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I was there.

*Yes, that’s fine now not a problem.*

I left, I left…Uganda in, in, in June of nineteen seventy. To come er…and study in England. So I left in…oh in fact I arrived in England on the twenty fourth of June, er, nineteen seventy. I, after having done er, about eighteen months, um…in um…July nineteen seventy two, two years, in July nineteen seventy two, I had gone back for my first holiday. Having finished er, having taken my first exams, er…here and, so when, when the…when General Amin actually announced that er, the Asians, that he had the dream and the that the Asians should be expelled I was in fact, it was the day after I had arrived from Uganda again, from on my, on my, on my holiday.

*So it’s your fault then, really? [LAUGHS].*

[LAUGHS]. Er, er you could you say that. Um, so yes, I was there and then, then, er…I spent four weeks and I left er…in August. Um…which is probably about thirty odd days after, he had the dream and, and, and er…he had given ninety days for the Asians to leave.

*Yeah.*

So that’s, that’s really. So I did, exp- …although I left Aliya to come to study, I was there, when, when the…

*The announcement.*

… when, when the announcement was made and then, so I exp-, I experienced all the terror and all the, difficulties of fear and the difficulties, of, of, of leaving the country.

*That’s, that’s perfect, I mean, I think that’s as valid as anybody XXXX. So that’s em, its perfect. What we’ll do then, em, what I’ll do is, they’re very open questions. If you, em, if you don’t wanna answer anything, if you find it too traumatic or you just, don’t have a perspective on it because you didn’t experience it, just tell me and we’ll move on to the next question.*

OK.

*Em, see, it’s all very simple, um. It shouldn’t take much longer than an hour as well, just under hopefully. Um, if you wanna stop, if you’re busy, just, we’ll end the interview it’s not a problem either.*

OK.

*OK. Right so um, this, it’s a bit boring the first couple of questions. It’s really about your personal details, so can you tell me your full name and could you possible spell it for me as well, is that OK?*

OK. The name is Naresh, N-A-R-E-S-H. Second name is Samani, S-A-M-A-N-I.

*Right. And what's your date of birth?*

Twenty second of February nineteen forty nine.

*And, where were you born?*

I was born in Uganda, in a small place called er…Bukoboli. The nearest town to it was er, Bukoboli was basically, er, a place with about four houses, where…my grandparents, maternal grandparents use to live. And they had a business there, of er…er, dealing in er…er, jiggery, which is a by product of sugar.

*Mm-hmm. [Clears throat].*

Of sugar production. So I was born in Bukoboli, which is, as I said the nearest town to it was Uganda, um, and um…so that’s where I was born. Um…my father, it’s quite traditional in most Ugandan, or amongst Asians that er, the mother will go to her parents, to…deliver the baby. So that’s, that’s why I was born in Bukoboli although we use to live in a town, which was er, er…fairly, probably the…third, fourth largest town in, in the country. Which was called Soroti. Which was in the north part of the country.

*Mm-hmm. I mean…it sounds like a very small place where you, you were born. You’ve mentioned there’s only four buildings, or four houses.*

Only four, four, four houses yes.

*Mm-hmm. So I mean um, can you perhaps describe um, what it was like growing up in, in that part of Uganda, as an Asian and, in such a small community as well.*

Er, growing up, er sorry, the growing up part, most of my growing up actually happened in Soroti which was a larger town.

*Larger town, yeah.*

Larger meaning er, population of er, probably…no more than of er, fifteen hundred people. Er…and, the way the society was structured at the time er, you had er…er, er, three different tiers of society. You had those who were, civil servants, teachers, um…who…were a mixed, and people use to work in the government, which is civil servants.

*Mm-hmm*.

Where people, majority of those people would be of er…er…er…expatriates like er…from the… Uganda had been and was a colony of er, of er, England, or, or Britain. And um, so the civil service at the top level would be primarily of people of English descent.

*Mm-hmm*.

You also have, teachers, who will, would be a mixture of um, um…um, people of English descent. As well as er…er, Indian teachers who, not necessarily Indians born and brought up in Uganda, but expatriates from India.

*From India yeah.*

So that was one, er, tier of the society. The second tier of the society was primarily made up of, people who were in businesses. Businesses meaning, er…smaller business like er…retail outlets primarily, um… of differing types. Er, and, and though that tier of the society was primarily dominated by, the Ugandan Asians.

*Mm-hmm*.

Er, er, and the third tier of the society was er, the, er…the local population. The Africans. Who, er…if you, if one, one is to, divide the world, probably divide it into two, which were, er, people who would work in the, er…in the businesses being run by the, a… the Ugandan Asians.

*OK.*

As well as er, er, there were farmers. The em, the first tier of the society would probably live er, most of the time, live in er…in the better part of the town, where the housing… was, at, at… at, at a better level. The, business part of the society would live in the main town. Which in, in my case was a town which had three streets. Um…and, and er…most of the people would live behind their shops. Um… um, um, um, and, and, and, and, and, and that was the, um, society and that’s where I use to live because my father and his brothers were running, smaller businesses of textiles, and primarily retail business including tailoring.

*Mm-hmm. And I mean, did you, you’ve mentioned sort of the three, sort of, aspects of society there the three different levels, um…I mean, did you…did you feel very different because of that. I mean, did you feel like you, you were in a more um…did you have an easier life compared to perhaps the Africans who were at the bottom, sort of, or...?*

The truth of the matter is…now, looking with hindsight yes. We, we were er, er…in, in a…privileged…

*Privileged.*

…position, because although we were all, our parents were all er…er, er, er, most of our parents were in businesses. Um, they were self-employed people, em…they…were not necessarily highly educated, or in some cases not educated at all. This, this was the first generation that came over, from India, under the British er…rule in order to, um…making a living and, and participate in the, initially, er…the first wave…

*XXXX.*

…came through as, to build the railways.

*Yeah.*

Um. But, so as I said, looking with, looking at it with hindsight, yes I was in a privileged position. But at the time, it just didn’t seem any different that seemed to be the norm, and that’s how we use to er, just er, live.

*Yeah, it was what it was.*

It was, ya.

