was customary for people to visit their families in Pakistan on a cycle of four to five years. Some went back to get married. Also, people stayed in Pakistan for six months to a year. "Didn't want any of my family to come to England, It wasn't attractive."

"For me learning of English was a slow process. Colleagues, who married English women, picked up English very quickly." At the weekends, when not working, we cooked, washed, went to the town centre, played cards, and watched Pakistani and Indian movies.

I am 72 years of age and retired, but still very much active in the community. England is a better and more attractive now that my family is settled and secure here. Huddersfield town is in my blood. I love living here.

## Sher Azam: 1961 - 2011

I arrived in the UK in 1961 at the young age of 20, from the Attock area of Pakistan. During the Second World War, Britain and Europe incurred heavy human losses and therefore, in the immediate aftermath of the war, Britain in particular, was experiencing shortage of manpower for its many mills and factories. Immigration from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh was the need of the time. The country and its economy had to be rebuilt. We from the South Asia were invited to rebuild the country and its economy. Newspapers in our countries carried advertisement encouraging people to travel to Britain as a land of opportunities. Mills and factories had to be manned for 24 hours a day and seven days a week. But the shortage of labour meant that these could only operate half their capacity. The local labour refused to work long hours and do the night shifts. In many instances, the work was heavy, dirty, and smelly and under paid which the local labour resented. For them this was not an adequate reward for the hardship and sacrifices they had made during the war. Therefore, Britain went back to its former colonies to fill gaps in the labour market.

I was very fortunate to have attained college and university level education in Pakistan. I was very much encouraged and supported by my father who himself was a teacher in Pakistan. He paid for my college fee of 100 rupees a month which also including my boarding costs. He himself was paid 90 rupees a month which was regarded as a high salary in those days. I am taking about years 1955, 56 and 1957. On any account we were not a wealthy family. My father's income was supplemented by whatever we reap from small plots of land. However, I was very fortunate to receive education. Many of my village colleagues did not have means to get far educationally. My father helped families in the village to write and read letters and assisted them with other formal matters requiring writing and reading. In the village life, the teacher was perhaps the most influential person because of his position and many people turned to him for help and advice.

My father could write very Basic English. This was a serious handicap to him when much of the official paperwork was in English, Pakistan then having only recently gained the independence. He encouraged me to learn the English language.

My father also paid for my first Pakistani passport and travelled to Karachi to see me off. The flight to the UK was long and tiresome. We landed at the Heathrow Airport and I had £5 which I had obtained by changing currency. I took a bus to Victoria station and from there came to Bradford via King cross. When in Bradford, I went to stay with my friend who had written earlier inviting to Britain. Within two to three days, I was able to find work. There was plenty of work in those. Anyone wanting a job was able to get one. It did not matter that you spoke no English or you had no education at all.

In 1961 there was only one Mosque. By 1979 there were 17. The number of Mosques reflected the growth and the diversity of the Muslim community. 50's and 60's were the decade of male immigration to the UK, people coming here for work. 70's and 80's they being joined by their families. The new immigration had virtually stopped and only the dependents of those already here were coming here. The arrival of families with young children brought to the forefront new issues and concerns in areas of education, health and faith education. Parents wanted their children to do well at schools. For most parents this was their prime motivation for bringing their families here. If nothing else they will at least learn the English language which was more than they could do. Those of involved with Mosques were increasingly being made aware of community concerns particularly regarding the school education. Parents wanted their children to do well. They had high expectations in this regard. They were also worried about their children losing their faith and cultural identity. They were concerned that schools made no provision to support faith and cultural identity of Muslim children. Schools were mainly secular and Christian centric in their approach.

In 1979, the first meeting of the representatives from Mosques in Bradford was organised to discuss some of the issues. It was very apparent at the first meeting that the Muslim community lacked a collective forum to articulate the concerns of the community to the appropriate authorities. People who came to the meeting soon realised that they were not alone in their concerns. Other people felt equally strong. It was strongly felt that a joint platform was urgently needed in order to take forward common community concerns. In the subsequent months, we consulted widely and extensively. In one of the meetings at the Jamiyate Tabligh ul Mosques at Southfield Square, 179 people attended from all walks of life-doctors, teachers, grocers, community leaders, representatives from mosques etc. These types of meetings went on for a year in different Mosques. Eventually, on 6th September 2011, the constitution for the Bradford Council for Mosques was approved and signed. I was appointed as the first General Secretary of the newly formed organisation. Many people showed tremendous commitment to the formation of Bradford Council for Mosques. Some of these friends are still alive and contributing and others have sadly passed away. "I admire them and always remember them in my prayers. They have done a good job." Bradford Council for Mosques came about as a result of collective efforts from all sections of the Muslim community-Sunnis, Shiite and Salfi's.

