*So, this is Lwam Tesfay interviewing XXXX on the 26th of April 2013. Can I just get you to start off by spelling your full name for me...*

Erm... Narendra Kotecha known as Janu Kotecha as a nickname, erm... you want a spelling?

*Yes, please.*

Narendra; N-A-R-E-N-D-R-A Kateacher; family name K-O-T-E-C-H-A. Nickname; Janu, J-A-N-U.

*Ok.*

I’m born on 30 January 1949 in a town called porbandar, P-O-R-B-A-N-D-A-R, in India where Mahatma Ghandi was born, so I’m proud to be from a town of a great man in our life. In 1950 I went to Uganda with my parents, as a child, from 1950 to 1959 er... I lived my childhood with my parents in Uganda and did my nursery in Uganda, a town called Jinja and Mbale. Jinja was our headquarters for a grandfather’s business and Mbale was a part of our manufacturing industry area. STOP.

[TAPED STOPPED]

*I’ll just carry on from now....*

So, obviously I XXXX it later wait from ’49 to ’59 after my birth from India my parents, I went with my parents to Uganda I have done my nursery in Uganda and we went to Uganda in 1950 [TELEPHONE RINGS] because er... my grandfather migrated to Uganda in around 1895 approximately er... to support the British Empire to build a railway line and within a span of few years he join a work, he started working for a British company called East African British cotton industry, which went erm... bankrupt in around 1933 and my er... grandfather was erm... chief manager person who was looking after the buying and selling of the raw cotton in Uganda. And er... he was given an opportunity by a bank in 1935 to take over the entire industry, which went bankrupt in 1933/35 by British er... erm... cotton... East African British cotton industry. Er... from 1935 my grandfather started rolling a nice neat business and industries and we were declared as a cotton empire and pioneer in Uganda and East Africa erm... obviously my grandfather recruited a lot of family members from India erm... his brothers, his nephews, his cousins, his brother-in-laws, uncles many people and all these er.. member of the family and extended member of the family slowly and regularly established in Uganda and up to 1972. Erm... from 1959, I go back to ’59 now, er... because in my father’s family we lost lot of lives in Uganda, and this is between 1935-1959 all the key personals from family died erm....[INTERRUPTED 0:04:55.5 – 0:06:32:0] So, obviously between 1935 and 1959 we lost lot of family members who were the key personals to run our grandfather’s cotton industry and erm... it was a very healthy industry, it really built up our future we made a fortune in that and er... around er... ’59 my father decided to take his personal family to India so that he can concentrate with other member of the families in the business and in the industry of cotton side. It er... my elder brother Shiraz and second elder brother Asho were sent to UK in 1959, for their further education and erm... my elder brother Shiraz written back to Africa and he supported my father in the business and... my father hand over the business to my elder brother in around 1960/61. He was a bachelor and he wanted to get on with the life and he wanted to get marry so it was my father’s desire to bring him to India, invited him to India, and he my father helped him to source a partner and eventually my elder brother Shiraz got married in 1963, but between ’61 and ’63 my father went back to Africa from India to do the one more year season of cotton and business and then passed entire responsibility to my brother and my younger uncle it just happened that my father came back, was coming back from Uganda by sea route to India and that was the journey for a most exiting life coming into his own personal life of my father because my elder brother shiraz, the first child, of my father and my elder sister Jesta erm... they were two getting married in 1963 and my father’s joy was extremely high. Er... but it never happened; when my father landed er... in India from his journey to Africa by sea he had a heart attack in Bombay and he did not listen to doctor and he took the train from Bombay to **Bombandar** and half way on the 1st of April 1963 he had another big heart attack and he lost his life and we lost our dear father. Since then my brother took the responsilibility of the family and the business and between ’59 to ’67 I was personally based in India with my mother and erm... all my younger brother, sisters were living with my mother, I was studying in a boarding school in **Raj court**, which was known as a capital of **Safrastre of Gujurat,** I was fortunate enough to study in a very nice er.. recognise institution known as Raj Kuma college in Raj Court and I finished my senior high, senior school there and in ’67 my brother requested that my mother to come back to Africa so that we can all live together, we went back to Africa in Uganda in 1967 as a family I... In 1967, my brother was disintergrating the business from our family group and make a hub only for our family as a brother it happened in 1967 and then my older brother shiraz demanded to my second elder brother Asho and myself for a help to run the business and the show and I had to debate between the two life of the two future life for myself whether should I go for record of make lab or should I join the family business and I made up my mind to join the family business in 1967 and I join, and around in 1969 and we asked our second elder brother to migrate back to India and double up cotton industry there he went to India and my older brother, Shiraz and myself were looking after the Ugandan Industries we were doing very well we made a fortune but in 1969, unfortunate thing happened in our life in Uganda that, which outside power influence the democratic er.... was toppled er... and erm... Milton Abote was our president was overthrown by martial law er, which is er...er... by er... Idi Amin who was er... commander in er.. chief of army and in ’69 own world life started changing in Uganda. Many people the people who were living there for fifty, sixty, eighty years they everybody started getting scared and er... lot of erm... incidents happened, lot of people life were ruined, lot of lives were lost especially in Asian community and lot of people started becoming negative and they started leaving the country but we being as an indutrialisists and businessmen we saw the growth during the Idi Amin’s regime and up to 1972 erm... we had a good time in Idi Amin’s regime but obviously at the back of our mind we were all the time concerned about our livelihood and our life, which did occur in 1972 one day morning Idi Amin came on the platform and openly declared that any foreigners whether black white or brown skin must leave the country within 90 days and if they don’t obey this order then their lives will be on risk. And he will not take the responsibility so by this statement obviously people were scared and er... some people were XXXX and me personally I was a young business man so I didn’t then care about it, I didn’t took notice of it and it just happened that er... in 1972, around the month of February er... the erm... Army people, Idi Amin’s officers suddenly barge in to my office in Ubale and they just very rudely and roughly came and beat me and picked me up, put me in the car and they kidnapped me they took me to erm... they were taking me to Kampala, a capital city of Uganda and they accused me that I was trying to built er... a small unit of your people who can support me to topple Idi Amin’s government and er... I was shocked to hear all this thing, at aged twenty or twenty-one you don’t even think such thing but somebody must have played a culprit role because I was a healthy businessman, young businessman within our radius of industry.

