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Contributor: I lived in New Delhi until the age of 4, and after that, because of my father's job, we kept moving until the age of 16 when we came to Birmingham. Then my parents left after two years to go back to India, but I stayed because I was in the middle of my A Levels, and Birmingham has been my home ever since.

I have a really warm, loving childhood, because I was the eldest first grandchild, if you like, in the family. My father's side was a large family, he had two sisters and two brothers who were contemporary, in other words they were alive at that time when I was born, and he'd lost two brothers prior to that.

0:01:27 So I was the first born, I was really fussed over especially by my grandmother, she took charge of my early years, and she was a really warm loving person, you know. So my early memories are of feeling very much part of a large family which was always fussing around me.

My parents, my father's side were from Lahore, well they'd moved to Lahore by the time partition happened, but they were actually from [Rabu Indi 0:02:02]. They were born in what is now Pakistan. So, their childhood was in Pakistan and they, up to the age of 13 I think my father, as I recall him telling me, they had a really good life, because my grandfather was the inspector of schools in that area.

0:02:29 This was during the days when the British were still ruling India, so they had a big house and a good salary. Then my grandfather died in a road crash, so things became difficult after that, and my grandmother had to fend for herself. She singlehandedly brought the whole family up, saw them all educated, married. Then when her youngest son, who actually had to return from England because they'd sent him here to study, when he was married she kind of thought, "My job is done." She went after that.

0:03:23 By then my father was established in a job, all my uncles were established in jobs, my aunts were all headmistresses, so they were from an academic background. On my mother's side, the family was from Amritsar, and during partition, because there was a majority Muslim population, even in Amritsar then, when the riots broke out it started to get really nasty. So they thought it would be safer for them to move to Delhi.

Even the journey from Amritsar to Delhi had its dangers. My father's side had moved from Rabu Indi to Lahore, chacha, my Uncle was still in college then. My father had started his first job in government service, so he was actually in Shimla, he was working for the government department in Shimla.

0:04:24 So he was getting first hand, receiving news of riots kicking off and killings taking place, so he would- don't forget this is a time when there was no internet, even phone calls were difficult to make. So he was writing to them regularly saying, "Things are turning bad, you should come and stay with me here in Shimla." Because Shimla was relatively peaceful, it was the seat of the summer capital of British India.

I don't think they felt immediately in danger, so they would have said, "We're fine." Then, because summers are hot in India, they came to visit him, Shimla is up in the Himalayas, it's a summer vacation capital. So they came to visit him, apart

from my chacha, they all came to visit him, and while they were visiting him the riots and the killings really kicked off, so they never went back.

0:05:25 My uncle, they had I think some sort of rifle in the house, he just managed to come across, he put the rifle on his shoulder, but a blanket on it, got on a train and managed to get across to India safe and sound. Some of our other relatives, few of them, got caught up and didn't make it. So my early memories are that both my parents, and the entire family, even though they were secure, and they had good jobs etc. Were still coming to terms with what they'd seen and heard.

Just at the time- I was born in 1950, so it wasn't a long gap between the riots and my birth. So my memories are that whenever they would mention politics or partition the atmosphere would change because of what they'd seen, what they'd heard and what they'd been through. Really they'd lost everything.

0:06:30 So, they were coming to terms with that in terms of their own personal lives, they were rebuilding their lives, they'd lost where they lived was gone, not they had to manage in a smaller space, everybody was sharing. Their attitude towards other people, especially towards Muslims- they had been living in what was a heavily Muslim populated area, so they had Muslim friends and they would freely mix with them. Now they became more careful, they became more conservative in who they chose as their friends.

As far as I recall, in my growing up days they had maybe one or two Muslim friends, all the others were wither Hindus or Sheiks, that changed in the family.

0:07:28 Then when you would talk of Pakistan or India, you could see the tensions in their faces, you could see the tension in the

way they described things. Because I think even though they didn't personally experience persecution or rioting, they saw a lot, they saw a lot of what happened to other people. That in its own way had affected them, traumatised them and they were coming to terms with that. So, that, subconsciously, because I was a child, I picked up on, and it was years later when I recognised why my parents wouldn't encourage me to have Muslim friends as well.

My other abiding memory was that they were a close-knit family, but this whole experience made them even closer.

0:08:27 They became very tight together in a way that has affected my outlook on relationships, in the sense that their brothers and sisters were so tight knit that they could withstand anything because they would stand together. The second thing that was my binding memory was that they weren't ever miserable, there would always be laughter in the house, because they didn't have much, but they entertained each other through just sheer joy of laughter and joking.

My youngest uncle, my dad's youngest brother, was a whit, and he'd come out with some cracking comments here and there. That in its turn affected the whole family, there would always be laughter, as far as I can recall, they would get together every evening, eat meals together, they would play cards.

0:09:27 Cards was a big thing, they would play a lot of cards together, but that closeness was important, it allowed them to weather all the storms, that closeness is something that I have not seen since, I've not seen it in the next generation. I look at them and say, "My God, they were tight together, the way they were." In a way I have picked up on that, and my brothers picked up on that and we're really close, people say, "You brothers are

really close." We're close to our cousins as well, we regard them as not cousins but brothers and sisters.

