**2013\_esch\_UgAs\_07**

*This is where we do the old testing*

You want to do testing?

*Yes, so I want you*

I’m Praful Patel. I live in Bedford Square… off Bedford Square, Bedford Avenue, and I’m delighted to meet Greig, whose interviewing me now

*And that is a perfect test my friend. Okay, let’s get going. As I say, this is very informal. Um.*

I understand.

*Okay, so I… for the personal details, you did just give them me, Mr. Patel, but can you give me your full name, including any middle names, and also could you spell your name, if that’s okay?*

Sure. My name is… the short name is Praful Patel. P for Peter. R, Robert. A, apple. F, Freddie. U, uncle. L, London. Patel. And I’m son of Raojibhai. R.A.O.J.I.B.H.A.I Patel.

Normally we’ll always have a name. Praful Raojibhai Patel. I was born in Uganda, and partly bought up in Uganda, and partly bought up in India, as a young boy. And err… I arrive in England in 1958 as a student.

*It was ’58… and I know that from doing my research. When were you born? What was your date of birth?*

Ah, my date of birth is 7th March 1939. It makes me 74 next month.

*And you’re looking rather well for it, may I add.*

[LAUGHS]

*Despite the scratching your head [LAUGHS]*

God’s grace. God’s grace. I… I still have the energy and the youth in me to do lots of things in my life.

*I think you’ve got a bit more energy than a lot of the youth today.*

You know my father passed away at 98

*Really?*

Yeah

*What a splendid age.*

And I told him, I said ‘please, for God’s sake, leave two more years…

*You get a letter of the Queen*

You’d have got the card off the Queen.

*My… My Great Gran actually died two days before, erm, and it was actually in the post, the letter, erm, and the Queen actually… the Queen’s representatives let the family keep the letter, so we do have the letter.*

He missed it by two years.

*Two years? That’s probably a bit too much to actually get your letter.*

He never believed me when I told him that the Queen will give you a birthday card. He said ‘always pulling my leg. You’re joking.’

*She doesn’t deliver it though [LAUGHS]*

No.

*That would…*

I said ‘she does send a signed card’

*Yes, yes, yes, very much so. Um, in terms of… you mentioned you were born in Uganda. Can you tell me what town in Uganda you were born in, what area, what part of the country?*

I was born at Jinja. J.I.N.J.A, on the banks of Lake Victoria, where the River Nile starts from. It’s the birthplace of River Nile. It’s a very nice, beautiful little town, and err… it’s the second largest err, town in Uganda, after Kampala. And Jinja had its uniqueness. Uniqueness in many, many ways about its beauty, and being on the banks of River Nile, and with Lake Victoria, and err, it had many wildlife, err, life around. And the community was small, very religious, and united. Including Muslims, Farsis, Jains, Hindus. They all lived very peacefully.

*Ahem*

They celebrated each other’s festivals, and you know, I… all those differences you now see, or you see them in India, it didn’t exist in Jinja.

*So you’d say a very co… united, cohesive community?*

Cohesive, very cohesive, very united, and very loving and extremely friendly.

*You obviously have fond memories of growing up there?*

Jinja, I have very fond memories. And err… last year when I went to Jinja, it was err, immersion of the ashes of the late Manubhai Madhvani, the sugar tycoon

*Yes*

And the richest Indian in Uganda

*Yes, he’s the father, isn’t it of the current*

Yes, that’s right… and I went um, to Jinja, and I cried. It’s a war-zone. Everything is ruined. What was once… I would call it a palace of Uganda… completely ruined

*Which in itself is the pearl of Africa*

Pearl of Africa, yes. Uganda is the pearl of Africa. And I went to my school, and the headmistress was very nice to meet me, and I said ‘look, can I go to my class now?’ School is the same, but windows are broken. It’s very badly maintained. The library was the same, but it’s not maintained well. In my days I was the head prefect of the school, and I really looked after the school. The garden is ruined. The garden that we worked very hard, every morning at 5’O clock, doing gardening till seven, going home, having a bath and coming back to school. I was shattered. When I saw my class, I cried. And the headmistress said ‘Mr Patel are you alright?’ I said ‘oh, just leave me alone for ten minutes, I’ll be alright. It’s the emotions catching up with me.’ The very desk that I was sitting on was still there after so many years. I left school in 1958.

*How… so many mem…*

XXXX

*Many memories but however slightly tarnished by the reality of what it was now*

The reality. And she said ‘nobodies funding us, we don’t have money’, and I said ‘look madam, XXXX my way. I’m celebrating the 40th anniversary of Uganda Asians as chairperson and if I want to do something, we too want to make an impact in Uganda. Like we… the 38,500 Ugandan Asians who were thrown out of Uganda, including Uganda citizens, and British citizens, and some of them stateless, that we would like to impact 38,500 Ugandan lives in education and health

*And on top of that the…*

And one other thing I’d love to do, and I want to do. I’ve spoken to many Jina-ites who are here from Jinja, and I’ve written an email for them, said ‘look folks, let’s get together’

*Yeah*

‘And renovate the school’

*What an amazing legacy that would be aswell*

We would like to do it. I’m too busy now, but I said to the headmistress I would do my best, I do not promise you, but I’ll get these Jinga-ites together now.

*And I mean, we’ll go onto this later in terms of people’s perspective on the past, erm… but you said it was a very tight-knit community. You know, you celebrated each other’s cultural practices and religious traditions and festivals*

That’s right

*And that seems quite typical of the Ugandan Asians I have spoken to. You know, you do have Ugandan Asian Muslims who would celebrate Diwali, and there’d be a crossover in terms of almost*

Yes

*And as you, I think quite eloquently put, erm, unlike today’s society there was no real sort of competition, or fractions, it was unified.*

Unified, we were ten siblings of my father. Eight girls and two boys, one girl died unfortunately from a disease called black water disease.

*Okay.*

But, you can imagine you know, my sister celebrated Lakshamin, they would do the Lakshamin with the Muslims and the Christians also. It was a festival everybody celebrated, Eid was celebrated with an exchange of gifts and sweets.

*I mean would you say as growing up you saw yourselves as Ugandan Asian first, and Gujurati first, and then anything else would sort of follow in terms of your identity growing up?*

As far as I was personally concerned when I became aware of politics after ...

*Children aren’t that aware of things like that are they?*

No, no, I’ll tell you what happened, at the age of nine, my father shipped us off to India, he said, ‘you guys are going to become a product of the colonial schools, so damn you all, go to India, live in a village, and learn the Indian rural life. And he wanted my little sisters to be married during that process. So we were all sent off to India, we were all very unhappy in India when we arrived, and we had this old ancestral home, we had to clean it up, a lot of cobwebs, this that and everything else, and we were unhappy for a few months. We had a local school, at that time soon after India’s independence, we were to wear a Gandhi cap and go to school, do the various prayers, you know, et cetera in the traditional style, and we joined the classes, and we had some farms, we were sent to do farming on a Saturday and Sunday, and help our - our farmer’s cultivate all the seasons.

*So your dad it seems to me wanted you and your siblings to be very well grounded?*

Yes, we had buffalos and cows, so we learned to clean them first, then eventually I knew how to milk, and I could do it today also.

*You could still do it today?*

Yes.

*Well luckily enough I have a cow out-, no I don’t.*

[BOTH LAUGH].

And then, and then, you know I learned all the things they do in the village, and when we went the village went to the village there was no sanitation, no facility, so we had to go to the loo in the fields. So a gang of us used to go together, carrying water, it was fun.

*Yes, of course.*

Of course a year later, the village received grant and they did all the, fix all the pipes and everything.

*A sewage system?*

A sewage system and all that, and we were a bit happier. But there was no electricity, so the first two years I used to study at night in the street light, or we put up a candle or a lamp, oil lamp to study. Then the electricity came, this was after independence you know, things were moving. And then, and then my two sisters got married, and we went back to Africa.

*And what age was that?*

By that, fourteen, by that time I was very conscious, and very alert, it was my aunt who was a widow, one year after she married my uncle she became a widow. And as a widow she wore all maroon clothes, shaved and she never remarried because it wasn’t permitted, now it isn’t permitted either under the society rules. She was XXXX to XXXX Patel, who was India’s Iron Man, they called him the Churchill of India, founding father of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Patel, Mahatma Ghandi, the trio.

*He was the iron man, the task master?*

At nine she took me to meet Sardar Patel, and I was there and she was pushing me, and I was fighting to look at that Iron Man, and I reached him and I put his hand on my head, and that inspiration has still stayed with me. But she was so political, she would talk about anti colonial British Government.

*And did you have that, I mean obviously you didn’t have it originally when you were born in Uganda, it took the experience in India to be aware of the colonial power, the repression ...*

Colonial power, the Empire, she wanted the freedom for African nations, how India struggled to get independence, how all the leaders were locked up by the British, and what a cruel British Raj was. They only – they only sold us everything they built in England to make money, they never developed industry, only XXXX I still remember what she used to say, ‘the best thing England did was build the railways.’ The largest in the world.

*It’s become quite a theme, which is quite ironic, being the original reason why the Ugandan Asians went to Uganda to take part in the production of the railways?*

Correct, correct. She, it calculated a spirit of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism in to me, and more like socialist doctrines you know?

*Do you feel, so you went back to Uganda at the age of fourteen, and did you feel you had this sense, you were suddenly aware of Uganda as a colonial state?*

Yes, so what, so what I was saying was, you asked me a question about Indians, right, and these communities, or were they Indians, or were they Africans, or were they British? And I used to lecture them, and ‘look, you have to integrate and assimilate, you’ve got to understand the aspirations of African people, you’ve got to write poetry about it, write literature about it. Like the British people do, the colonial Scottish people used to write. But you have to see the country, it’s a very important country. And if you remain insular, in Jinja central park, and grow as just Indian community, do it united through village, through different organisations, peacefully living, loving each other, then you forget the bigger picture.