*Were you quite successfull or well known in tha... in your community?*

Er... Sorry?

*Were you quite successful in the community?*

Yeah. I was very young, bright er... man er... in er... industry in my, my... our... I was very well known in our cotton industry and oil mill industry I was probably the youngest chap in the entire country to move into this industrial direction successfully and yes by no doubts er... erm... it’s with help of my brother and my family. I was very successful naturally competition was quite high and other industry people some of them were bit jealous, some of them were not doing good in the industry and erm... naturally in industry and commerce there is always a competition sometimes it’s healthy, sometimes it’s not healthy and people wants to feel negative against the successor. Never the less obviously I was kidnapped in February and unfortunately it just happened that while we were travelling in the military car from Umbale to Kampala, erm... my elder brother Shiraz was filling up the petrol in Ginger, which is a middle of Kampala and Umbale and these military people some how knew it who Shiraz was so they also kidnapped my elder brother, with me and er.. we were just driven down to er... Kampala and between Ginger and Kampala there is a forest called Marbira Forest the car stop and they asked us to get out of the car and they started beating us and we just hugged, hugged eachother we me and my brother and we said goodbye our life is coming to the end.. There is nobody here to rescue us and we will meet in Heaven fullstop. We give up our life we knew it that if you are kidnapped by military people you don’t come back alive and that’s what we accepted. But it just happened that they are.. they did not do much to us they took us to the prison which is know as the ‘Hell’ and the prison name is Makende a lot of people were kidnapped and taken there who never came back alive from the prison so once again the when the car entering into the prison again we both decided that look Janu we are coming to the end of our life and whatever it is we have to accept it and this is it fullstop. We were prepared for the death and er... it just happened that my brother-law had an influence with a gentlemen in er... army and they fought for us to take us out of the prison and he was successful and er... we were successfully taken away from the prison and so we went back to Umbale and then my elder brother advised me that ‘Janu in two three months time you go and take a rest in India with my mother and if i get a suitable partner i should get married , prepare yourself and then if everything is okay then come back.’ So I left Uganda before the exodus...

