

Sikh Migration Project – Learning from our elders' life experience

The Sikh Migration Project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and is being led by the Nishkam Centre. This project was designed to capture stories from 1st and 2nd generation Sikhs in the UK (particularly the Birmingham and Black Country areas), to preserve their experiences of the journey that brought them to the UK, so that we can share this with future generations.

As part of the project we have developed an exhibition that you can visit this summer at the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, before it goes on tour around the West Midlands. We have also developed a booklet and have a new website that we are slowly populating with research. For more information you can visit www.nishkamheritagecentre.org

What we ask from you...

We are aware that there is only so much information that we can gather on our own. Therefore, we humbly request you to be part of the project, and use this opportunity to speak to your parents and grandparents about their experiences.

The following pages include many questions that we have asked as part of our interview process, and cover a number of areas. Not all topics will be applicable to everyone, however we encourage you to ask as many as possible, and request you **ask a minimum of 10**. These questions are starting points, and if the discussion leads into a topic that is not covered on the sheet, we will be happy for you to discuss it further as part of our fact-finding mission. **You may audio or video record the interviews, or write down the answers** if that is preferred.

We understand that some elders may wish to remain anonymous and we will respect their wishes, however the more names we can include, the easier it is to justify our findings. If the participant wishes to remain anonymous please put tick as appropriate in the consent form.

Please return the completed interview (or recordings of the interview with signed consent) to heritage@ncauk.org or at the Nishkam Centre reception (6 Soho Road, Handsworth, Birmingham, B21 9BH). If you have any photographs or video clips that you are willing to share to help reinforce your findings please get in touch to discuss further.

Oral History Recording Process

For all recordings we request that the interviewer finds a quiet location where they will not be disturbed. Try to ensure that the participant is comfortable, relaxed and open to discussing their life story. Please request the participant to answer in full sentences, try not to interrupt them (leaving a 5 second pause before asking the next question), and be mindful of your own humming or tapping during the recording.

Thank you

We are grateful for all the support you can provide and hope that together we can preserve and learn from our heritage.

Consent

For all research to be used, we need consent from participants (particularly when recordings are involved). Please ask the participant to complete the section below:

.....

I consent to having my interview (in written, audio, video, and/or photographic format) being collated and shared as part of the 'My Story, Our Journey' Sikh Migration Project research.

If you wish to remain anonymous in any of our publications, please tick which format you wish to remain anonymous from:

Written Visual Audio

Signed: Dated:

.....

Please provide contact details in case we need to contact you for further information:

Telephone/Mobile:

Email:

Interview conducted by: Date:

Interviewee Details

Name:

Date of Birth:

Place of Birth:

Area of Residence:.....

Family Tree (if possible, please include age, place of birth and occupation of each member – *attach extra pages if necessary*):

Childhood

1. Tell me about your parents – how did they live? What was their routine?
2. Tell me about your childhood – what were the most important lessons your parents / grandparents taught you?
3. Are there any stories related to your culture or faith that you remember being taught as a child?

What is a Sikh?

1. What does being a Sikh mean to you?
2. How has being a Sikh helped you on your journey to the UK?
3. Are you proud to be a Sikh? If so, why?

The Journey

1. Why did you (and/or your parents) leave India / Africa? Why did you move to the UK? Where in the UK did you settle and why? What reasons encouraged you to move?
2. What was the journey coming to the UK like? How did you travel? What happened at the airport, or when you were trying to get your passport and tickets? What expectations did you have?
3. What did you think you were going to miss the most about India/Africa? Are there any memories that stand out from your pre-UK life?
4. What were your first memories of arriving and living here?

Sikhs in British Society

1. Did you have any skills, qualifications or a career before you came to the UK?
2. How did you find work in the UK? Were there any difficulties you faced in getting a job? Did you have many different jobs?
3. What did you enjoy or find difficult about the work you were doing?
4. How did your Sikh identity impact how you engaged in British Society? Did you suffer racism or prejudice from other people?
5. Did you take part in any political or social activism?
6. What was your daily routine like? Did you work nights? How did you dress? How has your routine changed over the years?

Women / Men – family dynamics

1. When did you get married? How were you introduced to your husband/wife? Did you get married in the UK or before you arrived?

2. Before you came to the UK, what did you think marriage would be like? What changed when you came to the UK?
3. How did you split the roles and responsibilities in your marriage, when in the UK? What would it have been like if you stayed your home country? How do you feel about this?
4. How do you see the role of women in the Sikh Community?
5. (For Ladies) Did you feel empowered or disempowered as a Sikh woman in the UK? Why?

Re-creating 'Home'

1. What were your hopes and dreams for your children?
2. What were your fears for your children?
3. When you were raising your family, what was your family routine like?
4. What helped make you feel at home in the UK, and why?
5. Did you engage in cultural / religious celebrations (e.g. Gurburab, Vaisakhi, Rakhri, Diwali?) Were there any traditions you began to practice here? Was it easy to do this? How did it feel?
6. What did you teach / share with your children about your roots? Were there any books, paath (prayers) or stories that you shared with them?
7. How important was it to teach your children about your roots, language, and culture? How did you teach them?
8. Do you feel you had to compromise on any traditions or values when you moved to Britain; if so, what? If you didn't have to compromise, what was the experience like?

Child Migration

1. How did you feel going to school in the UK?
2. What challenges did you face at school?
3. How did you describe who you were to your peers? Did you find it easy to fit in?
4. How did your peers treat you? Were you proud of your heritage?
5. Did you learn Punjabi and English simultaneously? How did this feel? How important is Punjabi in your day to day life?

Social Support

1. When you arrived how were you supported by the local community?
2. Did it take you a while to accept the support that was available to you?
3. How often would you meet other Sikhs? Where would you meet them?

4. How would you socialise with others? Would you visit the pub? If so, how often and why?
5. Was there any person or community group that supported you the most (e.g. jatha / Mahapurak)? How did they support you?
6. If you met a Mahapurak, or had sangat that brought you back to the Gurudwara, how did this happen and what was the most important lesson you learnt?
7. Did you go to the Gurudwara regularly? Do you feel the Gurudwara / community support is important, and if so, why?
8. How did going to the Gurudwara influence your choices and decisions?

Passing on the Heritage

1. What changes in society have come about during your time here, and helped you feel at home?
2. Is there anything that makes you feel uncomfortable or as if you are 'not at home' in your local area?
3. What lessons from your childhood do you want your children / future generations to take away?
4. How would you describe Sikhs in Britain? Has this changed from when you first arrived here? How far do you feel we have come as a community from when we first arrived in the UK?
5. How do you feel when you think about all the political, social and community engagement we are able to partake in?
6. Why do you think civic engagement is important (e.g. local government, councils, community groups, interfaith)?
7. Are there any achievements that you have witnessed in your family or by other UK Sikhs that share how far we have come as a community?
8. Is there anything that you still miss about home, or has the UK become your home? Do you feel proud to be a British citizen?
9. What do you like the most about living in your local area?
10. What would you like the Sikh community in the UK to look like in the future?
11. Thinking about everything you have experienced, what is the one lesson you have learnt that you wish to share with the next generation of Sikhs?

Thank you for being part of this research project.