*The outside world?*

The bigger picture was “what about the Africans?”

*Now, I mean you’ve touched on a point that I was about to bring up, because it seems the perspective of –um… certainly, I think it was used by Amin, certainly used by supporters of Amin, but there was this perspective that Ugandan Asians did have an element of privilege, associating them perhaps with the colonial power.*

They did, they did.

*And did you feel that tension perhaps when you were growing up, or perhaps even when you went back at the age of fourteen, did you sense that?*

No, I went and I tell you, I used to participate in Indian Association meetings [PAUSES]. I used to speak about this, and when I made friends with Africans at the XXXX College, the African College, my father didn’t like it much. He said “why are you mixing with these African children, it’s not for you to do this”, that was because of resentment. I said, “look, they’re human beings, who also have aspirations. It’s our duty to support that political movement.”

*They share the same soil as us ...*

Yes, and none of the Indians wanted to do that, and slowly, in a years time, I was branded by everybody as a communist. My father used to be rounded up by elders, ‘what’s wrong with your son, what the hell is he doing?’

*He’s trouble ...*

Control him [COUGHS]. So I used to tell them, that ‘look, you are dying to have an invitation from the Governor, you ought to go to the Governor’s XXXX party, you are asking for special reservations for the Indians in the Parliament, this is wrong, this is apartheid, this is what Mahatma Ghandi fought against in South Africa.’

*So did you, was there a sense of almost segregation then, in society between the black Africans and the Asians?*

Well the black Africans, the one that I knew then as a young boy were articulate and so were the politicians I met, because I used to go to meetings to see what they were saying, what they were talking about. And of course, it wasn’t liked by the, by the elders, but nevertheless I realized there was nobody to speak for them, and only government that spoke for them was the Indian government, so I was beginning to read about the freedom struggle for the African people, in Kenya, in Tanzania, in in in in in South Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and I, I I just saw a perspective that some somebody has to support these freedom struggles, and somehow end the British Raj. So, by the time I qualified, by the time I left I found er just two years before I was about to finish school, and became head prefect of the school, I found an all Ugandan Students Association, and I – I- in my own mind I conceived a scheme, and if you’re my member I give you a card, Greig, photograph, you become a member, that card will buy you books at twenty per cent discount, pencils and pens at twenty per cent discount, in shops you get discount, in cinema you get half a ticket, in railways you - you pay half. So [COUGHS] suddenly I made 3,000 members all all across Uganda, and in the school we used to travel in the inter-school competition, to Mbale, to XXXX, to Kampala, to, to Masaka and to other places. So whenever I was around I would mix with students from different areas, well I had the first all Ugandan Student Union Conference, the year I finished my school. After that it all ceased when I left, I was the active dynamic force behind it. But I tell you what: we did sometimes go and launch a protest to the Governor over the bad system of the education we had, and there was not enough funding, et cetera, we used to take up issues with the local Police Commissioner, always an English men, no XXXX Commissioners, and as well as the District Commissioner two nice Scottish people. And the Scottish were different to the English, I mean no offence to you.

*No, my name’s Campbell so you don’t have to worry.*

They were, they were really a different breed.[COUGHS], I could see the English and the non-English on the British Isles. And they were very kind.

*I think you have to understand the Scottish going back a number of years at the end of repression of the English as much as the members of the colonial powers in Africa; just because it’s a little bit closer to London doesn’t mean they escaped the repression of…*

So after I left school I came to India, things were not as active as I had created.

*Yeah.*

And today if you ask in Jinja they will say that Praful was a most brilliant leader, very dynamic and did a lot of things for us. That’s it, a nice time that I could really on my own organise things at that age.

*And obviously I mean, and did you, what was the black Africans, the black Ugandans, what was their perspective on suddenly seeing this young, youthful Asian Ugandan actually fighting for their rights as well?*

They were friendly with me all the leaders of the Africans.

*I presume they were shocked?*

They were shocked, but me, I would hug them you know, because they were my brothers, they were easy with me you know, and I learned about problems in African schools, and wrote little memos and gave it to the Education Minister and all that. But I remained very much against my own people, because they were not doing what they were supposed to do. They were, they were, I mean virtually cronies of the British Raj, and they all got their MBE’s and their OBE’s and Knighthood, they were craving for it, you know?

*Pandering to the oppressor almost?*

Absolutely. And and – and- and they have representation in Parliament, what to what end? I believed in universal voting systems, a good democratic society is what I saw in India, it didn’t happen when I was there. And when I was there I used to read, you know about England, the Fabian Society, the Theosophical Society, if you like, and I would read ‘Lives of 100 Great Men,’ and I was inspired by Bertram Russell, I mean you know characters you have in history. But I read about Stalin, Lenin, Marxism, I did read the book ‘Das Kapital,’ I didn’t like it, in my school I think I sold it ten - ten pages down the line, I got so bloody bored I said this is not a book I’d read.

*It is a very boring book.*

But I was aware about the, about the about Attlee, Sir Stratford Capes and all these British politicians.

*People with a social conscience?*

Who were, who were in favour of Indian independence, and I read about Churchill, who mildly I admired, the Iron Man, but at the same time he was very anti-India. So all this was there, and my father used to make read the Manchester Guardian you know, the old Manchester Guardian, cos my father believed that paper fought for Indian independence. So we had great fun all this time, so by the time I came to England, believe me there were students who had come to England as boys to study, they would bring the map of London, so I would know Regent’s Street, you know Trafalgar Square, so my aim was always Parliament. Really. I could see that building, and I would say, ‘I want to sit there.’ Thinking like that, dreaming like that. So I here and er on the very first night after I checked in, in the afternoon in the Indian YMCA I straight hit for the Parliament, I walked all of Tottenham Court Road.

*You may have walked past this erm street I would have thought?*

Absolutely, Cambridge Circus, Trafalgar Square, and I arrived at the Commons at about 9.30, 9.40 in the evening, and er the policeman said, ‘what do you want?’ I said, ‘sir I want to go sit in the Parliament, I believe there is a public gallery?’ So he said, ‘Ok, what’s your name? Go in, the central lobby, fill in a card.’ And I got my card and run up to the gallery, and I looked down, and I felt so happy, and I cried for a minute, and then I could recognise Harold MacMillan sitting in the front, and Hugh Gaitskell in front of him, and Hugh Gaitskell was winding up a debate on economic affairs.

*Wow.*

And I enjoyed it. And at eleven I walked back, and went to sleep at one o’clock. And I thought, ‘this is my day.’ Next day I got up, cos I’m a very staunch vegetarian, I knew that Bernard Shaw, and all Lasky Professors, XXXX and others were vegetarians with the British Vegetarian Society, so I found their address, I found how to go by bus, and I became member. They gave me a list of vegetarian restaurants in London, vegetarian guest houses in North Wales, in Lake District, in Matlock in Derbyshire.

*Beautiful, Matlock.*

Matlock! I used to stay there. From there, I had lunch on the way, and then I went to Fabian Society, my dream come true, and I met Shirley Williams, she was secretary there, she enrolled me.

*She actually signed you in?*

Yeah. Yeah, yes, she signed me the form. And you know what happened was, erm, I was, I then used to go to Fabian lectures, sit at the back, learn myself things like that. I knew about Theosophist Society, and er the Friends House, and I found the address for the Movement of Colonial Freedom, and I met a lovely Englishman named Mr Brockway, he was a member of Parliament, he was Lord Brockway. He died now, he was chair of the Movement for Colonial Freedom. So I joined, and I said “can you give me some work please?” He said ‘what would you like to do?’ I said, “I’m very focused on Eastern Central Africa”, so he said, ‘would you like to be the secretary of the sub-committee?’ I said, ‘I’ve never done a job like that, but I’d love to do that.’ And who was the chair of it? John Stonehouse.

*Really [LAUGHS]. You seem to be erm, you walk in the right doors at the right time.*

Right time. And then we organised so many demonstrations, and so many Trafalgar Square Demonstrations, protesting outside the Parliament, and to do with African freedom. And all the African leaders that came here, we would organise meetings at the Friends House, or the School of Economics, and things like that.

*It seems to me, I mean this is a very opportune time to pick up on the one thing that stands out on reading your biography was how active you were in terms of a certain piece of legislation that was passed by a certain Mr Callaghan.*

Callaghan, before Callaghan I’d like to brief you for a minute at you. So, so I became member of the Labour Party, I was for a while Chair of XXXX, Chair of the local Board here, which is where I live, I’ve never moved from here. I was down the road in Garver Street, and then I moved here, and I’ve never moved my address. Now the issue was that we were very opposed to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962. We fought against it, we campaigned against it, but it was pushed through by the MacMillan government, by Home Secretary Rab Butler, with one of the finest speeches of our times, in the defence of the Commonwealth, was by Hugh Gaskill, on the debate when he answered the debate. They were about to vote against it, and I remember the night they won mate, brilliant. And I tell you what, then we all got involved ourselves, by forming a commonwealth group of Afro-Carribean, Pakistani groups to fight against the - the injustices of race, all that.

*Within the colonies.*

And suddenly in the mid-60s my own Government, Harold Wilson brought about further curbs on immigration. ’68, old Callaghan, total race - racist British Home Secretary, he was seeing that African, Indians are coming. Enoch Powell did not help, he was articulating a case that these people should not be allowed to come.

*Yes.*

So was Duncan Sands, the former Commonwealth Secretary, who gave a pledge to the Indian people, like Iain Macleod did, that ‘we will keep our word, you stay British’. Now in Africa there were a lot of problems in Congo, problems in Zanzibar,

*Kenya*

People were given a choice for two years to either opt for local citizenship or retain their British citizenship. Now once XXXX things were like this people were clinging onto British citizenship, these people were clinging onto British passports, and they were devalued in 1968. In one stroke, in the most filthy way, the whole thing was pushed through Parliament in three days, in such indecent haste.