So that's come down from that experience if you like of what they went through and how they dealt with it, and I think that's what helped them resettle in a way, resettle successfully.

0:10:27 Both my daughters were born here in England, in Birmingham, so obviously their experiences are going to be different. I tried to keep them connected to India in the early years of their lives by going there constantly so they would meet relatives. It's not the same, they're very much settled here, this is where they see their future. I think what they've picked up on is the closeness of our family, so they see how much we insist, as a result of my brother and myself being very tight together, and how much we insist on keeping in touch with or cousins and other relatives, they've seen that.

0:11:19 We've encouraged them to do the same, my encouragement is that amongst each other, both the sisters should have that same closeness, should feel for each other in the same way that we behave towards my parents' generation did, that I did. So that they don't become remote and casual that, "She's my sister and that's it." It's more than that. I think that generally they are quite close, but not in the same way that we were, there has been a shift.

In the early days I went back with nostalgia, I went after many years, after I got a job and everything, so there was a big gap. I went back with nostalgia and at that time it was still the India that I'd grown up, I remembered from my childhood, even the streets, I was familiar with the streets, I could get round Delhi, I felt comfortable there. Travelling around to other cities I felt comfortable.

0:12:27 The modernisation has had its impact, now there are parts of Delhi that are unrecognisable, the whole way Indians behave to each other has changed, it's now become more of a rat race. There is a greater drive to acquire things whereas then it was just a question of, you know, even after partition, even your neighbours etc knew what the whole country had been through. So the way neighbours reacted to each other was warmly, it wasn't about, "What do you have?" It's about, "What friendship and support can we give each other?"

That is still there but it's diminished and it's changed immensely now, because people are now becoming more like we're used to in the west. Where neighbours will greet each other but that warmth and that closeness that I felt when I was a child of five or six, or even a child of two or three, that is not there now.

0:13:30 I remember even our neighbours, when we had moved to Delhi and started to rebuild the family, our neighbours would treat me like their own son, for many, many years when I met them afterwards. That string bond was there, and they kept in touch throughout each other's lives. That generation is now moving, and the next generation is coming in and things are changing.

I go back to India and I go to Delhi frequently, at least once a year if not twice a year. I still have a close connection with Delhi, even though, as I said, it's changed so much, and I find the traffic there infuriating. I still feel, when I get there, even though I've lived most of my life in Birmingham now, three quarters of my life.

0:14:31 When I go there I just feel like connection, that this is where I was born, and this is home. It wasn't as large as it is now, it wasn't spread out, there were far fewer cars, having a car was a real luxury then, most people went round on bicycles, my

dad used to go to work on a bicycle, the car came much later. If you had a house you were doing well, because to own your own house was a luxury, most people just rented or if they were government employees they were given a house by the government to live in. It was more trusting, in other words you could relax a lot more in the sense that crime wasn't as rampant.

0:15:27 I know for a fact, and I think statistics will bale me out, women were safer, they could move around the city without being molested. Everybody had a sense, and I think that's not just for Delhi, but Delhi especially because it was the capital, had a sense that a new era had begun. That we had to work hard to make a new country, because we'd just got independence in 1947, and when I was growing up this was the 1950s.

This was the era of, you know, when John F Kennedy was around, when the cold war was around, India was being a nonaligned country, wasn't taking sides with either the west or with the communist bloc, they just wanted to be themselves.

0:16:29 The overriding attitude towards India was, "We're going to succeed in making a new independent country, we're going to succeed in that." They were not in a rush to do so, it wasn't like, "Let's do it tomorrow," they knew they had to take the first steps. When you look at what India has achieved in the past 70 years, as a new independent country that had nothing to start with in 1947, and what it's done since. In spite of all the difficulties in developing industry and getting businesses going etc. In spite of all the difficulties they've had they've achieved a hell of a lot. That is a mark of the character of the Indians I think.

0:17:26 I would say that each side, whether they were in Pakistan or whether they ended up in India, each side had their own tragedy and their stories to tell. So, we look at them and say,

"They did this to us," and I'm sure they're looking to us and telling their own stories and saying, "They did this to us." So there is a lot of blame, and that is still there very much in the air. Which is why the two countries don't really have warm relationships with each other in spite of the fact that culturally there's a lot of common ground.

I hope the day will come when we can live together, when we can put that- but at the moment I don't see that happening. Because there's been a lot of pain and hurt.

0:18:28 My aunt said to me, what was shocking was the people that they knew, and completely trusted as friends and neighbours, showed a completely different side to their character in that six months or a year when all this madness was going on. That never left her and a lot of people in our family, you know, the way people changed.

I think it must be the same for others, it must be the same for their experiences, so it will take time. The best thing you can do, and I've done this with my daughters, is, yes you keep your cultural ties and you keep your religious ties and you remember where your roots were, it's important. I think it's very important that we recognise, if you're going to make your home here, you look to the future and say, "What is my life as a UK citizen, as a British citizen?" You sort of start to live that life rather than looking backwards all the time.

0:19:29 Which means you get on with everybody, you get on with Europeans, you get on with Asians, you get on with Africans, you get on with West Indians, you have to try. Because this is becoming a multicultural country.

[Break in conversation 0:19:44 - 0:20:07]

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