Over the years, Bradford Council for Mosques has led on many issues dear to the Muslim community. One of the first issues, we took was that of 'halal meals' in schools. In 1984, we successfully persuaded the authorities to provide halal school meals to the Muslim children. We were the first in the country to do this and in this respect Bradford Council for Mosques led the way on this issue. Muslim communities in other towns and cities took encouragement from our achievements in Bradford. It would be wrong for me to say that this was achieved by me or 5, 10 or 15 other people at the Bradford Council for Mosques. Many people contributed to our campaign; parents and children at the forefront of our efforts.

The Muslim community has moved on in leaps and bounds over the last 30 years. We now have 85 Mosques and Muslim faith schools in the district. This reflects the high regard in which these institutions are held. This also shows that the community sees its long term and permanent future here.

The future looks good for us but it would be not without challenges. The major challenge for us will be the future of our children. Will we be able safeguard their welfare? Globalisation means that no issue is too far from our living rooms. Events and developments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Kashmir, to mention a few, affect us directly. Islam and Muslims do not have a positive image in Britain. This is a major cause for concern for all of us. I am not politician. I am not a member of any political party. I hold no power. I am just a community worker. Others in position of powers and influence would need to deal with these challenges.

I continue to maintain links with Pakistan. My children and grandchildren think I am a good dad and good grandfather. They are born here. They feel that this is their home, their land and their country.

The education in Pakistan was and still is expensive. In England, children have an opportunity from good basic education and do well. Islam encourages its faithful to attain education and take up different roles to serve the country in which they have adopted as their home. We should all try to have a fulfilling life not only in this world but also in the next as well.

*"I have listened to these life stories, not once, not twice but many times. Each time I learned something new"*

**Samyah Ali (Young person)**

## Mohammed Shafi: 1964 - 2011

I arrived in the UK in 1964 at the age of 13. I was in the class 8 before coming here. My grandfather was already here from 1935 and my father from 1958. They lived in Newcastle. My grandfather visited Pakistan and brought me and my brother over. In those days visas were easy to get. There were no restrictions. The only thing you needed was a passport and a ticket.

My grandfather worked in factories and at a Newcastle shipyard. A few days after our arrival, my grandfather made me and my brother sit down for a serious talk. I remember what he said word by word, "if you respect the law in this country, then this country is paradise for you. If you disrespect the law of this country, it is like hell for you. If you can see there is gold on the shelf and there is nobody there, don't touch it. Work hard and don't go against the law."

In Newcastle, I attended school for about 3 years. On the way from school we were frequently beaten. The 'skinheads' used to go about beating and harassing us. Many times we came home with black eyes. On one occasion they beat us so badly we couldn't see. We ended up using chili powder to defend ourselves. Newcastle had more than its share of racists. Whenever we went out wearing a Salwar Kameez we used to get shouted at, "Look this Paki got a pajama on". They used to laugh and smirk at us. Things have changed. No one really cares what we wear now days.

On leaving school, I worked in a restaurant. There were not many other jobs. I used to give my wage envelope to my dad. Now day's young people keep all or half of what they earn for themselves. I was expected to give a sealed wage packet to my father. I was not to open to it were my instructions. I obeyed. It went to my father because he was responsible for the house and everything else. I was given my spending money for the week

I got married from Pakistan at the age of 25 and arrived in Huddersfield about 15 years ago. On coming here I could not find a job. My uncle helped me to get a job in Marsden in a spinning. In between I have worked as a taxi driver and wagon driver and also did other odd jobs.

I am happy here. I am able to feed myself and feel secure. My family and friends are here. I hardly know anyone in Pakistan. I know if I go back, I will struggle there. I would be starting all over again. At my age I don't think that is possible.

I want our young people to do well in life. They are our future but I am equally worried about them. These are bad times. Drugs and crime are everywhere. It is not easy for young people to stay out of trouble. Even if they have good upbringing they get pushed into bad ways by others.