*It was a back door, it was a back hand?*

You may have not been born then.

*I certainly wasn’t.*

They pushed it through. We campaigned. I campaigned singularly, single hand, I collected everybody, and we had we had we had then, within a span of four or five days we had people at the airports receiving Kenyan Asians, who - who were beating the ban to be due on the 1st of February, 1968. And that’s when I became internationally very famous, on the box every night, fighting my corner in debates, and things like that you know?

*At this point ...*

We nearly defeated the government in the House of Lords.

*I was going to say you did almost… you ran it to the wire didn’t you?*

We finally went to Buckingham Palace to stop the Queen from signing it. But all having done I saw very strange bed fellows, the left and the extreme right, all together to vote against this law. That’s why we nearly, because all these old peers around the country, they all came out, the hereditary peers, ‘oh my dear chap, how can you devalue a British passport? It’s Queen’s word in it, it’s a sanctity, we’re coming.’ They all came, voted. Callaghan came out very badly in that debate. He had he had a bit of a revolt in his own party with Shirley Williams and others that were voting. But, he carried it with the Tories vote. Iain Mcleod made a speech, I was there. ‘I gave my word, and I wish to keep it.’ That’s how we finished the debate. And he did, but lost.

*Too late, fighting a tide?*

And then a few MPs from all parties who knew [COUGH] that I’d lobbied, David Steele, John Hunt, and they all said, ‘lets have a meeting of MPs to see how we protect the rights of British citizens in Kenya.’ They set up an all-party Parliamentary group and I became its secretary.

*And let’s, at that point obviously, cos it wasn’t unique to Kenya, you’ve mentioned other countries in East Africa, I mean, did you sense at that time that it was only a matter of time before something like this happened?*

No, I said this in 1955, in a meeting I said, ‘if you don’t behave yourselves, you’ll be thrown out like the Indians were thrown out of Burma after independence.’ And there were there many Hindus thrown out of Pakistan. I said, ‘this is your fate if you don’t throw your lot with these African inspirations, you your fate is going to be one day thrown out.’ And yet in ’67 when I wrote letters to Indian leaders, 16 of them, that this is coming, I told them what Enoch Powell was saying, I told them what Duncan Sands was doing, I told them what XXXX Clough was doing. I said, ‘beware, some of the extreme elements of British society are turning against us now, they don’t want such a mass of people coming here.’ Told them they may be British citizens, and I remember every single leader said, ‘you’re wrong, it will not happen.’ And it happened.

*Do you think they were too comfortable? Or do you think -*

No, they, they thought the British would never do it. They were still rubbing shoulders with the white man because it boosted their bloody ego. And you know what happened was that it happened in reality, and we received so many Kenyan donations here, and then came a ban. A quota of 1,500 families only, you read the books, they’ll tell you. And then you know I was working for this all party Parliamentary Committee on Citizenship, John Leicester, David Steele, Martin Reynolds, we went to Kenya and conducted a survey on the Asian community, and we came to the conclusion that 1/3 of the Indians wanted to go to India, only 2/3’s were UK XXXX the rest were India XXXX. We realised the Indian Government had banned them from going into India, there were a mass of people in Nairobi, waiting to go.

*So, sort of stuck in the middle essentially? In purgatory?*

Stuck in the middle.

*Erm, let’s flash forward, not too long, but when Amin came in power. I mean did you sense erm that Amin, Amin will go down in the volumes of history as being a very populist leader, certainly on this topic, he certainly played of the populist sentiment.*

When he came to power I remember telling a few MPs in Parliament that the British have made a mistake, they’ve propped up this boxer, this uneducated idiot as President because they wanted to oust Obote, who had pursued a socialist policy. And they didn’t want him. And the British propped him. And I have told a few MPs, ‘this will cost you dearly, because you have chosen the wrong man, and your security services are absolutely wrong.’ And was I not proved right?

*You most certainly were.*

This idiot had a dream, he never had a dream.

*Well this is the next question, wasn’t it? I’ll throw in a quick question before you, where were you when you heard about the 90 day announcement?*

Oh, I was in London.

*You were in London?*

I was already talking to press being interviewed, and on the day of the expulsion I remember I was very aggressive on television and on radio, I was saying that, ‘we will fight, we will bring Indians in small dingies and load them on the South Bank of Britain like the Jews did, I said, ‘we won’t give up, this is our land and we will come.’ And er I remember one very dear freind of mine XXXX XXXX, he was the leader of the Daily Telegraph, Bill XXXX. Telling me, ‘Praful, calm down, calm down, this is not the language that you use. I’m going to invite you on Monday to meet the Minister, Home Minister, you will talk.’ So I said, ‘Talk what? You bring anything you want to bring, proposals, let’s discuss.’ And he said, ‘You know what? Later I’m playing golf with Lord Aldington and Edward Heath, just leave it. We know what has happened, you know the inner most thinking of Labour were Conservative Party.’ And I said, ‘Look, I don’t trust you guys, because you’ll just bullshit us, and make us stateless and hand us over to the United Nations. But this time round my people must come here. And no Kenya-isation ban, no quota, everybody has to come.’

*What was your reaction when you heard that Idi Amin had made that ridiculous speech where he, I think he quoted a dream hadn’t he? I mean I’ve, you can tell me now, I’ve heard many different conspiracies of why he passed it, I mean the obvious point to me was he was a populist leader who tried to buy into a populist form of governance essentially. But you know I have interviewed certain members of the Ugandan Asian community who said he wanted to marry a Bollywood actress? That was one that -*

Not a Bollywood actress, but the wife of a big industrialist.

*Oh it was an industrialist, I had heard it was a Bollywood actress. I mean when you first heard, obviously you said you were in London, in dialogue at the time with certain members of the government, representatives of the government, was it a surprise to you at all knowing Amin, knowing what was going on in the rest of Africa?*

I did not believe that Amin had a dream, but you know one of Amin’s staff was a very dear friend of mine, and he had left two months before this happened. And I rang him, and he said to me in confidence that, ‘for the last six months, we’ve been preparing a paper for the Government to expel all the Indians.’ It was a deliberate policy of the President’s office, Amin wanted to do something very populist. By that time he was frustrated by the British who were not helping him, and he - he was getting irritated. And he was he was he was trying to impose a strong Army rule in Africa, he had already murdered all the democratic institutions. This - this information I got, and I came running to Whitehall, and I made sure it reached the Foreign Minister, the Foreign Secretary. At that point I was quietly told, ‘don’t worry, our boys are working. We’re going to speak to Jo XXXX and calm him down.’ Nothinh happened, this was June of 1972.

*Wow.*

I cannot go wrong. And what happened? 2nd, 3rd of March, 3rd of August, out!

*So, you were probably the least surprised person [LAUGHS].*

I wasn’t surprised, I was expecting it. Except the – except the establishment wasn’t believing me.

*I can imagine how frustrating that must be.*

Yes, and I was never part of the establishment, I was anti-establishment anyway. I was a strong Labour man, you know?

*Yeah.*

And I was trying to become a Labour MP, so naturally thereafter we had a meeting on Monday, XXXX in th Ministry and all that, and then I was part of the establishment – and I didn’t know it. But I did, very nearly I became part of them, I was sitting with under-secretaries, deputy secretaries, giving a briefing on the communities in Uganda, the different make-up of the Indian community in Lohana, Patel, Brahmins, I did all kinds of things to tell them that these people would come here. And what they expect from you. And then suddenly, the wheels of decision making moved, and I must say a word of admiration for one single British politician, his name is Edward Heath. The bloody courage. He fought his corner through Robert Carr in the Conservative Party, Enoch Powell spoke, and party was scared of what he was going to say, and just before his speech we were both asked to participate in the BBC interview. He came to the studio, now this is interesting yeah? He came to the studio and he told the editor, ‘I will not sit with Mr Patel, I wish to be interviewed separately.’ And I was so embarrassed, I said, ‘Well what a man, and how rude he is,’ you know? And we were waiting for 15 minutes in the room and he told me, “Mr Patel, I’m very sorry, don’t get offended, you know you and I will never agree, and I don’t want a public spat with you, so you say your bit on your own, and I’ll say my bit on it. I respect what your doing.” And then I learned, he knows more about India than I do. I was impressed, and he was so nice to me. He got up and made a coffee for me, I was a bit nervous talking to this man you know? But he was a most civilised Englishman, I have never ever met in my life.

*He spoke 7 languages I believe, didn’t he? Trained in the classics?*

He spoke so many languages including Urdu.

*Yes, Urdu, he was fluent.*

He used a few words on me. And he said “Mr. Patel I bet you don’t know pure Hindu,” I said, “in Urdu”. I said no, I know Hindustani, but not Urdu. But I said “I understood what you just said, but if you speak too much I’ll have to ask you the meaning of some words.”

*[LAUGHS]. Wow, erm so ...*

And as he left the studio after the interview he shook hands with me. “Good luck” he said to me.

*In saying that, do you think it was about not having a public spat? Or do you think he realised you could have asked him some questions that he couldn’t answer, or he couldn’t comfortably answer?*

That’s right. But anyway what the BBC did was to, between his story and mine, they ran a story about the expulsion of the British High Commissioner [PAUSES]. But, he made a very good speech though, in his defence, in his argument. But the Tory Party did not accept. Robert Powell er Carr was brilliant.

*I think he took a chance didn’t he Powell, that day. He took a risk, a very high collateral risk, and fortunately he seems to have lost in terms of his own personal career, you know. But I think the legacy ...*

But had he been alive today, Greig I’m telling you, where are the rivers of blood? Today London is the most multiracial city in the world.

*You have to realise as well, I mean you know the lady in his constituency that he kept mentioning.*

Yes.

*He kept talking about that lady.*

That lady.

*Do you know the truth about that lady?*

No.