*And um, do you think, um…um, lets, this is before Idi Amin, let’s say even before he came to power, um, let alone made the declaration, the notice of ninety days, um after that very strange dream that he had. Um…did you feel that there was a tension, between the three…or more importantly perhaps, you in the middle and also the Africans at the bottom. Was there any sense of tension, jealousy, rivalry…?*

Yes, you mean certainly immediately aft…prior to independence, which was in nineteen sixty two, there was no tension. There was its as clear cut, everybody knew their er…their position in the society. Everybody was dependent on, on different parts of the society were dependent on the other part of the society to function properly. Um…so a, there was certainly not, on the, in the, am-amongst the Asians. Er, not tensions felt. We all just felt that this is normal and this how things will carry on.

*Mm-hmm.*

We never felt like er…they, that the civil servants, who, who lived in accommodation that was er…better than the population of where the business community lived.

*Mm-hmm.*

Er…but that was just, it just happened to be. It wasn’t a question, it, there was nothing to stop the business people, to move into er, that part of er…of the, um…in terms of residencies, but we didn’t because er, it seemed far more convenient to be living behind your business so that, you, you er…you would open your shop so, open your businesses in the morning. And at five thirty in evening normally, the business would be shut, and you are at home. You don’t, didn’t travel.

*Yeah I’d much prefer a two minute commute to work than an hour and a half [laughs] every morning.*

So, so, so, so let’s, lets XXXX…

*Would you say perhaps that, people were aware of the difference, the difference, within society and economic privileged you had but it didn’t…*

Yes.

*…but it didn’t, there was perhaps a certain aspect of jealousy but not as true tension XXXX.*

No, well, er, until such time as, certainly until such time as independence, which is nineteen sixty two.

Two.

No, there didn’t seem to be any tension. Er…and, and it’s a very fluid situation because everybody, even within, if you took different cores of the society, er, the three different er, sections. Within each section there would be differences at, at, at, er, er, er, er, of how well, to do financially, ah…how well to do in terms of family relationships, er, er. So within this, this same society there would be differences. There would be people be better off and people who would not be so better off.

More educated, less educated?

Yes. So, so no there wasn’t, certainly from, from the middle…if you like, middle class er, er, which we thought we were. Er, it didn’t seem that, that there was any great tension, or, there wasn’t any jealousy. It wasn’t a question of, there was jealously in terms of, if you had somebody driving a brand new car, you, you as a family would wonder why can we afford this?

Ah hum. But that’s human nature; it’s not specific to Uganda or…

Ya, ya, ya.

It happens outside today, in the street. No doubt.

Correct.

Um…and a lovely car you do have. [Laughs].

But when did, I mean, you, you mention this is obviously pre-dating Amin…

Yes.

I mean, when did, um, straight after British rule. When did the tension, or, when did it become more noticeable?

The, the, the tensions and the differences of opinion in the society really er, er, began…in, more or less immediately after the independence. And the reason why it happened like that is that um, at independence, er, er…was the time, when, um…the Asians were seen to be doing better at expense of the…er, local natives, or Africans. Um…and, and the political parties, there were two main political parties at the time. Er…U.P.C which stands for Uganda People’s Congress, and um…Democratic People’s Party, D.P.P. Er, and in order to, gain votes like everywhere else in the world, the parties would say things that they thought would appease the masses.

Populism.

Populism and, and, and, and, a d that is when things were said about, how the African who was er, mostly either working in, in, in, in Asian owned businesses, or…was a farmer could do better, could be running that, that business that the Asians run, and how the particular party if elected would make certain rules and regulations which, which would help them. That’s when the initial differences started. Until that time, there were…there weren’t any significant issues between the different communities. So, er the initial differences really, er, the, the, the main difficulties er….around er, around the time of election which was ninety XXXX.

So you’d, noticeably, they’d perhaps go up during, election time or when XXXX needed the vote. So I mean, would you say that um, so it is to me from what you’ve just said it’s clear that Amin didn’t event this tension, he pra… took it up a level, er played of it.

Yeah, I, I, I think that, that er…er, the tension had started well before Amin’s days. Amin, Amin came into power much later. Before that, there was…the, the, the, United People’s Congress party is the one that was elected which had made some of this announcements.

*Mm-hmm.*

Although they, er, when they came into power, they did not actually and not so many of the things that XXXX, right at the time of er…

He used it to get into power XXXX.

Yes, but, but over a period of time, em… it was generally seen as er, er, er…that er, that er, they wanted to help the Africans to be doing things that, er, Asians were doing and the people who were in the civil service were doing. So not necessarily…

But that doesn’t necessarily mean take it away from you though XXXX.

Correct, correct. So what happened is that, the civil service over a period of time em…em, was then by, by quo-, almost by quota system employing local Africans, um…um, and, and, and, and then…in order to help certain of the, the population to go into the business er, element of the society. Certain rules and regulations were passed, like, er, that Asian owned, not Asians and no, only, a local…er, African person could do business in certain areas. So after three streets that we had, the main street where the business was conducted, er Asians were not given licenses to trade. Everybody needed a license to trade so Asians would not be given a license and that was, that became an official policy.

*Mm-hmm.*

So Asians would trade in the other two, er, streets, and the main street would then be occupied by XXXX

Oh wow so I mean, quite an active form of segregation almost XXXX.

Oh yes, there was. From business point of view, there was. Er, unfortunately em….erm, erm, the Africans er…weren’t at that junction and this is a personal opinion. Weren’t quite ready to take on the business activity.

Yeah.

Because a, a, a, a, a any business activity er…to be undertaken requires certain level of er, certain calibre of ability,

Experience.

And I, I, I , I …I’m reticent to use word er, intelligence. I don’t think intelligence is an issue, it is, it was, is this a question of, er…business was engrained in the Asian community. Which would obviously be Africans would take a few, years to get, to, to, to, to, obtain the same level of XXXX.

Of course, and experience and get to know the processes of what I suppose, exchange and making money.

So what actually then happened is that the mains, the main street which was suppose to be the primary XXXX started dying down.