*mmm...*

Er... went to India I was searching for partner, life partner which didn’t happen then er... because I wanted to travel so from India I went to Germany to see er... Munich Olympic in er... September 1972. But when I reached to Frankfurt I saw this statement of Idi Amin on the television and I called my brother and my bother just ordered me to go to UK immediately leave everything and he wanted to send his family to UK as a refugees, so I came to UK I stayed in er... as a paying guest with one of my friends mother and in my pocket I had hardly about £280 pounds so I was waiting for my brother’s family to come to UK I.... fetched them from Stans... from Stanstead airport, and erm... I went to the home office because I was carrying an Indian citizen passport myself so I said ‘Look this is what the situation is and I cannot go back to Uganda I need your permission to stay here for at least 12 to 20 months because my brothers young family’s coming and they will be under my responsibility and er... in those days Prime Minister Edward Heath’s government was running the government one thing in my life I will say that Prime Minister, ex-Prime Minister Edward Heath became instant Godfather for entire foreigners and Asian community in Uganda. The hospitality he extended to all the refugees in UK it’s unbelieveable he just opened the doors for us, for all the Asians, he welcomed them, he looked after them, he gave them clothing, medicines, education, residence homes everything; and that is true a leader of British government we respect him and we still miss him, whatever we are today all thanks goes to Edward Heath ex-Pime Minister of UK. Yes Idi Amin was a nice gentlemen he was a good president but what happened in a time of ’69 to ’72 he truly probably with his uneducated mind or probably foreigners influence or foreign comments influence he just become a second Nazi and in his regime last period of exodus he really become a life butcher in the country he murdered and killed thousands and hundreds and thousands of people, young babies, young er... girls were literally raped and murdered. People assets and erm... what you call... wealth were snatched but it become a history in our life and me as a young man of twenty years, twenty-one years old I still remember the Uganda was that glorious country, one of the glorious country in this world we left our history behind we come back to UK and obviously I was a businessman I determine myself never to work for anybody, I wanted to do my own business with help of friends and bank I borrowed about £18,000 pounds in 1972 and I opened a corner shop in Shephards Bush and within a span of a year I got married erm... my wife Mayshuarie and with the support of my wife and the British government I started building up the business slowly and gradually by around 1982 I had about, portfolio of about eight or nine different retails unit I invited my rest of mem...members of the family from India and my wife was carrying her first child in ‘78/9 and then erm... my second child was born in 1982 we altogether started building life in UK and we had a very successful growth in our life in UK that did not permit us or think twice to go back to Uganda we did leave our fortune assets in Uganda. I went back to Uganda in 1982 to survey and see my left over assets and everything with my brother but we saw the state of [COUGHS] our properties and industry and we felt that the is a future in UK, so why do you want to come back to Uganda? Yes, we today believe there are quite a few ex-Ugandan still live in Uganda and they have built a successful business in commerce and industry and that’s life and we accept that and similarly I’ll happily say that we have also built our niche life in UK with the help of UK government and our family and friends and we are happy here I have two sons, eldest son is thirty-five years old, he’s got his family I’ve got one grandson, Almet is elder son his wife is Pullwee and his son name is Rehan they are based in Dubai. My second son got married last year Ravi and his wife is a nice young lady she’s a chartered accountant and young couples are also happily living their life. I’m very fortunate to have my mother with me till today she is 93 years old, and...

*When did she come here?*

My mother came in Uk in 1978, to deliver our first child and since then she has always lived with me and she has taken a vow that she will not go anywhere she will die in my own home – she is 93 and today I’m very happy to say that we are all brothers and sisters we have four brothers, three sisters with their individual family we decided to take our mother for a lifetime memory trip which is a cruise we are... we are going on the cruise on 11th of May this er... next month for fifteen days with our mother and that will be a lifetime memory we don’t know how long my mother will live because she is aging obviously and sooner or later we will have to accept her absence and that’s life...

*So, this is like a family trip with everybody?*

Family trip. It’s a family... and that’s it.

Yeah. Just going back to Uganda a little bit can you remember when they made the... you said you were in Munich or Frankfurt when they made that announcement, what was the atmosphere like in Uganda around that time, in Feburary, March....?

