

## **File name 5\_1 – transcript**

Interview with Mr Sharma and Zahid at Milan Community Centre who took part in oral history sessions in March 2013.

Mr Sharma: Could you tell me your name, please?

Zahid: Zahid

Mr Sharma: Zahid Kashmiri?

Zahid: Zahid Kashmiri

Mr Sharma: And what is today's date?

Zahid: Today's date is the 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013

Mr Sharma: And you came to England from..?

Zahid: Pakistan

Mr Sharma: So Zahidji, when you were in Pakistan, what were your impressions about England?

Zahid: I thought it was a very rich country, that there was lot of wealth and everybody over there lived a good life.

Mr Sharma: And you thought that if you go to England you would be living a good life?

Zahid: I thought I'd be having a good time and good life, yes.

Mr Sharma: That's good, so actually when you came over here, what year you came?

Zahid: I came 1963...26<sup>th</sup> of December

Mr Sharma: A long time, huh?

Zahid: Yes and I reached the airport, it was 5 o'clock in the evening, it was really, really foggy.

Mr Sharma: And the month was...?

Zahid: December, it was really, really foggy and I was supposed to fly to Birmingham from Heathrow, but the flights were cancelled.

Mr Sharma: Because of weather..?

Zahid: Because of weather.

Mr Sharma: So what was your overall impression when you arrived here?

Zahid: First of all, I tell you how I got to Birmingham. I got to Birmingham by train from Paddington, I hired a taxi from Heathrow to Paddington which cost me £3.

Mr Sharma: So you were on your own or was someone with you?

Zahid: I was on my own and I had to see my friends in Birmingham.

Mr Sharma: No-one came to see you at the airport?

Zahid: They were waiting for me at Birmingham airport...I reached Heathrow, from there I went to Paddington, from Paddington I went to Birmingham. I wasn't expecting anyone there because they didn't know I was coming there. As soon as I got off the train, I heard a voice, he called my name and it was a surprise and that man, I met him and he took me to his house. I slept there for the night, at 2 o'clock in the morning I went to sleep and then he took me to my friends in Tipton which is in Staffordshire.

Mr Sharma: Right, right, so it was a mixed feeling that you had some difficult...problems as well as then your friends received you at the station.

Zahid: I was very tired and I had mixed feelings about this country then.

Mr Sharma: So after you were finally here, what struggle did you have, or did you face any struggle or was everything smooth for you?

Zahid: It was smooth as well as easy because I got a job the next day because I could speak English.

Mr Sharma: Right, right.

Zahid: I was working in a club where English people used to come .... so I went to a foundry, I asked at the gate for a job. In those days there used to be guards, company's own guards. They used to have a list of vacancies and they gave me a job in the warehouse because he thought I can count.

Mr Sharma: You could count, you could speak English...that was a good start..

Zahid: And then I worked there for 6 months and suddenly I found a job in an office as a registrar.

Mr Sharma: So it means it has been easy for you. And you were on the right way to prosperity? Right..

Zahid: But to my misfortune, what happened is I left that job to earn more money as a postman.

Mr Sharma: Right so were you happy as a postman?

Zahid: I started as a postman in Christmas which was not a right time to start for winter. It was very very hot?

Mr Sharma: Loaded with parcels and so many letters...

Zahid: And because it was Birmingham, Dudley where I worked as a postman, it was a very, very difficult job. And I worked there for 3 years. Then I went to Pakistan and came back with my wife...and I started working as a clerk in British Gas. In those days it was North Hills Gas in Beaconsfield.

Mr Sharma: So you, you have been living a bit of a comfortable life because of your education in Pakistan, so education stood you in good stead.

Zahid: Comparatively easier life...money wise but not very good life out of money. I was earning £62 a month as a clerk in 1967.

Mr Sharma: Yes, that was more than average wages at that time I should say.

Zahid: Maybe but not...the rent was very high.

Mr Sharma: So now what do you feel, whatever struggle you put in, because in your case it doesn't seem to be that much as other of Pakistanis or Indians put in, but still how do you feel the end of all that struggle now you are a Pensioner, aren't you, a Senior Citizen?

Zahid: First of all, I'm very thankful to this country and they have been really good to us. And I enjoyed all the benefits in this country what other people have...and I'm having a good life after retirement.

Mr Sharma: So you appreciate whatever...right? Now... now when you are comfortable leading a good life, do you ever think that you should do something for the community you live in?

Zahid: Yes, I have done, I have done a lot...

Mr Sharma: Could you tell me something what you're doing in that regard?

Zahid: I've done a lot, I was working, I used to work at the weekends with my children, Muslim children to give them lessons about their religion and it was a voluntary job and I used to do for 2 hours every weekend, Saturday and Sunday and that was, that was in 1970. From then on, I started working at the weekend with my children, all the children in that area. We hired a hall in an infant school in South Hill and I was going there every weekend and working with the children.

Mr Sharma: That's good, that's very nice because you helped them to know a lot about their culture and about their identity and about their language, about their religion.

Zahid: Of course.

Mr Sharma: That's right. Thank you very much, Mr Zahid and this interview was taken by Siri Ram Sharma on 20<sup>th</sup> March 2013.