*Laughs.*

And the other two streets where, began doing much much better.

Did that annoy the authorities or…?

Well I think, I think that er, it must have but, but, I, I…I didn’t actually…there weren’t any specifically pronouncements XXXX.

XXXX.

Um… and I mean lets go back to, um…sort of your own family and the, the, Ugandan Asian community and the first XXXX I’d like to ask is did you ever think you’d leave? I mean, did you, was there every any ambition of your family perhaps to go to…

No.

… India…or…and elsewhere in East Africa?

N-Never I…never ever we, did we think er, even when I left in er, nineteen seventy to come to study to England, it was on the basis of…

Return.

…of er, wanting to return.

Mm-hmm...

What has basically happened is that er, the…the community Asians or the Indian community that had been brought, effectively brought over by the British to establish the railway lines and…

Yeah.

…the training centres, and as the Asians got, got em…perhaps better educated, they, they started moving to civil services. Um…I, I, um…none of those people ever thought that the, the, they would leave that was home. And, and, and, and, and us…in my case, I was born in, in, in the country. And my mother was born in the country in, in Uganda that is. And, and we er…we just er, when the, at the time of independence we were given a choice by the outgoing er, government which was er, run by er…the British government. Er…we were given a choice, er…that we could have opted to be either Ugandan nationals, or we could become British nationals under er, er… a particular type of citizenship which was called British Protected er, Citizenship.

Yeah.

And…in my case, er, we actually I opted to become a Ugandan citizen so I took a Ugandan passport after I was a Ugandan national.

It shows you never had the inclination.

n-never ya, never did it occur to us that we would actually go and live elsewhere, and make a home aswell. Always thought that the home would be…in, in Uganda.

In Uganda.

At that time.

Yeah of course.

And again, this, this would run through different strands of the society, even within the er…Asians there might, it is possible, I couldn’t say for sure…that there could have been, there could have been families that thought they will not live in Uganda they’ll be moving out. It never crossed anybody’s mind that living in the country would become dangerous.

Dangerous of course, and once it does, then obviously you’ll XXXX…

XXXX.

…which we’ll go onto. Um…this is really the last question on perhaps, before Amin and um, its proclamation, um…is…can you, perhaps, was the Ugandan Asian community quite a tight-knit community? I mean, did you celebrate, certain cultural or religious practices together?

Ya well, the, the, although one talks of Uganda Asian community within that community you obviously had different sections…

XXXX…

If you, if you had to take, there were Muslims, there were, Hindus…there were Christians.

Uhm hum.

Er, er, and er, er…er, er…so within the, society you had different, circles…

Yeah.

Who, who er…who had their own religious beliefs and who would do their own thing for example, Christians would go to church every Sunday morning…er, erm, er, the…Muslims er…er, er, and the last part was er, in my particular town, there was, there was a significant, um, minority of er, Ismailia who…would go to…their er, mosque on every Friday evening apart from other days. And the Hindus, we had our temple, and we would go to the temples. Er so, within, even within the, within the community there were different sections. but, um…was there any ever er…direct tension between different communities er, I certainly, until er…I left the country at the age of twenty one er, did not see any.

*Mm-hmm.*

Er, and, and, and, and it wasn’t a question of er…I, I, this sounds er, very much a cliché, I had Muslim friends but frankly, it just did not, did not work on that basis.

You didn’t think…

You had ya, you just had friends. Er…

After five people who do say fixed statements like that er… laughs

No it wasn’t a question of I got on very well XXXX it, it…we, we, we went to same schools. Er… we were taught by the same teachers.

Yeah.

Er, our values er…if you, if you put religious er…differences aside our values were the same.

*Mm-hmm.*

Er morals er…whether good or bad, were, a-at a very similar level.

*Mm-hmm…*And culture I suppose XXXX.

And culture, culturally we are, the back, background of, backdrop of the culture was really, very much Indian.

Yeah, yeah.

So…um, so yes, there were differences, there were different circles within the society and it wasn’t a question of them, one circle did not cross into the other.

Yeah.

And it wasn’t that we did not get together, so for example, we would go to, when there are religious, when the religious functions…different societies would go, go to the functions.

Ok.

Without any, without any hindrance.

So Diwali would be celebrated by XXXX

Ya, XXXX ya, Diwali or er…prob- more er…about things that come to mind is er, erm… Navratri, which is nine days of dancing, that Hindus do. And in that time, everybody would come into the temple, there wasn’t a question of these people cannot come and the other XXXX and vice versa. So, that’s really…there were differences but it did not exist in terms of er…er, different er…a-although there weren’t any clashes, along those lines.

In a negative context. And lets flip to the, perhaps the relationship than with, Ugandan, you have told me an overview of society. But how did that function on a day to day basis, did you go to school with em, African Ugandans?

Yes, we, well…the, my, that was again divided into two tiers. what happened is the first part of my education, from er…up to what we use to call J.S. two, which is er…O-level, ah not O-levels er…er, pr-prior to going into…secondary school, four years of secondary school which would take XXXX into O’levels. Er, there was a seven, from…you started school at a around six years of age. From six to…seven years, or thirteen and on thirteen you would take a particular exam, and if you passed that exam you would then move onto secondary school which was four years. So, the first part of my education was at a, a school called the, called the Government…Controlled Asian Primary school.

Laughs

That was the name XXXX

XXXX its very to different to St Thomas Moore.

*[Laughs]*

[Laughs]

So, so it, it was a school and it was primarly my primary school was er….no I would say not dominant and but actually…a, almost all the students were of er…Indian origin.

Ok

Er, so…that’s, that’s for the first seven years of my education. Em, when that finished, er…and then I went into school which was by this time time the country was independent, um...and the, this where the secondary school was er…run it was a government controlled school, and anybody who was able to pay or contribute fees would be able to attend, subject to having got the right grades. At that juncture, we had, we had… classes of senior one for example, it was for senior secondary schools or senior one, would have two classes of forty students each. And in my class we had er…er, er, a XXXX section of er, students and, and with that juncture we did, for the first time study with the Africans XXXX.