*They, ironically of all the newspapers who actually found out that got to the bottom of who it may be was the actually the Daily Mail, about three or four years ago. And they got a researcher on the case and I forget her name, but she was a lady who lived about six or seven doors down from the street across from Enoch Powell.*

An Indian lady?

*Erm, no she was a white lady. But he had made on as if she was a well respected member of the community, elderly white lady, who had been to the point where she was scared to leave her own door, you know people are throwing trash on her erm on her garden, groups of black men are making ...*

He spoke about it?

*Yes he referred to it a couple of times, and he said he always mentioned this one lady. And it turns out it was actually a lady who erm actively used to rent out properties to migrant workers.*

[LAUGHS].

*And what had happened was, she had got into, she was also known as, I’m going to say this without being offensive, she was, if I say a ‘loose lady? I think you’ll get, what I understand, what I mean?*

Yes.

*She basically fell in love with one of the black migrant workers that she let stop in her house, and they’d had a dispute, and she was, she was also a drunk, she was well known as liking a drink And one day she came onto her street and she’d thrown his stuff out, and she was drunk, and she’d obviously made a complaint to Enoch Powell, erm because her heart had been broken by a black man, and that was the truth.*

This came out in the Daily Mail?

*Yeah, it was in the Mail. I think the Mail and the Independent did two pieces but ...*

Do you have a cutting of it?

*Yeah, I can send you the link, I’ll send you the link. They don’t quite go into that much detail, but they do refer to her as being a bit of a drunk, and she basically ran a hostel for people who came in, not just migrants, but at the time Wolverhampton in the mid-60s, a lot of the people who couldn’t afford to have their own house, or could only share one room, who’d just arrived in town would be migrants. Normally from different parts of the globe. So she was recruiting migrants to actually make extra money to rent out her property, and she got her heart broken one day, got into a dispute with someone who was living with her and suddenly she was used as this sort of representation of Anglo community of Britain suddenly rejecting the foreigners and migrants.*

I’ll tell you something. I wrote to Enoch Powell, and I said, ‘Mr Powell, you were cabinet minister in the MacMillan Government from 1962 to 65.’

*He played a proactive role in bringing foreign nurses to the country at the time?*

Yes. And I told him that the very cabinet you were a member of, there was a common Immigrants Act in place, you admitted 280,000 vouchers to unskilled workers from the Commonwealth.

*What time period would that be?*

’62-65.

*That was in the three years?*

When Wilson came, and then Wilson sent them on a XXXX mission to curb immigration. So I said to him, I said, ‘look, 280,000 multiplied by four, you have taken a million people, when you yourself could have stopped it. And you make these kind of speeches today, you should be ashamed of yourself.’ That made me angry, you know.

*But as - as I think we both realise Mr. Patel, it’s - it’s it was the most purist form of populist manoeuvring ever, wasn’t it? To suddenly turn your back on a policy that you actually ...*

But he was misguided.

*I think, you know ...*

If he was alive today I wonder what he would say?

*I think I I I keep… people often talk about that fictitious sort of erm you know, the dinner party who would you invite? If had a dinner party I’d probably invite one man, and that would me, me - me and Enoch Powell sitting opposite each other, having a meal.*

[LAUGHS].

*And yeah, I’d want to open those curtains and point out to what’s happening outside, and say “is your legacy this?” But I think ...*

And what’s more, he loved eating Indian curry, he told me in the studio.

*As I said ...*

So he was telling me, ‘I’m not anti-your people. But England is too small, and we can’t have too many of you here.’

*What was the population of England back then, compared to today?*

48 million or something, I think.

*And there’s over 60 million today?*

And you had over a million and a half immigrants, largely West Indians.

*And I don’t know about you Mr. Patel, but if I put out of the window there’s enough space even in London for us to walk about.*

[LAUGHS].

*We aren’t on top of each other are we? [LAUGHS]. Erm, in terms of, I mean, that period, I mean in general there was quite a lot of turmoil, when you erm, in terms of the announcement, you obviously had friends and family in Uganda I presume, I mean were you concerned for their safety?*

I had many relatives, concerned about their safety, and we were hearing stories of African looting them, some Africans killing them in small places, and one was even fearful of leaving the country, and what can they leave, going out with their suitcases, and there was a bit of a delay to implement the expulsion of women from Africa, that is when the first flight came over on the 18th of September, 1972. We were at Stanstead airport, myself, Sir Charles Cunningham, John Pressley and all that, and we had already by then opened all these camps, Greenham and everything together. And we were all planning at the fastest possible speed the resettlement programmes, and er in the Uganda resettlement board I was inducted as a member.

*And you were the only erm non-British ...?*

Asian member, the only Asian member. I pleaded with the Government to have more Indians, they didn’t, they said, ‘no, lets just have you.’ And I wondered here a Labour politician, who has been a militant activist, and why are they having me? And then I objected to Sir Charles Cunningham becoming Chairman. I said, ‘why are you picking this man because he was a permanent secretary of Rab Butler, and therefore the architect of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act.’ But I was told on no uncertain terms by David Lane, ‘look Praful don’t make that mistake, here is a man who will deliver. You have a big shouldered responsibility. You want people to settle quickly, you need money, you need jobs, you need housing. This man knows how to twist the arms of the Whitehall Mandarins you know?’

*So I’m guessing perhaps you had to bite your tongues a few times?*

Well, then I met him. What a kindly man. He was the most lovely Scotsman I had ever met in my life. And then I saw a list of the board members, I was delighted that Mark Bonham Carter was there, Lord Tornikoff was there, and leading chairmen of the, kind of all the boroughs of England was there. Many many great people of some weight. So it was a very high powered, weighted board, and I - I made sure the terms of reference were checked by me before I joined, and I made sure I changed [COUGHS] a couple of clauses in the terms of reference, in terms of the financial resources, as we XXXX a section on it. And I clearly told the Whitehall that XXXX have remained in camps still, Egyptian refugees had lasted in camps almost fifteen years. I don’t want my people to last in camps more than five years, at the maximum.

*Which is you know five years in its self is a long time to be almost lost, because you know you have no permanent situation.*

But I did say, ‘our people are very enterprising, very hard working, they’ll get out and want to earn money. So I knew the psyche and the DNA of these people. Give them the opportunity they are looking for.

*Yeah.*

And my God the resettlement program was the most successful ever undertaken in Britain.

*Again this is something we’ll go onto perhaps in a couple more questions but I would, I’d wholeheartedly agree with that as I said when I first sat down. Erm I think, which is why it is so important to celebrate this commemoration.*

Yes.

*It is because even today it is so vital to prove to naysayers and those who do oppose immigration that immigration is a good thing, it can work, and different societies can adapt and work around each other and the outcome will be this great multicultural society we have today. So I think, you know, we need as many examples and case studies as it were, of success, and we need to get this out in the public, to disseminate into the public’s perspective and what a perfect story the Ugandan Asian community in Britain is.*

Of course.

*Erm, in terms, I think leads very well on to this, because I want to talk about culture. I don’t really like the word ‘assimilation’ or ‘cultural adaption’, but you know it is a way of measuring the success story of a migrant group generally. I mean, I personally think assimilation can be used as a very positive word, I think it can also be a very negative construct as well, you know you can’t force people to change, you can force people to adapt and you know almost manoeuvre around each other, but not to completely change. But at the same time, can you tell me what you think is in the psyche or the spirit of those 38,000 people who left Uganda, and the 20,000 people that came to Britain, what is in their hearts or their DNA that allowed them to be so successful, and become this great success story that we’re actually talking about now? What is, if you can get to the bottom of it, what is it that stands out?*

It’s the, it’s the family structure of the Indian community, they want to do well, they want to earn, and that DNA when it was translated into various people who were sent to various parts of England. And a family would go somewhere, we would give housing to them, one of them have got a job, the families are so articulate enough to get their or daughter into a job. Then you have a family that earns money in one pot, because sons and daughters gives their money to the father, giving XXXX money, pocket money. But that kind of individual collection of wealth within a family meant that in the space of two years I’d seen Ugandan Asians buying refrigerators, buying new television sets, colouring their property, bringing in furniture. Another two years, the elder son goes and opens a corner shop. By that time they’ve educated his sister or his younger brother, who then qualifies to become a solicitor or a chartered accountant. The individual British parents, they aspire for success of their children, this is the most important thing them, be it in India or anywhere. I always wanted my nephews to become doctors, you know, engineers, and do something ambitious, and we would talk about, and they would see that I’ve got my mission to do so and so, such and such thing. Now that is how individual families were transferred to over hundreds of thousands of families, you have suddenly people in the first ten years becoming slowly wealthy. Shopkeepers didn’t have one shop, they suddenly had half a dozen shops, and later they would open a cash and carry, you couldn’t believe it. They didn’t have a car, they bought a small car, ten years hence they bought a Mercedes Benz. They wanted to just improve their lot, by sheer hard work.

*Do you think, I mean, do you think culturally a lot of Ugandan Asians were of that merchant class anyway so perhaps they had the means?*

They weren’t merchant class.

*Were they not?*

In India, in Uganda we called them Dukawala D-U-K-A-W-A-L-A. What is Dukawala, they used to say all these people are dukawalas, shopkeepers, having little shops in all the provinces and districts of Uganda. They were basically traders.

*OK.*

It’s like Napoleon said, ‘that England are a nation of shopkeepers.’ Do you not remember your history? So these were the people who were traders, and some who had done well in Uganda wanted to XXXX here, and able to raise loans from the banks. New ownership loans, to get these things going. Another thing, if you didn’t have a home and you were in a rented home, very simple, you… people bought homes within one years or two years of settlement. How? Mortgage system, they used it. But when they didn’t have the deposit, ‘Oh Praful-bai, can you give £500, £1000, I’ll pay you back in four weeks.’ I would help ...