## Shamime Ahmed: 1974 - 2011

I arrived in Bradford in April 1974 with my mum and two brothers to join our father. We had to make two trips to the British High Commission at Islamabad before we were given visas to travel. Following the creation of Mangla dam, there was a huge exodus of Kashmiri families from the affected areas. Some went to other parts of Pakistan and some used this opportunity to come to the UK, for better and more secure life opportunities.

We landed at London Heathrow. It was cold and damp. Coming from a warm country, we felt damn cold, "like a fish out of water". Everything was different-too orderly and too quite. I really missed my grandmother. I was loathed to leave her behind and she was equally loathed to see me go away. I had to promise her that I would visit her regularly. However, it was not until 1984, ten years later, when I was able to visit her. On my parent's part, they desired for us to excel at education. In those days, new arriving children of immigrant families were sent to the language centers with the aim of giving them a basic foot hold in the English language. We had no house of our own and therefore we had to lodge in with our aunty in a three bedroom house. The foremost priority for our parents was to earn and save sufficient money to buy a house for ourselves. My father worked in a textile mill as a weaver. Bradford had a thriving textile industry. There were plenty of jobs to be had. This accounted for many Asian settling in the city. When my father lost his weaving job in Bradford, he was able to find a job in Preston where we had other relatives residing. We moved there in 1975. In Preston I was also sent to a language centre and later I was moved to a high School as a late entrant to the fourth year. There were other Asians at this school but it was my first real experience of meeting and studying alongside white children. At this stage of life I wanted to be a TV engineer because it offered prospects of earning good money. My father was laid off work in Preston and we moved back to Bradford.

On leaving my school, I was able to get an apprenticeship to become a welder. I was put through my paces. I had to do all the menial tasks like sweeping and cleaning. One day I went up to my senior and said, "look, when am I gonna do welding? When am I gonna see a welding rod?". He took me to a man about 60 or there about and said to me "young Ahmed, you see when that gentleman there retires, than you can have his job". That wasn't the answer I was looking for. I turned around and replied, "You can do your own bleeding sweeping. I am leaving because I didn't join your firm to sweep the floor."

Because I walked out of a job, I wasn't eligible for benefits for 2 to 3 months. My parents being annoyed with for walking out of a job pushed me to work at my uncle's shop which entailed one and a half hour daily walk at 6.30am. Whilst I was doing my apprenticeship, my family wanted me to get married. I wasn't sure about taking on this massive responsibility at the age of 18. But I could not say no to my mother. I didn't want to disrespect her feelings. I tried a hollow threat by declaring that I will leave home if I am pushed into a marriage. At the end I gave in and got married. My parents paid for all expenses relating to my marriage. At that time, I felt that a great injustice had been done to me. The decision that I should have made was made for me. It wasn't my fault and it wasn't my wife's fault that we were put together. "I don't regret my marriage; just wish that it could have been different". Joining the army was entirely my decision. The army offered me a secure job, good pay, clothes and roof over my head. I was fed up working at the shop for very little money. This taught me a good lesson. My wife was totally against me joining the army. I had to practically force her to sign the army papers. My mother was also against the idea for her first born going away to work for the army. "I think I was selfish and I was. I think to get ahead in life, sometimes you have to be selfish and self centered." On joining the army, I was given an advance of £250. When I took the money home, my mother thought I had stolen it. I passed my training and did very well. I was the only Asian. There was one other black gentleman of West Indian origin. On joining the army, I lived in army barracks. The accommodation was shared with other men. I was the only Asian. The Army provided me with vegetarian meals. I am still with the British Army and have no regrets about. I have done reasonably well and feel that it was the right decision and the right choice.

My heart still says to me that I will return to Kashmir. If the situation improves there then maybe that one day I will do that.

"The Muslim community has achieved enormously and has reached huge heights in England. We have doctors, dentist, MP's, Lawyers and Lords and the list goes on. From 1974, this represents a sea of positive change."

"It is very important that people of Pakistani and Kashmir do not forget their heritage. Don't forget who are you but at the same time it is important to know where you want to go. If you forget your past, you're not going to know where your focus is."

## Mohammed Ajeeb (CBE): 1958 - 2011

I was born in 1933, in a small village in the district of Mirpur, Azad Kashmir. I first came to the UK in 1958 at the tender age of 18. This indeed was my decision to improve my life. I travelled alone. In those no visas were required. I had no relatives in this country. I borrowed money from my uncle to pay for my travels. My father also contributed..