Yes, erm... in 1972... Feb... Between January and September, obviously here in there because it was a military ruling government under the martial law erm... some of the military senior officers were taking advantage and abusing the power and the biggest scandal was kidnap the rich people for ransom and once they get the randsom either they knew... oh.... they knew they’ll pay or they’ll kill them.

mmm.

This is scarring part of that life which we never saw before at my age during that period I never seen such thing but I have seen life in 1972 when I was kidnapped and left in the erm.... Makende prison for 48 hours and in that prison it was 4X4 cage in which me and my brother were put in it was all four walls were open and you could literally see other prisioners black, white and Asians and we at night around between ten and one o’clock in the night you could literally see that black people were torchered on the floor by the butts of the rifle or guns or machine gun until this person dies and then they used to... floor officer used to hold the hands and legs and throwing the body on an open wall like a football and crush it and in the morning they used to pick up all that put it in a big drum boil the water and they were serving it as a soup to other prisoners; and that’s the life we have seen with our.... my own naked eyes... and it literally put us off that what is this going on why the humans are treated like that but it has really given us a lifetime lesson – how to treat human, how to be human and how to treat other humans that was my learning point in my life which has literally given me personally an opportunity in the UK to be associated with a lot of volunteer group I’m fortunate since last twenty-four years I’ve been serving my own community from bottom to top up to the top chair I’ve been there i’ve worked with other few societies in volunteer area I am also a volunteer persons in erm... many organisations in India which I do my silence job there. I personally value human no matter whether that human is disabled, poor, middle-class or rich to me human is human and that is most valuable thing in my life and today till I die whatever I can do for human I’m there for it physically, mentally, timingly and money-wise, whatever I can do I’m there. I value human life. Yes in Uganda when you see such thing at young age it puts you off from the life it puts you off to put your own life or extend to some other human life but I was not one of that I decided to give something back to human life. When I came in UK as I say it in 1972, I decided I don’t want to work for anybody I’ll work for my own self. I’m very proud to say that from ’72 to 1984 I built up a nice small business in retail sector with seven eight shops in between ’82 to ’92 we sold all the small units and we bought a very large unit in South Hampton and... which was we had thirty-three full-time white people staff and at that time I was feeling very comfortable that here is the period in my life which gives me experience how to be a boss again and in ’89 my friend from India who was erm... er... mega textile group from India offered me to do a textile business in UK which was the cotton was in my blood so I took the challenge in 1989 and by 1996 we become a er... erm... major supplier in UK cotton industry fo... er... raw material from India that is cotton yarn, cotton fabric and fortunetly again our XXXX believed to be the top in the market, so, I started learning things and I linked myself with a major group in UK called Marks and Spencers ny 1990...8 I was a very successful supplier to Marks and Spencers my trust, my confidence, my ability, my knowledge they accepted they gave me a lot of backup in er... 19... in 2000 I was the first person to take Marks and Spencers to India to buy a ready-made garment and we did it in 2000... April year 2000 and today I’m very proud to say that Marks and Spencers supports India wholeheartedly and that 30-40% of the garment is sourced from India, which is my pride.

Wow. I didn’t know that....

That is the biggest pride I am personally carrying today. Today I’m also happy to say that I have a grandson I promise my eldest son that when I become a grandfather I’ll take retirement no matter of my age and I’ve fulfilled my commitment to my son and I’m enjoying my life with and without my grandson today. That’s family.

Family is very important to you....

Yeah. Family is very important. Thank you

Can I just take you back to your first time when you arrived in UK. Can you describe that experience when you came off the plane?

When I came to UK I only had a few pairs of clothes I landed exactly on 14th August 1972 3.43 in the afternoon, to Heathrow Airport and my... one of my friends came to pick me up at that time he didn’t have the car, so we walked up to the bus stop, we picked up the bus and we went to Hounslow Central and then I picked up my bag and we went to home by walking there he gave me a box room, there was a one single bed and say ‘This is your room, will cost you £8 pound a week, one meal at night, and one cup of tea in the morning. Two baths in a week and that’s it, you will have to be in the house before eight-thirty, after that we’ll not open the door, that was the kind of life I star