*So a strong network?*

Network of the community is solid. A Lohara would help a Lohara, a Patel would help a Patel, they’ll stand by them. So that community spirit is there, inside the churches, in the temples, in the social halls, and slowly they all organised themselves into little communities and started to support each other. And the other people had come all together from Kenya or from India, they were helping the Ugandans also, because people are related you know, or become friends. But it is quite - quite normal for one Indian family to borrow 5,000 borrowed to put down a deposit on the house, and pay back, because you see the wealth of the whole family mattered.

*Not the individual?*

In English homes, in English homes, probably you and you won’t give it to your parents, but you’ll go and have your own little flat and live there. But here the spirit was to use the money for the benefit of the family as a unit.

*The collective unit, not the individual?*

The collective. And I noticed this over the period of the first twenty years, when we celebrated the 25th Silver Jubilee celebration, right? And that was paid for by Mr. Mandvani, one single family. The service at Westminster Cathedral with Edward Heath. We did one major lunch, and we did one major meeting in the XXXX Temple in Neasden, where XXXX came, Mandvani brought him, I was there when he spoke. He said said, ‘please come back and help me build my country, I’ll give you repossession of your properties and assets. I also spoke at that meeting, and I reminded XXXX of his commitment. Anyway, things happened, a lot of Indians have gone to Kampala. There are now 700 families of British citizenship went and acquired very cleverly oil mills, cotton mills, XXXX, sugar factories, this, that, and have become billionaires now.

*Yeah. Is it the Negrecha brothers?*

Negrecha brothers.

*Yeah the Negrecha brothers, they’re opening up a foundation of er back in Uganda apparently.*

Yes.

*Yes, I was actually down their cash and carry last week erm I’ll hopefully get an interview with one of them in the proceeding weeks erm.*

Who?

*Erm, basically there’s a guy called Ashwin who works for the brothers, he runs the cash and carry, he’s not Ugandan Asian himself but a lot of the workers are actually Ugandan Asians so we’re going to go down to the factory with our flyers and chat to them, and have a – get a word with them hopefully. But I did notice, I mean, a lot of the Ugandan Asians who I have spoken to, and have asked if they were ever tempted to go back, and seems that no inclination, they’ve made up their minds.*

No, not the average man. Cos where would they go? Like my father had a house, I saw it the other day. My heart was bleeding, because in that house 27 people are living, seven different families, they’ve ruined the whole house. The room I used to use, I nearly cried when I saw it. Point is, if I want to go and acquire that property I would have to evict all those people.

*Yes, a house of 27 people?*

It will cost 20,000 dollars, 20,000 U.S. dollars, then I’ll get it, what is the value of that house? It’s completely finished. So a lot of average people did want it, but wealthy people who could afford solicitors and accountants, and were made wealthier, they’ve gone and taken it and turned the corner, quickly. They are running their mills now, oil mills, sugar factories and other factories, you know c-c-c-lothes, hosiery, the making of clothes et cetera they’re doing very well because you know what they did? They drew in money from the World Bank fund that was available for repossession. Overnight they could become millionaires, very simply, simple manipulation of books. I have an industry, I got $200,000 to buy new equipment and machinery, I’ll import it from Germany or from Japan and the importation XXXX advice to get cash from those guys, backhanded. So that’s the first cash I’ve made, and then successfully, they’ve already, within a year, three or four years of repossession their original loss they made in 1972 has been made good.

*However, that’s not quite the same story for the thousands of others that arrived with £50 in their back pocket?*

Yes, and they’re not going back, they don’t want to go back.

*Yeah. Would you say that erm, let’s go back, you said you were there when the first plane arrived at, was it Stanstead the first plane, I presume?*

Yes.

*I mean, can you perhaps describe looking into the eyes of those first people who walked down those steps. I mean what ...*

Totally bewildered. It typical Indian, er English weather that 18th of September as the Winter was setting in. And they were cold, bewildered, nervous, as they landed, the volunteers from the Women Association gave them blankets, there was some woollen clothes given out to them, they were offered a nice hot cup of tea, and biscuits and things. Well it was very well organised first flight. Subsequently also it was done, then they were taken by buses to the camp. See by this time we had a whole range of staff in all the camps. I must tell you a little bit back story, that when we met first meeting at the Ugandan Resettlement Board I said that I didn’t want my people to stay longer than five years, so we must work very hard to get them out. And there’s a recruitment drive for the people in the camps and everywhere. And I was amazed, the Whitehall machine moved, to find retired British civil servants from XXXX, from Rhodesia, and finding their background that is ...

[TELEPHONE RINGS].

Civil servant from the Commonwealth Office, from the Colonial Office, they dug out people I’d never seen before ...

[TELEPHONE RINGS].

The process of recruitment, I was sitting on it, as the board Indian member, and they, they would just find the right people for the right job. There were local people who used to speak a bit of Gujarati, who knew the background of the Indian community, this that and everything else, and had a liberal mind.

*Cos I mean it’s a logistical nightmare isn’t it, you know, to try and…?*

Yeah, but you know before, such hundreds of thousands of people lined up for the jobs, and we recruited all these staff, and these women’s organizations, Royal Women’s –what is it called- Voluntary? They were a brilliant group of women who runs ...

*I know the Women’s Institute?*

No, no. I can see the board there reporting their names you know?

*Ok, I can see that.*

They brought in lots of volunteers and people, they were all paid. But the speed with which it went, it was remarkable. And amongst some of the people I recruited, were Provincial Commissioners, and District Commissioners in the old days, and knew how the Indians tick. Do you understand?

*Yes, of course.*

They knew exactly, and that was the beauty of it. This is the British at their best. I’ll speak about it in one of the speeches I make, the British at their best. Because we have to say a huge thank you, to both the government and the British people, that they opened their doors. Every night this Idi Amin threatened the British people on television, ‘I will teach a lesson to the Queen, I’ll make her beg when she comes to see me,’ and this that and another thing, you know? It really made the British people very angry, they felt very insulted, and the more the merrier, I said “let this bloody idiot Amin talk every night.” It helps us you see? It helps us to create goodwill and sympathy. But - but, let’s face it, that whether there’s racism in Britain or not, Britain dealing with refugees have been the best country in the world.

*I think you described it as impeccable, right? I read in an interview?*

Impeccable, it is impeccable.

*Erm, I mean, I find that interesting as well because I think, again during the interviews I’ve had so far, and reading previous interviews of Ugandan Asians, erm a lot of people always want to, especially because of the time period, we’ve talked about Enoch Powell, we’ve talked about Callaghan and the Kenyans and these issues, and you know the reality is, late ‘70s, late ‘60s, certainly the early ‘70s you had Stormfront coming out, you had the BNP, you had the National Front starting to flex their muscles and actually do a lot of activity on street level, even within mainstream politics. I mean you look at ’72 in Ilford Essex where I work there were the first councils being voted in for the BNP and the NF. So during this time period, what I’ve found is I mean a lot of people, interviewers and I include myself in this, a lot of the time to make the interview more interesting we angle to see whether there were any perceptions of racism, or prejudice amongst the Ugandan Asians as soon as they arrives, did you face any prejudice, did you meet any skinheads off the plane? And not one person has actually said, or sort of dealt on it, they’ve said, ‘there were aspects of prejudice, at that time* *period it was to be expected, however in the main, in the majority, the British people were very welcoming, whether it be the governor, a politician or the man on the street. Would you agree with that?*

Absolutely, they were so welcoming. There was an overwhelming response from the Ugandan Resettlement Board, our switchboard never stopped, ‘can you please send an Asian family to our town? We have nobody.’ In all sort of - Devon, can you imagine? Norfolk, can you imagine? I was amazed the kind of response that was coming, people in the industries used to phone us, ‘oh I’ve got a job for a Ugandan Asian, could we employ them?’ But as a board we took a view, that if there is a job in - in a Lancashire small city, we won’t send one lonely Ugandan family, we will send two or three of them. So there is some connection that they could meet together and do something. So we were doing the resettlement program in a nicely organised manner. And you know another thing the – the - the Ugandan Asians were annoyed that Leceister City Council put all the bloody ads you know?

*That was my next question [BOTH LAUGH].*

You know, it … it the people arriving here they said, ‘where is Leceister?’ They used to ask me in the camps, you know? I said, ‘why? Don’t go there. You don’t want to go there.’ ‘Oh, but I have one friend, look here is the address, can you connect me the phone?’ I said, ‘Go to the desk and get a phone, but don’t go there, it’s not a place to go.’

*What was your reaction to that?*

What could I do? Because it was the reaction of a XXXX report. Yes, remember XXXX in 1968 put a ban on people taking money on a holiday, he put a limit of 50 quid, per person, and I remember very clearly, the man that many families who didn’t go outside Devon, or away for a holiday, they wanted to go to Portugal and Spain. But the family will take 200 quid with them, or 500 quid depending on how many members there are. This is the mentality of the people; if you bend something, they want it. So it was this adverse effect.

*So you actually think a lot-*

Publicity!

*Yes, he drew a lot of attention. I mean, have you spoken to anyone, erm, sort of from the current Leicester council recently? Because that seems to be a little bit of an embarrassment almost of the council in 68. Was it actually a Labour council?*

Yes.

*It was, wasn’t it?*

And when we went there, myself, Charles XXX and Tom XXX, I was embarrassed as a Labour member. I was really embarrassed.

*What did they say?*

And by then, in 68, I resigned my Labour membership. And I was thinking of rejoining. I didn’t rejoin until 76.

*Yeah, I read somewhere…*

So you know, it’s – it’s XXX embarrass the Labour politicians, you know. They are supposed to have different values, and ethics.

*I hate to say it, but I probably expect it.*

And they spoke so badly about the Indian community and the Asian community and they lecture us about bending them to Leicester, and I remember telling them “how can we bend? England is a free country, you cannot have within England different tier system with people not willing to XXX the city, how do you manage it?”