I had friend in Nottingham from my working days in Karachi. So I stayed with him. I lived in four bedroom house with 28 other males. There was no TV. People did not understand the English language so there was no radio in the house. All we did was to visit each other. There were no Asian cinemas in those days. For the first two years, we could not purchase any halal meat and therefore we had to make do with eggs, tins of beans, processed peas, cauliflower, and potatoes and nothing else. So when the halal meat did become available we had a big feast.

I missed my friends and my family. I missed the sunshine, the open environment and my normal career. I was depressed and felt that I had made a mistake of coming here. But I was determined to succeed. This helped me to change my attitude and overcome my initial depression. Leaving Pakistan was a difficult decision for me as would be for most people having to leave their home, their family and their friends behind. "There are two types of people who normally make this type of decision: the least ambitious or the most ambitious. I definitely was very ambitious I wanted to see the world and move about and be successful."

The life here was a complete contrast to what I had been accustomed to in Pakistan. Firstly, I didn't like the weather. I arrived in the month of December. It was bitterly cold, dark and foggy. Secondly, the food here was different to what I had been used to. It was some time before I acquired the local taste. The halal meat and poultry were not available which meant getting used to the food here more difficult. Thirdly, I found work here very difficult. I was not used to physical labour. My first job was in a soap factory which gave me a weekly income of £7 and 1 shilling for a twelve hour shift.

I had a good command of English. Communication was not a problem. However, my accent was naturally different. I tried to reach out to white people but felt rejected. "They had no respect for our people. I became more and more involved with the Asians".

One day, I was doing my work when I heard one of my seniors calling me, "Hey you! come here!" I ignored him. He shouted again, "Hey! You come here". I ignored him again. He then came over to me and tapping on my shoulders said "I am talking to you". In reply I said to him, "I am not your dog. I am a human being. If you are going to treat me like this then you can keep your job, I am going home". I did go home as said. The following week I joined the British Rail.

I found the new job difficult particularly the cold weather and the night shifts. The boss was a nice person but the assistant was racist. It was not until 1968, that I was eventually able to find a right job as a housing officer with the District Community Relations Committee.

I tried to save about £2 to £3 in order to send back home. I wanted to repay the debt of coming to England and also to support my father, my sister, my brother. Comparatively the life was difficult but we had the benefit of earning more money for ourselves and our families. The aim was to become rich enough to go back to build a house, get married and start an own business.

I wanted to become independent by owning my own house. This became possible in 1962 when I was able to buy a four bedroom house in 1962 for £1100. I paid £200 deposit which in those days was a considerable amount. I was proud of being a landlord. I had no real interaction with my new neighbours other than saying "Hello" or "Good morning"

There was a great deal of racism. White people did not like us. We knew to stay out of their way. In those days there were no laws against racism so they got away with it. Most Pakistanis did not understand what was happening to them. They simply accepted the mistreatment dished out to them.

Initially, I was very much involved in various anti- racist campaigns of those days. Also, became involved with the 'Social Welfare Organisation of the Pakistanis', which offered advice and assistance to Pakistanis at the weekends, particularly those who could not speak any form of English. All this was on voluntary basis.

In 1971, I first visited Bradford at an invitation of someone I met in London. He asked me to come to see Bradford City. Bradford was a well known city with a large Pakistani community. I accepted the invitation. During my visit I found people living in back to back houses in overcrowded conditions. They had put up with these conditions because of poverty and low wages. The housing stock in Bradford was very old. Basically it was poverty, discrimination and the feeling of insecurity which forced people to accept poor living conditions.

In 1973, I moved to Bradford where I was to become the deputy director of SHARE (Shelter Housing and Renewal Experiment) and went on to become its director in 1977. Whilst in Bradford, I joined the labour party in 1974 and was elected to the local Council in 1979. In Bradford I was also elected as the Chairman of Community Race relations, an office which held for many years until mid the mid 80,s. This gave a high profile on race relations issues in the district.

I served on Bradford Council for many years, holding various portfolios. I was appointed as the Lord Mayor of Bradford Metropolitan District in 1985. This indeed was culmination of political career. In 2001 I was awarded CBE in the Queens Honors list.

## Jamil Akhtar: 1962 - 2011

I arrived in the UK in 1962 at the age of 22 in order to study. The family circumstances back home also gave me an added impetus to travel. My mother, bless her, died and my father remarried. This fundamental change in the family gave me an additional incentive to travel.