XXXX. And, and I mean you sort of obviously, mix with after school, play with them or…?

We would play the school time together, em…er, because the, the where the school use to work there is from eight o’clock to one o’clock you do the studying bit. Then…you go home er…four o’clock you go back to the school for sporting activities like…whichever sports you wanted to XXXX

XXXX

Yes. When, when, when it was a bit, bit, bit cooler er…so you’d, so then you would play with…with all the students. Which whatever their background, um…and when…. you finish at around six thirty before it was, six o’clock when it started really, getting dark you would then…head home er, and then you would go your own ways. And, and quite frankly…outside the schooling environment, no, not er…local African friends amongst XXXX there wasn’t a much of a cross, er, er, er, er, er, er, er…mixing between the two communities.

Ok

Em…which probably could lead to problems later XXXX

Yes, but I think primarily the main reason for that, was er…was the fact the Asians…who were in businesses tend, most of the Asians were of, of, of, a business background, they lived in the town, in, in, in town centre itself. The Africans who were XXXX they would live er, in the surrounding areas and there were farmers…primarily and, and, and people who, who work as servants in the household and the shops or whatever, once their job was done they would go back home, er…which is outside the town.

Yeah so it’d mean geographically quite XXXX

Geographically segregated…

I suppose also the reality is if you’re sort of father’s a farmer, or your dad’s working in a market, you’d probably go and help out with the family. You wouldn’t have to play with your friends…

Correct, correct.

…you’d be supporting your family in any way you could.

Correct.

Right, em, we’re gonna flick now to em, a certain Mr Amin [LAUGHS]. Who I’m sure you have an opinion of [LAUGHS]. I’m sure a lot of people do. [LAUGHS]. Um, its, I mean…your story’s a little bit different cos you’ve told me, I mean a very unique, one you were here then you were there and seem to coincide with your arriving, which is probably bit a unfortunate [LAUGHS]. You picked a bad time to go back [LAUGHS]. Can you describe your em…reaction, em, to…when you first heard em…Amin’s, proclamation…was it…

I, I was actually in a taxi er, having gone back, er, I was, I stayed a couple of days with my uncle in Kampala which is the…which is er, the main town and, which, to which I flew back. Um…having stayed a couple of days, then I was travelling, checking up to my parent’s town Soroti, which was er, erm two hundred miles from the main city. and the main mode of transport in those days use to be, er, taxis…taxis like er…XXXX, although I think the word taxi is not quite synonymous with taxis here.

Yeah I know.

Taxi would mean that you would have probably eight people sitting in the car with the luggage on the top and in, on the carrier.

Some chickens on the roof [laughs].

Chickens on the roof and also other stuff. So I, I was in, in the taxi as, as, we were heading down er, erm…and I, I remember distinctly um…I was between, just gone past a second largest town called Jinja, er, er when…the, on the radio this announcement was made. Quite frankly er, nobody believed it, er… within the taxi which had, Asians aswell as Africans as er, er, er, er, within the, within the car. Oh, everybody just thought um…

Amin talking…

Amin talking nonsense.

…Nonsense again. Em…

So…

He did have that kind of aspect, didn’t he; he had when, er…

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Almost like a comedy character XXXX….

Ya, he was buffoon character, and then he…

Yeah, a comedy villain XXXX…

And he played, he played to that. He…so initially, no…no, no, no impact whatsoever. Travelled, got home, first week, seven ten days, nothing seemed to have change. Um…but as, as, time went by…people started packing up selling their businesses, or selling their personal artefacts. Er, and starting thinking about moving on.

What was that as a reaction to, were there instances…?

There began to be instances where the…Africans would come around and surround, this is you are only here until such and such date, that I’m going to take this house this is mine. I want to do this with it, and that’s, that’s when it really started to dawn upon people that this is…

A reality.

…a reality.

And I suppose you were starting, to…it kind of empowered perhaps the African community.

It did and, and, and, and XXXX actually started XXXX army, er…outside the town so if you…outside my little town, if you wanted to travel out, you would have to go past a checkpoint. Er, this is, this is when it really started as, to seem, er…that, that things were…

Changing.

…for real.

Yeah.

And…

The minute Africans tend to do that I suppose, [laughs] 029.24.4

Yes. So, so er…the, yes, the, the things started changing after the announcement, people started baking, selling…er, er, and, and, and, started thinking about er…moving on. Um…those people who, um…and majority of the people had a British protection passport. Er, if not British, British nationality er…and of course I was in a predicament because I had a Ugandan passport but I had visa to study in England. Um…and we started as a family to worry about what would happen, if I wasn’t allowed to leave the country. So…about four weeks after the pronouncement, er, my father, my family thought it would be sensible for me to leave, if I was able to, er…and that was my four weeks er, worth of holidays was done and I, I, I was about to leave but er, you could see even then that er, travelling between towns was becoming difficult. Em, Africans…

The atmosphere had changed.

…the atmosphere had dramatically changed. Ya.

And um, after the announcement, I mean you said your reaction and XXXX was right, that he…Idi Amin again [laughs]. Played to perhaps, the populism and sort of acting a buffoon as you described him. Um, and then you’ve obviously mentioned that as such the army where settling checkpoints that’s when it got real.

Yeah.

Em…and I couldn’t completely imagine, how that…do you remember the moment you left. I mean, the actual moment of expulsion, that journey?

Well I wasn’t part of the expulsion, I, I, I…

Of course, sorry yeah.

I, just left a month…

Just before, yeah.

… just over two months before. I think the announcement was made in July…

*Mm-hmm.*

…he had given ninety days. Er, it took up to end of October, and I, I… left er…around middle of august.

*Mm-hmm.*

Now, I, distinctly remember it because I travelled that morning, from ‘SIDRETDEH’, er, er, from um…Soroti to go back to Kampala because the, there was only one airport. Which was Entebbe…

Were you thinking you were not gonna be allowed out? I mean…

Ah yes, absolutely. We…we thought it would be quite poss - it, it would…that it could happen. That when one presented passport at Entebbe airport they would say, er…you can’t leave you are a Ugandan national. Why are you going, or for whatever reason. That was one the second fear was that, the visa that was granted to me by the er…British government, er… there was a question mark whether they would say, sorry under the circumstances it is not a valid reason. So yes there was concern. Er but, um…it didn’t. Actually come to…

Fruition?