*It’s short term as well, because let’s face it, I don’t think Leicester would be functioning as a city just today if it wasn’t for the Ugandan Asians arriving. You go to certain parts…*

Believe me, it was a most violent city then. Growing with Pakistanis and Indian people, and these people are XXX to it. And these days I would have thought that these days, if you look at – I haven’t seen the figures- but if you look at Leicester’s development growth, it would be much higher than the British rate of growth. I remember illegal order. Completely hopeless in 1958-9, to when you walk down the road, what do you see?

*Jewellers, cash and carries, XXX shops, Gujarat shops…*

I went to Southall in 1958 in a weekend, and to eat my first Punjabi meal, and I was quite amazed that Southall had started regeneration; and what happened to Southall?

*We know exactly what happened with Southall.*

And I mean, all these people have contributed to the growth and the development of Britain as a whole.

*Hanslow as well, you could look at that.*

Everywhere in every way, you go to Belham, Crawley, I mean these in Newham. East London was terrible in those days. You thought you were coming into a third world country. But today you look at these streets and development, today Indians are in property, biggest developers. Not only cash and carry, but they are industrialists now. And they are doing so many good things in pharmacy, in sweet shops, and…

*Across a big set of skilled professions, certainly. I mean, you know… growing up I was obviously from North Hampton, and I would say certainly of all my friends, the ones who are the most, certainly the most successful on paper within their relative professions are all my Indian friends. Every one of them.*

I’m an investment advisor, I work in investments, you go to the city, and look at the financial institutions, stock exchanges, insurance companies, and you look at the structure of the staff. The middle are all Indians. Pakistanis. So many Ugandan Asians have risen to the top in this city now. In the city. Director XXXX, and they are doing extremely well. And all this happened in the span of forty years. That is remarkable.

*No, it really is, I mean I’m currently writing up a project, it’s a very mall project, we’re going to do an overview of the German community in Stratford, and going back, and it took the German community in Stratford was there from the fifteenth century, sixteenth century, they’re Palantine Protestants that were thrown out, repressed and thrown out, and over 15000 fled to London. It took them four hundred, five hundred years just to be, and even then they were only just the tradesman class, they were all working in butchers and bakers. And that’s you know, the German mentality and culture is very efficient, and they have a successful mind as well, yet it took those15000 of them 500 years to establish themselves in London. Forty years? It’s unprecedented, almost, which is why, again, I’ll keep making a point of really celebrating-*

I’d received this sort of threat in 68, that uh… they would kill me. I received many threats.

*I’m sure you did.*

In one designed for me, was in XXX envelope, went to the wrong person in East London. It was in the papers if you look at it. And I used to get so many abusive calls they tried to stop at night the calls coming in. So I had much racist experience, but the biggest show of experience is when in 1964. I finished studies, I was living in Gower Street, on the corner. I saw this flat being advertised, I want to buy it. It was being advertised for £5000, when you’re sitting down, which is over 60. I went to buy it, and the agent said “no, it’s sold”. Now, one of the local Labour Party members was Mr Ford, Eddie Ford. A nice fellow. He was the XXX in this building. He met me on the streets, he said “Praful, I want to tell you something. They didn’t give you the flat because you’re Indian.” And that boiled my blood. I said “how dare he does it!” Right? So I went to look up – I said “who owns the building?” he said “National XXX Institutions”, one of the big insurance companies in the city. I go to the Times library, looked up XXX, and found the chaiman of the company. I wrote him a letter in handwriting. It’s a nice letter. I said “I must come and meet you, because I was being against racial discrimination, and I don’t expect this from such an eminent institutions as yours.” Two days later I got a phonecall from the secretary with a very English voice, you know. The woman told me “he’d be delighted to me you”, me and my colleagues. And I was thrilled. And you I know I have to dress well, and I was carrying a little umbrella with me. It was the thing to do in England, you know.

*Of course; when in Rome.*

So I went to see him. And as I entered the room, it was a large room, you know? And he got up from his desk to walk round and shook my hand “XXX, nice to meet you, come and sit down here. Will you have a cup of coffee?” I said “if you have it, I’ll have it.” So I thought ‘this is good, now he’s offered me a coffee, if not the bloody flat.’ [Laughs] He said…

*That wasn’t a £5000 cup of coffee, was it?*

So I told him what had happened to me, he said “I am ashamed. My grandfather was in Puna. I have many memories in India in my house, and I really want to profusely apologise that you got this treatment at the hand of our agents. I’ve ordered an inquiry into it, I’m going to expel them.” But he said “young man, you’re so young, have you got 5000 quid?” I said “yes sir. Do you want it today? I’ll pay you.” He said “you seem to have this wealth with you at this age?”, I said “yes, I come from a very humble middle class family in Uganda.” He said “the flat is yours. Take it. Do you have enough money to furnish it?” I said “yes”.

*And did he ever come round your flat to have a quick cup of –*

No, he never came round, but I think the two years later I tried to look for him, but he retired. But I cannot forget, here was a – you know, when I walk into his room, I saw a bloody XXX and a XXXhead, and I said to myself “this is a pretty toy, I bet he’s going to give me the flat”, but you know he was such a nice man.

*Do you think… because I mean, it’s interesting you say that because I’m not, I’m not particularly proud to admit this, but I remember certain – older members of my family, and it’s almost become a little but of a stereotype in England… if somebody… your next door neighbour died or sold the house and the ‘for sale’ sign comes up, the estate agent would pull up with two members of the family looking to view the house, they’d open the curtains, and you’d- the older members of my family, particularly my Gran, she’d be like “oh, it’s an Indian couple here to view the property. Oh, the house prices are going to drop in the area” because an Indian family was going to move in. And I was sort of sitting there, at the age of four, thinking “so what happens? If Indian communities come close to us? Does the cost of our house drop?” And there always seemed to be that perception that –*

[Phone rings]

That is one thing. When I came to this block, I found all the resistance was from either doctors, or solicitors, actors, and I wondered if this is XXX despair. There’s not many souls here. But you know, they are very nice, when I first we went to the XXX’s meeting, they were very nice to me, everybody. Everybody came and talked to me. Cos I saw them to me – I looked a very distant person, one of them. I was all “morning, hi, lovely day”, I checked with the old ladies, and things like that, and you know it’s quite settled. So no problem.

*But I mean, would you accept that for every one of you, Mr Patel, there’s all… perhaps they wouldn’t view other members of the Indian community in the same way. You know, because it seems to me you’re very adept to sort of… erm…*

To the British view of life.

*Yes, definitely. It’s something that although you oppose many aspects of the British sort of legacy across the world, but there’s also, it seems to me that you’re almost enchanted by certain aspects of British culture. Would you agree with that?*

Definitely, because when I came when I was a student, I was delighted by Paul Betany’s group, and through the Vegetarian Society, people inviting me to come and spend Easter with them. Christmas with them. I’m visiting a place like Marlborough for my Christmas two years. Nice English families, they made sure I was vegetarian, not eating eggs and that, and I had exposure. Much of the Indian community right now want that kind of exposure with the British people. Alright? Now, if you make an effort, I sometimes pick on people; make an effort to try, and come closer to the British people. Like the Jewish people did. Don’t give up your Indian-ness, don’t give your Hindu religion, keep it. But at the same time, mix with the mainstream of British society in a secular way. So you’ll belong to the British institutions. Unfortunately, the way the migration has happened, we have these pockets of… pockets of Indian communities, Pakistani communities, I mean I can tell you there are pockets of Chinese XXX, now all this has happened. Now, you can’t talk of assimilation, that’s not possible. You talk about integrating. But there has to be some program by the government, by the social sector, and – and – to belong. But I’ll tell you, you get Ugandan Asians or Kenyan Asians that are living in Wemberley and Eeling, and all these pockets, but where is the money? You see, the really- in Hartsforshire, in Surrey. Fine enough, they’re all moving out, and they’re beginning to integrate. I’m not about one or two families, I know hundreds of families who have moved out. Not true, for instance, not HorXXX, not XXX, or some area where all the rich Indians live. It’s interesting because all these pockets have developed; luxury flats, luxury little bungalos, houses, people who came from Uganda are not living in style. Would you then be envious of the others, you know?

[Aside conversation with a woman in another language]

There’s a whole India there.

*The complete region.*

All over the –

*Yeah, I mean, I know Manor Park is a little bit less, you know*

Less, less underlying.

*It’s very similar in Birmingham, you have the Erdington area of Birmingham, which is sort of like the houses you see there.*

You look at Birmingham, they are all on the outskirts of Birmingham.

*You get into the suburbs*

What a lovely home, XXX apartments in Birmingham. So they’re moving. People in Leicester to Aldby. People this these areas… it comes a very – very much the area, and a lot of the residents are Indians.

*And it’s a part of the natural process, isn’t it, and from the areas that they’ve left, the next generation of migrants will move in. You know, it’s a natural occurrence and then hopefully, in a few years’ time, with hard work, a bit of luck and perseverance, they will have the opportunity to then move up the social ladder. I mean, and I think that’s perhaps the joy of when you went back to England being sort of, impeccable in many ways in terms of embracing new migrants traditionally, but also, it’s not just about embracing them when they arrive, it’s also allowing certain aspects of society to allow them to better their own lot, if they work, and work hard. I think that’s the joy of Britain as well, to a certain extent. I’ve lived in America for a quite a long time, and there are – it’s not what’s people tell you the ‘nation of immigrants’ myth they have, they now have a black president, the reality is there are that many structures in place in American society which will block you from climbing up the social ladder. I think we do have them in Britain, but not perhaps as much as over in countries such as the US. I think, you know, you can with perseverance, with hard work, and a little bit of luck, you can actually climb that ladder, and I think the Ugandan Asian community and the Indian community in general certainly prove that.*

I remember on the fortieth anniversary, we had two Hindu XXX services, one of which would tell you his life story, his name is XXX XXX. Everyone around the world knows of him doing this. Then we had- we now had the Hispanic community doing the Thanksgiving dinner, and Farsis were going to come.