I travelled alone. I had no relatives here. On arriving here I stayed with a student friend. Did I have any expectations of this country? No, not really, everybody thought that this was a beautiful country, and everything here is rosy. But it wasn't that or this is how I felt. I missed home. For weeks, I cried my eyes out. The real difficulty was that of loneliness, not knowing anyone and not having a social life.

Was coming to England a right decision? I don't know. I believe it was my fate. It all happened quickly, within a 2 to 3 months. I never planned to come. Before catching a plane, I spent a night in Karachi. In those days the flights to the UK were from Karachi. I cried all night. Frightened of the unknown and being away from home for the first time.

Although, I spoke English, others found it difficult to understand me and I found the Yorkshire equally difficult. So went to college to improve my English language.

When I first arrived, I lived with four to five people on Bradford Road. They knew where to purchase the food from and helped out until I got myself familiarised. There was a shop in Springwood from which we purchased food to cook at home. I had no difficulty in adapting to the English dress code. I was accustomed to a Trousers and a shirt from my days in Lahore. I had a very limited social life for not knowing anyone. I worked and at the weekend I went to see a Pakistani or an Indian film. When I first arrived lived with four to five other people. They knew where to buy food and helped out.

My first two jobs were in textile mills, the first being at Holmfirth. Then I thought why not apply for a bus conductor's job. In those working as bus driver or a conductor carried a bit of prestige. I applied and was successful in getting the position. I had been in the post for about a year when I had an argument with the union secretary during a strike. Annoyed, I put my name forward for the position of a shop steward for which I was duly elected. Within two years, I worked myself to the position of secretary. This was a fulltime paid position which I was to hold for the next fifteen years. I don't think there was another Asian in the position in the Yorkshire and Humber region. It was a prestigious and a powerful position with the trade union which had 6000 members.

My uncle was a socialist and must have been influenced by him. But it took a long time for me to join the Labour Party, almost three years. People were suspicious of black people motivation for joining the labour party. I believe I was the only Asian that joined the labour party in those days. I joined the labour party because I believed in social justice and that people should be treated equally irrespective of their colour, creed and sex etc.

People those who know me from the 70's think I have been taken over by the establishment. People say that I have changed from my young days when I did many things. I was an active person. I believed in the cause of social justice for the working classes. I used to be ever present at various demonstrations.

For the Asian community there was nothing happening. People used to come to me for help with their problems.

I remember when I stood as a candidate in local elections for the Newsome ward, the Labour leader at that time, just three days before the election, when the Examiner asked him about a bid by an Asian to become a councilor, he suggested that I had no real chance of being elected, perhaps in five to six years time people may vote for an Asian but not this time around. This made me more determined to work hard and I won by twenty seven votes. Everyone was shocked.

I strongly believe that it is all fate. I never wanted to be a Magistrate or a Councilor. By nature I am a shy person but my years in the trade union gave me the best training and prepared me for other roles. In the trade union people know you. They vote for your hard work. All the members were predominantly white but I still got 90% of the votes. On one occasion a member of BNP stood against me. One of the young lad came up to me told that he had voted for me. I asked him why because he never liked black people. He said he voted for me because he felt that I would never sell me out. I enjoyed the fact that people had confidence in me.

Do I have any regrets? No! I have no regrets. I am proud of what I did. As a councilor I was the chairman of Highways, chairman of Planning and the Chairman of Housing. In those no other Asian was to be seen anywhere. I used to meet Lord Nazir at the party conferences; He was a councilor in Rotherham. He used to say me that I had a knack of becoming a chairman. I presume I was very lucky.

All my life I have struggled against racism. One thing that I learned is that if you are black, you would always need to watch your back. Although, because of the positions I held I was able to avoid its worst affect but it is always there. I remember knocking on a door during my election campaign, and being told by a white voter that although he has voted for the labour party all his life, he will not vote for me. When I asked him why, he replied that in his views black are not competent to manage the Kirklees budget which runs into millions.

I just visited Pakistan after seventeen years. Obviously, things have are very different from what I knew. The towns and cities are overcrowded. I personally feel that people are very patient. The way the Government and things are the public is very patient. I have never known a more patient nation. Any other country, people would have burn it. With the food crisis and the corruption an all that, people are very patient and very decent.

I worry about young people. They need to get education and secure good jobs. A good job is an answer to many problems. Parents are to be blamed for failing their children and for not taking interest in their children's education.

The Pakistani community needs to take pride and have self respect for what it has achieved. Every community makes mistakes but there is no point in always digging out the past.

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