Fruition yeah.

Erm…so you’re obviously sitting at home, em…when I say home, England now. Erm, and the rest of your family are in Uganda. Em, can you describe to me sorta the feeling of, you know obviously, it’s not the technological age where you can chat to them on Facebook or Skype. As far as you were aware, there, in your small hamlet your town, I mean, where you concerned about their safety? Were you…incl-, did you have contact with them?

Oh I, no I didn’t have contact with them. Em…I had contact only via letters. Em…I em, I heard that er, and I read in the papers, local papers in the UK, that er…the Asians started moving out and that Britain er, was accepting er, the Asians. And they were coming in, er, and there were camps that were set up here.

*Mm-hmm.*

Em…so I expected my family to arrive but I did not know when they would arrive. Er, and I wasn’t on…a day to day contact with them.

Did you em, I mean…was the UK chosen by the rest of the family because of you?

Em…

Cos you know you started, obviously twenty eight thousand arrived in UK but you also had Canada took on quite a XXXX aswell…

Yeah. no, I, I, I don’t think of, I don’t think that er, my family came to…my parents and my er, siblings came to up because of me. I think that er, em…it was a given that would be better off, in terms of living standards, and, and, and in terms of being able to earn a living. Er, in UK as opposed to the other option, which was available, which would have been India.

Right.

Er, that’s, that was er…almost er…universally accepted phenomenon within the community.

*Mm-hmm.*

So I think that’s why they came. In…in my…particular case it wasn’t because of me. It might have helped and made er, made them make the decision but I don’t think it was specifically because of …

More sort of pragmatic, pragmatic…

More pragmatic.

…the prospects are better there…

Correct.

…than they are, elsewhere. Em…in terms of…erm…your, pa-, well the rest of your family, em, where, where did they arrive and when did they arrive?

They, they arrived towards the…middle of October, nineteen seventy two. Erm…and they were er…upon arrival they were er…placed because I did not have anywhere with those, for which to occupy them. I use to live in bedsit…

You’re a poor student… laughs

Yes. Er, so, um…they were er…placed at er, west morling RAF air base. So that’s where, they were taken, they then got in touch with me, and I made my way. Er…to go and see them in kent. Which was a xxxx.

Can you describe that moment when you saw them, when you walked in?

I, I, I was er… of course very happy to see them. Em…but…em, didn’t really think there had been any, in any danger so… er, there wasn’t any, any elation from the point of view of ‘ah, they are now safe…’

And alive.

Alive, ya. But, but I of course I was very happy to see them. Em…the er, but when I met with them and they told us of the stories and the things that had happened, then of course I was very happy that they had escaped without any serious er, difficulties.

And we’ll touch on that, again, I know this could be quite a sensitive topic, I mean, could you describe perhaps some of things…that, the rest of your family saw. Because what I, I was talking to your daughter about it, and she goes ‘oh yeah’, and it seems to me a lot of the atrocities that were occurred, in terms of under Amin, where...obviously projecting to the African people, themselves. And it seems almost, it’s an oversight, em…there wasn’t wide-scale shootings or rapes but there seems to be certain stories that did come out of the atrocities.

Yeah, yeah.

Can you tell me about it, if you don’t mind?

Yes er…the…if you put er, onto different scales…the first, the most obvious thing that happened to majority of the Asians was that er, in terms of their possessions and in terms of their wealth, they could not come out with much…

Fifty pounds.

Ya. Fifty pound allowance and, and the rest of the assets were all left behind. So from, financial perspective er…for people and the community that was doing very well, financially…all of a sudden they did not have the XXXX for which to support themselves.

*And that affected everyone?*

That effected, right, right across the board. So that’s the, the…from the financial perspective. In terms of security what happened was that there was quite a bit of harassment from the army, who…er, took things like any jewellery that anybody had. Any material possessions that they could lay their hands on…

*Anything they could get.*

Anything they could get they took. Er, but apart from the…largest cities, em…er, the Asian population wasn’t harassed much apart from being, looted of their wealth.

*Mm-hmm.*

But in the, couple of the largest cities, there were stories about er…women being, young, ladies being taken away. Em…and, sexually abused, er…that obvi-, it was the most…er, the, the, the, the, the, the most difficult part, to accept. Em…and in, in, in, in…in my case, for example I had er…friends, er…in one, one particular friend’s brother, his, he was abducted and he's never ever been seen since. Er…so there XXXX, very very few, em….in relation to the fact that there was about seventy thousand Asians being expelled.

Yeah.

Er…there were very few cases of that sort, but there were.

And, you know, one…case is a tragedy isn’t it…

Yeah.

…you don’t need hundreds of cases to make it anymore horrific for that individual or their family I suppose. And also the fear that probably spread amongst the rest of the community.

Yes. The…from that point of view, but quite frankly…the society that we live in today in, in two thousand and thirteen, those, almost seem, insignificant. There's a different er…moral code, er…running different societies, almost across the world.

*Mm-hmm.*

Er…kidnapping, bombings, wars, this sort of thing they did not exist at the time.

Yeah.

Or, or did not seem to exist at, exist at the time. So there were…xxxx although I said that, I suppose Northern Ireland was going on at the time wasn’t it.

Yeah.

So there were, quite a few…

I think…I mean perspect, my gran, my granddad was an Orangeman, member of the UVS actually and he fled to England. And then, I was chatting to this, about the XXXX, I really impressed with her, because she…there is this, I mean we’ll chat about this later, but there sodes seem to be this fear of this lost of knowledge about what happened to your generation amongst, the second and third generation Ugandan Asians and gujratis in Britain. And im really impressed with your daughter because she’s actually gone and re-embraced your story as well as her own heritage. Em…but I do think, the sort of, there's this perspective where we kind of forget, what went on in the back, the back, the past, certainly in Britain. I mean…I, I think also the big difference, what you sort of mentioned is er, the technology. Io mean if something happens now, a bombing, everyone knows about it.