*Okay, yeah.*

Then we have an event in Leicester in the Leicester Cathedral at Thanksgiving. We did the Westminster, and I wanted to do something in Leicester for this community. And who accepted the invitation? Enoch Nichols.

*He heard there was free food going on!*

XXX of York, fifteenth of June. So you know the events happening…

*I’d like to tell me about these events, because I have a lot of flexibility, and I would love to perhaps, sort of –*

I can send you a business plan tomorrow.

*Yes! Yeah. I’d love that.*

And you know what, we want to, we want to do a big galleria, and I met the prime minister in erm, Downing Street.

*I saw the pictures.*

Oh, you did?

*Yes, yes I’ve witnessed them.*

It’s very funny because I XXX XXX going to Downing Street XXX Diwali party, I had just been to the Labour Party headquarters.

*The more I read about your biography and sort of your, let’s say, sort of the social conscience that you’ve developed to fight for fellow man, and I did wonder how you’d mentioned earlier about uncomfortable bedfellows. I did wonder what was going through your mind when you should hands with him – he almost gave you a hug, I think, if what I saw was there…*

Of course, so he’s going to come up to the galleria.

*Interesting. Amazing, obviously we’ll open up the contact with that. In terms, I mean, this is probably a good opportunity to go on to – you’ve mentioned a museum, you mentioned this idea of legacy, I mean, let’s talk about, and I spoke to you about this earlier on the phone slightly, about the second generation and third generation. And I’ve interviewed Ugandan Asian – the perfect one would be Visha ViXXX, who did the documentary show that I told you about on Radio 4, and she didn’t even know whether, if her mum was born in Uganda or not. She found out afterwards she was actually Kenyan, oh, no, she was Tanzanian, sorry, but she knew her dad was. And he was never actually expelled, he came over in 1970, so he came a couple years before, but a lot of her family, her dad’s family were expelled. But she didn’t actually know, and this is a girl who is very well educated, very aware of her own family’s existence and background, yet she saw- she’s very unsure. Do you feel there is that sense of loss or lack of awareness in the second or third generation about what the first generation went through, the guys that arrived here?*

It is why I am saying “let’s celebrate the fortieth anniversary”, so the generation doesn’t forget, so we planted some legacy projects, like a museum. Other legacy projects is um, we want to do a commemorative book. XXX XXX XXX that have settled. It’s very identical to a book that I picked up in Dubai with the Indian community Dubai has made. I want something like this to be made, a coffee table book.

*I’m going to read this through, just so it’s on copy: so it’s “India and the UAE in celebration of a legendary friendship”, and that’s the new Venu Raj Amany.*

That is why we told the government that we wanted to do a commemorative book and a children book. That’s why we were very interested in your project. And like access to material, confidentiality is maintained, no problem. And we could reach an agreement, so we are happy to be able to do this project. This one was finished this year, think of the money for this project, and we want to be able to have these by the year 2014, 2015. A heavy coffee table book. Apart from a few political chapters about the history of India and Uganda, history of Indians in Africa, about what happened to them over the years, I’ve got many academic friends Professor TunXXX, all these guys who will write these things for nothing. And then have interviews done on families, in depth interviews, their stories, what is happening. It’s fine, XXX got really excited, and he looked to me immediately, and he said “uncle, here is a chance for us to do something with some organization in a joint partnership.” So we got really excited about this because we want to do this as a legacy project.

*What- why do you think it is important? Do you think it’s important because, I mean, I think it’s very important to make people very aware of their own ancestry, and their own story of how they got somewhere, but I think also, it’s equally important for native, the native population of England to be aware of the story of the Ugandan Asians. Um, I mean, could you perhaps tell me how important that is for you?*

If you publish a book like this as a result of your own history, you’d like to associate with it. But I am looking at a bigger version of a compilation book. Do you understand where I come from? If we get enough money, then we will have a little XXX for the job. We celebrate – I mean, I have an office for the Ugandan Asian, so the issue is all we need to do is four or five peers working, not caught up in an Idi Amin project, but a serious project, and such a book comes out, there are people who are eager to contribute.

*I’ll give you a name, there is actually a girl called Joanne Herbert, she’s a Queen’s – erm, she actually did a PhD erm, oral history of you – the African Asian communities in London, uh – she looks at gender and identity is what she really is specializing in is the way uh, a woman or a mother would work within a family grouping after they left Africa and arrived in England. But she, I think she’s doing post-doc work on um – Ugandan Asians in Canada, but I think she’ll probably be coming back, I’ll keep with her at CCI, I spoke to…*

Does she live here?

*No, I think she’s Irish, um, of descent, I spoke to you on the phone, she’s, I think she’s originally from Nottingham, she got middle of –*

She any good?

*Very good. It’s a good piece of work. I mean I aspire to do a PhD like that. I’m a couple of years from getting my PhD, but it’s a very good piece. I’ll link you the title and her name and her contact details. I think –*

Let me tell you as I talk to you, I was thinking about the last six months, and I want to write my autobiography.

*I think you have a story that needs to be disseminated.*

It’s an inside story. Of my XXX over at Whitehall. I would like to write something and put it in the public domain. It’s easy for me to line up a publisher. I need someone that I can go into for hours together, someone who can put it into words. Little narratives, and then finish the book.

*To really create a conscientious narrative that tells a story.*

Someone who is dedicated, hard working, if they want a bit of money, I can take it from my pocket and give it. You know what I mean? I already spoke to one author friend of mine, and uh… he’s not on board you know.

*He knows you to well, probably as well!*

He said ‘you probably should write stories about Uganda’s loss’.

*I’m surprised no one has ever approached you before to write one.*

But I’ve been so busy, right? I work in India, and Singapore, and Hong Kong, and I’m away from England, so you know… Now the time has come, part of it for the anniversary, part of it as a private project.

*Do you think this anniversary has made you reflect on your own life?*

Indeed. As I’m saying, it’s making me reflect on my own life, and the fact that I must leave some legacy behind to tell the story of what happened. My personal story.

*I could, Mr Patel, I appreciate you need to XXX you say, but don’t underestimate the legacy of what you did anyway in 72, or anything before that. I mean, you know, and this is not me in any way being sycophantical to you at all, because I know many members of your cohort actually supported this new group of people.*

I’ll tell you what –

*Your legacy is, surely, staring into the eyes of the grandkids, and the kids of the people. That’s your legacy, and I think that will give you more than any book, and any book review you’re going to get, especially with such a social conscience as yourself. It must be heartwarming, to know that there are children, and even grandkids now, of people who arrived in 72, running around England.*

I’ve never written a book, so I need, I need some help. And if somebody you know like this lady…

*I’d like to think that we very much will be continuing our dialogue on an ongoing basis over the next few months, so you know, I will certainly consider anything I can think of.*

Yes, think about it.

*Definitely, I nearly – what I will say is we’re about to finish anyway, and she’s always… I always try to add little bits of humour to the-*

Like one-page confessions?

*Yeah, that’s what I will do, it’s topics-*

We’re finished?

*Yeah, we only ever do an hour and a half.*

Well, I want to do one more personal story.

*Well the last bit is um, certainly open for dialogue for you. Um, if you have anything to add. So, this is your opportunity.*

This story is… about XXX XXX. XXX my XXX the XXX. We invite you to sit on this committee, that committee, I never drew any alums. Because I never believed I should take money from the government, in fact money from the government allowed me to be their stooge.

*Yeah, yup.*

I mean, I don’t want to be a stooge. So I never drew any expenditure of my travel to XXX, I flew XXX, I go the whole of my expenses, finally the chairman call me, he says “you’ve been travelling with me on flights and trains and… why haven’t you claimed anything, what are you doing?” I said “sorry, I don’t want any money from you”. He was amazed. So he said “you haven’t drawn this money for the board membership fee.” I said “why, I give my services voluntarily? I don’t want any money from the board fees either”. He said “would you let all these thousands of pounds go?” I said “yes. Keep it. Somebody else will need it in the government.” He was really stunned. So a few days later I get a phone from him. He said “uh, we would like to offer you an OBE”. So I said “I’m very sorry, I can’t accept that”. “You can’t accept it?” I said “look, I mean no disrespect to the Queen, even I am very loyal to the Queen. I admire the institution of British monarchy, even though I’m Labour Party. I see it as a fantastic institution which keeps this nation together. But I won’t accept it.” Why? I said “Because there is a word called ‘empire’”

*You went and said the ‘E’ word.*

‘Order of the British Empire’. I said “the day they remove the ‘empire’, I will take it as a XXX list, and anyway, there is an empire.”

*Did you search for, um, because I, I’ve done a decent amount of research on your past, and I certainly wasn’t aware of that. I mean, a bunch of people would be quite happy mentioning XXX…*

This is why I thought to write a book. But let me tell you something. Afterwards, if I told them, afterwards I was told, what was XXX their head, this fellow has worked so incredibly hard, probably dedicated in spirit and given time, and added value to the resettlement, and so what were you thinking. One fine morning, I have a message on my recording machine that I am something- Sir David Ashmore, private secretary to the Queen, would you submit to her please for me. I said “of course, of course I can XXX my nephew”, I said “XXX, this is a bloody joke”. Well first I rang him back, and he said “Buckingham Palace?” And I said “oh bloody hell, this is Buckingham Palace”. So I rang him, and he spoke to me very nicely and he said “the Queen would be honoured to have you for lunch in her private apartment.” And I said “did you say her private apartment?” “Yes”, he said “the Queen offers six lunches in her own private apartment every year to some distinguished people, and she would very like it if you accepted the invitation, it will come in the post for you.” So then I said “Hold on a minute, you’ve got to go vegetarian, I wouldn’t eat eggs and fish and nothing”. And he said “are you a vegan or a vegetarian?” And I said “no, not a vegan, but a vegetarian, I eat cheese and milk and all that.” “No problem”. So I got an invite, and uh, I got all… my family was very excited, my sister gave me a new suit from Harrod’s, another sister gave me a shirt, I wore a lovely dye, my nephew made sure I had the right shoes to wear… I said “I don’t buy expensive shoes.” They polished my Toyota car overnight, next day I am going to Buckingham Palace.