Everyone knows about it.

Yeah, if something happens in Uganda, in a small town.. I mean, but when is that information eventually going to decipher to the rest of the world. If even, it sis….

Even if you have, ya

And it doesn’t make it any more or less horrific, it just makes it less XXXX I suppose [laughs].

Yes.

Em…so lets em, we now gonna sort of move on to your life…that you build in England, and er, perhaps even what your family did, but its more specifically…you. Em, I always ask what people first reactions of coming to England are, but yours wasn’t walking out of an airbase hanger was it, yours was coming here to go university.

Yeah, no…

Its still important, what was it like, I mean…

Well my, my impression was er…because our, our education… educational system in Uganda was er, all based in er, or based on the English system. We, our, our exams er… o’levels, A levels, universities, locally in Uganda were all based on, er, er…English standards.

Yeah.

Er…for example, our er…o-levels board was er, Cambridge, and oxford. Er…so same standards, same sort of educational levels.

So, I mean...education not much of a transition perhaps.

No, no almost none whatsoever…

Culturally?

Er culturally there was of course a great change, great change in the sense that em…er, was there a shock when I landed, no. only because, I had read er, er, quite a bit er, er about the society. Er, our teachers were er… my teachers for the six years of senior education, four years of o’levels and two years of a-levels. My teachers were er, er, almost without exceptional all English.

Ok.

Er…and, and, and, and…we use to read the most famous er…magazines that we use to read were dandy and beano.

Laughs.

So we…

So you knew about the bashry kids [laughs]

We had the background so, no there wasn’t that, that surprise. Er…and, er…

I suppose there was already a network of not necessarily Ugandan Asians but, Gujarati’s…

Yes there was. There was a network of Asians, I, I…er, when I arrived I went to live with a family in Wembley. Which was er…a Bengali family from India, but I stayed with them as their paying guest.

*Mm-hmm.*

For the first er… two years of my live in the UK. So, em…was I so shocked? No. was I, er, impressed? Yes. Was I er…xxxx with these civil organisations, and the way things worked here? Very much. Em…er, er, and…did I actually have any difficulties, why frankly, no in the sense that the society was quite broad minded and it accepted er…immigrants…or, all the students or whoever…relatively peacefully without any problems.

*Mm-hmm.*

So, from all those perspectives, er… arriving in UK was, fine. We read about er, in, in, in that era, there were er…youths, white youths…skinheads…

Skinheads

…who’d go round….

Enoch Powell’s friends.

…yeah, but, but the truth of the matter is, although we read about Enoch Powell, we heard about national front, and we saw what they did and we saw on, on, on, on the news we might see what, what they were doing on TV. Or we may have read and see photographs, personally… the fact that I did not frequent the areas…like pubs in the evenings, or, or…go to political rallies…

Football matches.

Foot, football ya, I mean my first football match I was, not until nineteen seventy….seven. seventy six. Er…so, we didn’t, I never personally got involved into any XXXX right the way through, not to date.

Do you think, em…it’s… a sort of thing, this is like off topic but XXXX manipulated by the press a lot of these. Cos there, there was a sense you had the race relations act passed in nineteen seventy one XXXX, and you also have the Kenya arrival…

No…

Which again it wasn’t forced, but it caused a certain reaction.

Yes.

Obviously, you had, as you mention, a certain Mr. Powell, who…actually, I’m from Wolverhampton. He’s…my house is actually his ward.

Yeah.

He’s the most confusing…to me, as someone who’s always worked with migrant groups. I’m an academic I XXXX PhD, as some, and I've looked at migrant issues and attitudes towards migrants. He to this day is the most divisive, confusing individual within Britain politics, history I’d say. Cos, he’s such a hypocrite [laughs] in many ways, you know. he spoke, two or three different languages, he lived in a number of different parts of the world. Er…he , was, in charge of the NHS and actually, actively, proactively went out and got foreign nurses into the country.

Hmm.

Em…and then suddenly, overnight decides to become the face of…sort of, right-wing agitation really [laughs].

Yes.

I think he was as much of a populist probably as a certain mr amin.

Well, ya… I think I would agree with that. And I think that er, that er, he obvisouly was a highly intelligent man. You don’t become a politician of that oratory power.

*I wouldn’t go that far [laughs].*

Laughs. XXXX.

*Laughs*

But yes, but, but er…I think predujice, in a different level…among different people, but even in the same... people of same ethnicity, exist.

Yeah.

That’s, that’s human nature.

I found it such a…its…it becomes excuse the pun, such a very black and white issue doesn’t it.

Yes.

Your either racist, or your not a racist its kinda well, [laughs]. Is that, is that clear cutted?

And…when I trained, er…to…when I was studying and I trained there about twenty eight of us, students and er…there might be , about of us where, non-english. There rest of them were English students and quite frankly, er…yes there were differences of opinions initially, when you went in. or a few day, a few weeks XXXX, we got to know each other and, and, and that was the end of any, any predujice, immediate predujice amongst ourselves. Whatever they might say that at home, whatever they might do outside…

Of course.

But on the whole, there wasn’t er…there wasn’t any direct er…discrimination that…I particularly faced. I can only speak from XXXX…

XXXX any, apart from the…the most celebrated I think, we’re not celebrating as infamous, as you as em…Leicester council there XXXX, there is an open letter to the Ugandan Times was it I think, and they actually said ‘we don’t want em…any Ugandan Asians arriving’. It think they, I think they’re glad they did arrive…

Laughs

Leicester XXXX [LAUGHS]. I don’t think leiceste rwould be the same place, or even a place [laughs] if you guys hadn’t arrived. And we’ll go into that later. Em…can you describe, I mean…you said, you’re siblings arrived with your em…other members of your family, can you describe the sort of help that the bristih government gave, em…I mean what was it…apart from the basic…

I took, I think whatever else is said about er…the immigration and, and the expulsion from Uganda. One think should never, ever be missed out, wherever it is said. The british government behaved impeccably, em…there not only….em…admitted the popolus here, knowing full well where this would put tremendous train on the er…on the utilities and the services and the…er, sochoolings and all of it. they…almost with open arms welcomed, the local people er…who we came across, and then in my family we came across in xxxx (WEST MORING?, behaved in…superb, superb manner. Fully supporting, em..and my er, parents stayed in the west mooring camp I think, its probably more than twelve, eighteen months.