*Sunday best.*

Sunday best. I had to go, and write the expedience in my book like we talked about. This is important, you know? This would bring life to the story of what would happen to a man.

*Can you not see the reaction on my face already? I’m not even reading it.*

What I’m saying is this: that British establishment, I think the day I had the lunch with the Queen, there was a disconnect between me and the establishment. But the time I enjoyed being in that establishment, I was at my best. And I learned, as a, as a, an aspiring politician, how the balance of power moved.

*Which is important for you for later.*

Which is important for a foreign office, employment ministry, social security, all ministry, committees and meetings, and this is the meeting that is going on. The speed! And the documents the civil servant wrote.

*I think a lot of us know about the machinery, but we don’t see the cogs actually spinning, and you clearly did, and you are of aware of how – how it works. Yeah? Can you tell me if, you know, you obviously don’t have to answer this, but did the Queen broach the subject of the rejection? Of the OBE?*

No, no.

*There was never…*

I don’t know whether she knew it or not, but she was briefed well on what I have done, and she asked me lots of questions, and she was praising our community, and she was saying “the way your people have settled so quickly out of resettlement camps”, she was amazed. And the Duke of Edinborough was really, really praiseworthy. He said “the Queen and myself are always er- value communities, and he was telling me about how Lord Mountbatten had been talking to him, you know? His uncle. It was a personal touch.

*Of course.*

And I felt happy that the British establishment is now given me a ‘thank you’. In a very nice way. Not an OBE, not the Queen going around, you know?

*It means more than a medal or three letters after your name, doesn’t it? That they…*

You know, it’s true for Parliament in Britain also. I increased the XXX from 7000 to 14000.

*And you played a major role in the, getting the Asian vote up for McKenna and Livingston as well, would that be right?*

Yes, yes, so Ken, XXX, and myself, the three of us fought the campaign together. I worked two years in the XXX North Constituency, and Sir Robert XXX was very upset with me that I could increase the vote. And on the day the results were declared I said “Robs, next time, your vote is in my seat”. It was offered to me in 97, and I turned it down, because I was XXX Bethnal Green and Bow.

*Really? Okay.*

And uh. I was asked to withdraw from it by Mendelson, Peter Mendelson.

*Can I ask why?*

Because they wanted to XXX a white candidate, with myself and XXX were shortlisted, and the Bangladeshis were up in arms ‘we don’t want these Hindus and Christians here’. And the party had, the party had been suspended for many years, so the Liberal Party executive would decide a candidate. And I remember Peter Mendelson telling me ‘you step down, but we want you in Parliament, and I’ll make sure the next safe seat comes, we’ll give you an opportunity’. But you know, 97 was a landslide.

*I was going to say, I believe it was.*

The North was won.

*It was won, wasn’t it?*

By Labour.

*Do you see yourself in Parliament?*

In seat, truly no. I can’t fight the seat now, I don’t have the energy. I could do it if I had a saved seat, not an issue, but at 74 I couldn’t do it. I’ve got energy in me, but it’s a lot of hard work.

*Do you think, are you satisfied with your uh- if you look back at the little boy that left Uganda and arrived in India, at the age of nine, then went back at the age of fourteen, and then you flash forward to the first night you arrived here and spent that first night running over to the House of Commons, and obviously the Vegetarian Society, I mean, do you look back on those preceding years, you must have a sense of pride, of what you achieved.*

Yes, a sense of pride definitely. I have learned this, things from the British way of life, society taking on such as – I’ve taken the best of the British. The worst of the British, I’ve left it behind, and my Indian-ness is my strength. Having been away from many years, I have an urge to come back to England, if you asked me where is my home, I say “England”. But then I come back every few months or so now, I would like to do some work in philanthropy. I want to go back to lead a public life, I don’t know what I will do. I haven’t thought about it all, but the book is something that has come to my mind now. A number of my English friends tell me “for God’s sake, write the book”.

*Well, Mr Patel, if you walk past any water stones this morning and you see some of the –I’m going to say this word ‘idiot’- out there, who have been given a book, um, contract to write their autobiographies, I’m sure there is enough space on the shelf for a story like yours to be on there. I mean, if the last X Factor winner can bring in an autobiography…*

I just want to leave a book behind as a legacy for the- people can read it, and even if, you know, that the book goes to two to three thousand libraries around the world, I wouldn’t mind doing that, so everywhere there is a book.

*I think you have a story that not only will educate people about the past, but also inspire people for the future, I think that’s the important legacy that should be told as well. I think if someone, well, let’s… in reality, someone from very conservative backgrounds in terms of money, you are not wealthy, you didn’t have a wealthy upbringing, you didn’t perhaps have the advantages that certain people did, but you’ve still managed to aspire through hard work and determination to achieve this status. But also I’d also say what’s most important is you’ve stuck to your convictions, haven’t you? You do have a conscience. And that’s what has driven you. And I’m sure many people have fell off the path, and perhaps turned their back on their own um…you know lesser men than me and even better men who’ve done the same.*

See, I need to hire someone to sit with me and work on a structure of a book, and narratives, and make a XXX job of things and publish it.

*We did do uh… what I’m going to do is, I’m going to send you… Give me the kind of days, I’m going to collect all my thoughts, listen back to the interview.*

No, please, are you happy with that?

*Yeah, perfectly happy, I really am, honestly. Uh, what we normally say is, and what I do from now on is I don’t allow XXX interview to go on longer than an hour and a half. Anyway, but we’ve touched on the subjects anyway. We’ve done about an hour and… twenty minutes, twenty five minutes. Um, what I’ve… the next step in this process, really, is, I’ll go back to the office tonight, I’ll um, burn this onto a CD, and I’ll get this posted out to you, and what you have to do is sign a form, you’ll see it, it’s just so we can put it into our archive. Uh, you’ll read it. I mean, listen to the interview and say- if there’s anything you want omitted that you said by mistake, or you want to clarify, just send me an email and I’ll adapt it into the transcription. Um, but Eastside, that’s not our only publication. We did bring out a photo, a photo book of the BNE community in Ilford, it’s called ‘Legacy’. I’ll post a copy of that so you can take a look at that, because I think there could be a potentially great section with you in any potential book. Because it’s just a photographic essay of the black community of Ilford-Essex, and I think something similar could be done with the Ugandan Asian community of Britain, just a photographic essay.*

Could be very interesting, that. Is it like a book of this size? As apposed to the collaboration book, the children’s book. Because I was speaking to the minister of education, and he would be very delighted if a children’s book was done so that it can push into… they said there are about 45 boroughs in England, or town halls, or townships, or city, that has a population of Indians and Asians, or African Caribbeans, where such a book, a children’s book on Uganda…

*Do you know that there’s a school in Highgate, I don’t know the name, it’s a private school, it’s a Gujarati school, I’ll find out for it.*

A Gujarati school?

*Yeah, it’s a private school, it’s not a full-time school, it’s an after classes so, they have a lot of between fifteen and twenty kids at five o’clock for an hour, hour and a half, and they teach English to Gujarati speakers, and vice versa, if you’re an English speaker you can actually go in and learn certain languages, Gujarat, Hindu, the idea is, they were doing a small project; I didn’t speak to the teacher because he was very busy, he runs the school himself, he is a full-time school teacher, you know, and he also hosts this after school class for Gujarati Children, um, but I think he was looking at getting his children – a lot of them are Ugandan Asians, and they’re going to write poetry, uh… they were going to talk to their parents and write poems, and try to draw pictures. That would be a lovely little thing, perhaps if I can get some of their works, what I can do is I can always archive them, scan them through, and I’ll send you a few, if we get permission. Perhaps you can see what kind of…*

I would be delighted to see that.

*I think that could be really nice, because it’s done by children.*

These things are happening, and we have no knowledge of it. But you are obviously at the grassroot level, you’re picking up all those things.

*I told you, um, Mr Patel, I spent, you know, a number of hours making phone calls, sending out emails, going on Facebook groups, which is how I found XXX in the first place, you know, I’m very adept- you’ve got to realize my background, I’m an ethnographist, I went cold into a small mining community in northeast Pennsylvania, a community that was experiencing really horrible racism, and I walking in there, and I didn’t know anyone, and I just spent a year there, basically in community outreach, just connecting with congressmen, or just people in pubs, in bars, very rough-and-ready looking fellows, sort of ‘redneck’ types. And so I’m very adept at community outreach.*

How old are you?

*I’m 31 as of a couple months ago.*

Only 31?

*Just about, you say ‘only’…*

I thought maybe 38 or 40.

*Thank you, I’ll take that as a compliment.*

I mean it, you are a very mature person, you are.

*Well, uh, in many ways I am, in many ways I’m not.*

You’ve got your PhD already?

*No, I’m not there yet, I have about 18 months left, about 40 000 words.* [whistles] *Well, don’t whistle, you’re going to write books! [laughs]*

That’s quite the job you’re doing.

[Interview subjects discuss the interviewer’s PhD thesis, American politics, and the Peruvian civil war for an additional 35 minutes. The transcriber has opted to refrain from continuing documentation for the sake of preserving textual relevance.]

**Interview details**

**Name of interviewee: Praful Patel**

**Project: Ugandan Asians**

**Date: 19/04/2013**

**Language: English**

**Venue: Bloomsbury, Camden**

**Name of interviewer: Greig Campbell**

**Length of interview: 137:45**

**Transcribed by: Sheldon Pacquin**

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