Wow.

Er and then, the…there were xxxx a, a council house. a two bedroom council house in em, chatham kent.

*Mm-hmm.*

Em…and, and two throughout the process, the support was unblieable. Im not sure that today…we as a society, are…geared to be able to churn it out on the XXXX, on….on the same , at the same level.

Twenty eight thousand people overnight is just…

Overnight, XXXX

With no, with no, sort of informs, you didn’t, no notice at all, literally.

Ya. And er…beginning of the winter, end of October, beginning of the winter, for…popukation arriving from er… a xxxx country.

Slightly different climate {laughs}

So, so that has, should be stated, what4ver else you guys state in your books or…narratives, um…the English…er, whether you taking terms of the government, whether you take it in terms of the local population em… on the whole behaved, not only behaved, went out of their way to acoomodate…er, the…the Asians that were arriving.

And do you think that sort of appreciation, em…and still I ahvent spoken to any members of your community, but certainly, your gerneation who I have done it seems quite everyone is very appreciatative. Do you think that led to when…after a number of years, when amin did leave office, em…get ousted and f-fled to Saudi Arabia, and there was the opportunity to, go back. Do you think that led to the decision for many not to go back or would’ve think it was just been so long that Britain was now their homwe. Would you think some XXXX…

I think er…there was a mixture of both but primary, er…by the time Idi amin was off the scene, em…the, the majority of the people who had arrived had become quite established. And…started thinking UK as home, or England as home. Er…there was a generation, which are, probably the people who were in their forties who had arrived who perhaps never, ever really settled.

They’re in between aren’t they.

Ya, and they would, they would have loved to go but when they had, their children who were, schooling here and doing reasonably well. Er…there weren’t the issues of not being able to put er… or to… live to a decent standard. And if you were prepare to work er…then there was always an opportunity to better yourself. From those xxxx points of view, I suspect not many people er, wanted to run back to Uganda, and that’s, that’s what happened.

And again, makes pragmatic sense I supporse for, the reasons you came to England xxxx

Correct. Personal, personal sense and then personal financial well being.

Of course.

*Which is very important, if your an economic migrant, its important but if you’re a, a refugee and you come here with fifty pounds in your back pocket, that is you know, that is the most important aspect of your life. Em…in terms of…when…you, sort of, again, your family got to Britain et cetera, I mean, how…we’ve kinda touched on the fact there was a certain…em, transference of culture…education system’s quite similar so perhaps that made the adaptation a little bit easier, what aspects of life did you struggle to adapt to, and all your family? Weathers always the one I xxxx [LAUGHS]. But where there any aspects of british society that you, perhaps even today you don’t understand?*

No, i…personally, there is no…no aspect of the British society that I feel I do not understand, and then why it behaves in a certain fashion. And I, I ….I speak from the point of view of er, a reasonably well informed person. Em…I… speak in relation to right from the royal family and that sort of society…

*Mm-hmm.*

….and a society of very very well, one, one top two percent of the society in terms of financial terms who do very very well and, er…leave er…at a different level. And then I speak from the point of professional classes, whether it be doctors, dentists, pharmacists, accounts, lawyers…er, I know those and how, how they live. Then we speak from the of, of the people…from the… other aspect of the society who work in civil, whether it be civil service, whether it be er…in em, businesses…as er, employees…accountants, bookeeepers, whatever. So…do I feel like did I, did I feel that there is any part of society that I could have not gone into…er, yes I did. I did never think that I would be able to merge into the very upperclass society in terms of er, if you, classify societies by there…there wealth.

*Mm-hmm.*

Er yes, I did feel that. But did it actually matter to me? Personally no, because there was plenty of opporuntities for me to rise form the levels that iwas at. Em…er, and…do well for myself and…my immediate relations and family.

And, that leads perfectly onto…something I haven’t asked you I mean, you wetn to university here obvuiously, er…

No, no I didn’t. what I did was I, I’d done a -levels in af-, in Uganda and then I caeme here like, took up er, due to the fact that my father would not have been able to afford…

Afford.

..the fees to send me to a university I took up er, accountacnyc training.

Right.

Which enabled me to study as well as pay for myself because I was paid a small er, salary.

*Mm-hmm.*

To get on with, and…that’s, so i…did accountancy degree which is like a training contract.

*Mm-hmm.*

Er and…er…so that’s how I studied.

And you’re still accountant today?

I am, I’m a practicing accountatnt in…in a fairly successful practice er…

I've heard your son, got involved at one point.

My son did aswell, for a short while yes, and then, then…he thought he wanted to do better than er…

laughs

… XXXX something different.

They always do don’t they laughs.

xxxx.

I think em, your daughter has a very good interesting perspective on that. In terms of, what you want from your children, and perhaps what they want aswell and often, and I don’t think that’s exclusive to your community XXXX.

XXXX.

Em, and at what, is there any point where you’ve, when the opportunity to go back when idi amin, did you ever consider going back?

I, I never did. Ah because i…what happened is that upon, once I finished my education, I found my feet er, quite rapidly. I was quite driven in the sense that I wanted to be…er, if I were to reamin in accountancy I wanted to become self-employed because I’m a business owner XXXX…

XXXX….

And, and, and…er, I started er…I qualified in seventy seven. I’d became a manager when I was er…worked with them a couple of years. Seventy nine I moved on joined a smaller partnership, em…with a view to becoming a partner if, if…after twelve month trial, if I like them and they like me.

*Mm-hmm.*

Er and…that worked out reasonably well, and, and then…from really has been nothing but…er, hard but success with the hard work.

*Mm-hmm.*

And today I am part of a thirty partner accountancy practice employing three hundred people.

Wow.

So, e…and that is really what I meant about the fairness of the british society in which you, if you are prepared to work. You may have to work a wee bit harder than the those people who had right connections in, and…privileges.

So do i. [laughs].

But if you’re prepared to work hard, er…and I even believe that today, I one is prepared to work hard…one, you are given that opportunity to work hard. And two, the fruit sof your hard work, you are able to enjoy.

Hence your lovely house, and beautiful family.

Thank you er, but….yes, and…that’s and…it, really depends on what you want to achieve. The harder you are prepared to work, the more sacrifice, sacrifice in inverted commons really, because…we really not been wanting for anything. Er I’m…oritened towards playing sports, and enjoying er, a life from that perspective as opposed to just sitting and finding different ways of making more and more and more money. Er, i…was content and…er…things could have been, couldn’t have been better really.

And I’ve heard you enjoy quite a lot of time on the golf course.

I do.

Laughs. Em…and in terms of your siblings have they all found relative success aswell?

Yes my…

Through hard work…

Well yes I have….one brother and I have two sisters and er…both sisters are, are married. One…if my younger sister actually works for…for my business as er…as a clerk. And has done very well. Erm…my, second sister er…use, had joined the civil service as, as er…em, DSS department of Social Services as, as er, clerk. And she was very rapidly within the, within that er. My brother hasn’t been terribly successful but, in a way, er, looking at it er…selfishly, er, it hasn’t been so bad because he therefore has a, has enabled, and has been able to look after my mother…

Ok.

…without having to push my mother into a care home.

Yes, of course.

We could not have achieved what we have achieved, had, did, had we not had him…

*Mm-hmm.*

…sacrifincg time looking after my mother.

Yeah. do you tell him that.

XXXX of course.

Of course.

Of course, and, and not only do we tell him that we appreciate it er, very much.

*Mm-hmm.*

Em, even today my mother who is now eighty three, em is er…not terribly well. We can still pursue the work the hours that we want to work, and, and our leisure activities. Er…without having to, have a guilty complex of having to send…

Of course, yeah.

…mother to a care home, em because there is somebody who is prepared to look after her.

And, you’re more importantly not a stranger or a nurse…

Ya.

…somebody who’s part of your family.

And, and we contribute financially certainly, but from the point of view of time…we are left free to pursue our own activities.

Do you em… I’m gonna, we’re really getting towards the end now, so em, we’ll probably be another ten, fifteen minutes if that’s OK for you.

OK.

Em, three or four more questions. Em…I’m go on to the success of…the Ugandan Asian, er... Ugandan Asian erm… refugee community in Britain. Em, we touched on it with your own personal dealings, but also, we’ll… touch on that later. And lets face it…it is a very celebrated community. I mean, pretty much held in very high regard, and almost as, a justification for the continued immigration into the country. Em…the success, and also the cultural aspects that you’ve influenced, such as, extended opening times, corner shops that sort of thing. We will talk about that in a moment, but, lets talk about you. About your identity. Your…?

XXXX.

I asked a man who was born in XXXX…

I…er…I feel very er…I think the word ‘British Asian’…

*Mm-hmm.*

…really defines me. Er…that’s what I feel. Em…I am er, very much at home. Whenever I go away from the country, and I do very frequently, two or three times a year. Em…after about a forthnight I am quite hungry to get back. Er, when I fly in, when you fly into heathrow and you see those red chimney pots you think you are arriving at home.

Yeah.

XXXXX I cant change that, that’s how I feel.

Yeah yeah.

I go er, for, for…many a years we felt er…that er…that we are er, Indians. However, only interms of er….our cultural views. Er…we, I had not been to india. The first time I went to india was in nineteen seventy…three…

Ok.

Or seventy four. Was for a forthnight with my father as a holiday. And I didn’t go back to india until nineteen ninty five after that…

So you don’t really feel any attachment to the terriotory XXXX…

I've none whatsoever, and in fact we, we, we… feel quite foreign when we go to india.

Yeah

So that’s…that goes without saying. In fact it was, er…effectively we forced ourselves to go because I our kids were beginning to be of an age where we thought the not er…have any idea …about their heritage.

Yeah.

So then we from ninety five to XXXX we almost go thre once a ywar. But…where is home? There is no dobt at er, in my mind that England is home.

Mmhmm.

Whatever its’ pros and cons, England is home.

Yeah.

Er and…one feels, and I think I, this should come through in your XXXX, one feels a sense of gratitude, that er…we were presented an opportunity that we were living er…that we…we came to live amongst society where people…mostly were of er…good morals…of fair er…approach and attitude. And, the fact that you were not in English er…or not white, did not stop you from progressing.

Mhhm.

We progressed and…er, if you’re prepared to work…

Mhhm

…you would make your way up.

And you can then renjoy the fruits of your labour.

XXXX at which ever level. You know, but me, so from that point of view…where is home? There's no doubt home is England.er…do I ever feel that I want to go and er, live elsewhere? Frankly, no. where do I want to live? I want to live where my children will be, where my grandchildren will be. So er…from that point of view again, we would rather live here. Do I …im a slight, and perhaps slightly unusual in yje sense that I never would even consider buying a holiday home anywhere else.

Ok

I’d go on holidays.

Mhm.

But I don’t want a particular place, whether it be spain whether it india, whether it be east Africa, wherever.

Mhm.

No. er, so from that point of view, I personally feel very much, british.

Mhm

Er…very comfortable. I…don’t necessarily frequent nightclubs and, I’ve never done so.

Mhm.

Em…only because ei ahvent found any, I may have missed something in life but so be it.

Laughs. I, considering some of the music I listen to night clubs nowadays I don’t think you’re missing out much, at all.

Laughs.

I sound like my dad then. What I’m going to do Mr. Samani, em, I've got three more questions left.

Ok.

But I am going to change that will take no more than ten minutes but I have two minutes left on this, so I am gonna go and change the memory card. I just gonna run next door to get it. And then we’ll, another ten minutes and it’s…

Ok.

…I promise. Thank you very much.

[Long pause]

It’ll take no more than ten seconds. It’s the em, it’s the interviewers nightmare is em, either the battery going or the, forgetting the extra memory card.

[Ends tape]

The End

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