

London, 23 October 2022

00:00

So first, I just wanted to ask whereabouts in Afghanistan did your families live?

Okay, my family we lived in Kabul initially in Shor bazaar, then moved to Karthe Parwan where we lived the whole time until I was in Afghanistan.

My family still initially lived in Shor Bazaar We moved to Kalai Fatullah for the rest of the time. From the 40s onwards we were living in Taimani till 1991.

01:07

No, people moved from different cities from different provinces. Me myself, I was born in Laghman and then when I was very young at the age of two or three, I moved to abul. And after that, we didn't go back to those city and lived the whole life in Kabul.

01:33

Yeah and many people like us, they moved from different parts. Basically what happened life levels in provinces cities were different to main cities. Education levels was different. So that's why people wanted to move, economically financially, people needed money and they need to go to the biggest cities and this process started from let's say around 1945 1930s.

Yeah, and people started moving to do those bigger cities and then they started living the biggest interests did your family.

Our families are related to each other and some of them might my grandmother. Why me from Sultanpur which is a province near Jalalabad.

02:43

Okay. And my granddad was the governor of the area in the same times. This trouble was all the time running away, the girls, the ladies of the Hindus and Sikhs in other minorities to convert them to Islam. And as I had from my family and parents, my grandfather more was living in Sultanpur.

03:14

So my grandmother was very nice and pretty. They want to abduct her. As my grandfather was the governor so he made arrangement in the nighttime to get her out from the house and there wasn't any other place to hide her so that why he's done it. Instead of sending to Kabul maybe danger away, because another people are also dangerous.

So he married her the night. I mean, married on that occasion, they said there's no objection to come down anything to it. That's why we are all mixed. Mostly whoever lived in Afghanistan, we are above three or four communities of Hindus like one family called Multan brother.

04:02

One was called Kukan biraderi, one was Auroras and other from another provinces, as well about mainly three or four categories. We are, we were a friendly and we are going to each others functions. Whatever happens, altogether like you as you know, we had some religious places all the time and our religious functions will getting organised.

04:32

All of us will be joining over there. And who are there? The place was to see each other families and also young generation has to go there and meet each other and get engaged and get married. That's what we were so close to each other and this was the I think over unity and our brotherhood was come from there.

04:57

The biraderi develop from different origins. Like you say in England, there's some one cost maybe Smith Bradley. Another is from maybe coming from Scotland, coming from Ireland and stream and Wales, what there is the same thing.

05:31

Three, four big cities over there. Something people were living over there. And this categories of communities were very long way back. Yeah, because originally Afghanistan was a Buddhist and Hindu country and we were living might be, I don't know, five years, five, thousand years, I, whatever you go back, you've got history over there. So, on that time, Pakistan was the part of it, and some people were living in Pakistan. There is a big city or big province called Multan might be this most honey coming from there and we are Kokrans in Punjab area mostly so we might be coming from there.

06:15

That's what is 3 or 4 I mean families and but we were all together like brother and sister and Aroras are also same, they come in from, you can say, middle of India or another one, which is the you can say Khost biraderi, the culture is a bit different: we do something, they don't do, don't do something.

06:54

Not big difference, but I was well, known three four categories of people. the what is now, the Northwestern or what is no hybrid, but moved to Afghanistan in 1947.

I haven't heard such a thing of people moving to Afghanistan in 1947. I never heard the people move from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Mainly this, these people living in Afghanistan, they were part of Afghanistan from the beginning and they never come from Pakistan or India, or anywhere else. They, they work in Afghanistan and, and then they struggle to save their religion and their culture.

And then their families if there was any, any kind of risk from surrounding people or those things, they always try to save themselves. And even though the situation in the old time were not good for them, they have to pay like jaziya, like some money to the governments for being Hindu to live in Afghanistan.

08:44

This, this was even recorded in history books. And we don't have any proper history about Afghan, Hindu and Sikh. But these are the stories we have heard from our parents. Any how they were paying this money to live in Afghanistan, being a Hindu.

09:05

And then during the terms of Ammanullah Kahn, And there was just a law and said that new law and Hindu will not be allowed to pay any kind of jaziya. And from that time, it was a bit in life changed for Afghanistan for Hindus. And after that, they never paid anything. They just were living like other people.

09:37

Kind of those things. So basically, if we say we have moved from any other country or did you know we were part of this country and we were there. Yeah.

10:01

My brothers and they were businessmen. They were importing and goods, from Japan, Korea, and those cities. And initially when they moved from there and they were, they were involved in the trade of clothes. They were doing initially buying the clothes from local factories selling into the the market.

10:33

And then when the market develops, their started to import thing from the other countries and this was the basic basically living things for us. When they moved to Kabul, there's a market called Hazar Gul market in basically, all Hindus were most of them in, in the same area.

11:00

There were three big markets, Shazada market, Hazar Gul Market and Afzal Gul market. And most of the people were there. They were doing their businesses and that's in the area. That's now equal Mandawi. Yeah, there's this idea. Yeah, where you go to Pul Khishti mosque behind the, it's all commercial area which is start from Sarai Hazar Gul later on. Everyone there is Hindu and Sikh.

11:47

I used to, after finishing the school, I used to go to my father's shop, and I remember that our people were economy economically, very active in the market.

12:14

I mean, the the business, let's say the business issue in this market, well, around 50% in Hindus. We were hearing things. When you are a minority you hear some things. But you ignore them.

12:40

Yeah, there are minor incidents. You you can hear and you can ignore them to those things. Yeah, happen. But still, we were happy to live there because we had no choice yet to have to go through. That was our country and small incidents. Like why you irritating us or, you know, becoming Muslim.

13:01

Mostly the problem which we had is to disturb our world girls in boys and tell them to convert Islam and be Muslim. But there very good families were there as well, Afghan families, which were like friends and the family, all the times and the business which they got, they had no choice.

13:25

The problem with the other community was because they were not that much clever and Hindu community and Sikhs were good at maths and business; they were born and brought up with business mind. So they were most of the people they trust in them.

13:44

Muslim people would deposit their money with Hindus because they were honest. And they will trust him a lot and they were like their money and the things. They would give 100,000 rupees and we would give it whenever they needed it. We wee happy to keep it and help them.

14:09

We used to visit Afghan Muslim houses. In 1980s, I remember few people had TV all over Afghanistan. Our next door, neighbour, he had a good 26 inch TV, and we all used to go there and

watch it together. He had influence in government, so he got a TV. He had a good house with a big balcony, so he has to put in his balcony, and the family comes and sit in the balcony and watch TV together.

14:56

We visited each other at special occasions. When they had events we had, and when we had events they came. They used to come to our Diwali with holi, whatever functions we had. They have to come to our house and we have to. So, they came to your house like a family.

15:11

You know, there wasn't any problems. I don't know, especially in public. Yeah. And other cities might be a problem, they don't come, but in couple we had got good traditions. And so about some you know they everyday life of the community in terms of, for example, food which is really important, but of Afghan culture.

15:39

The only thing of theirs that we didn't eat was beef. They used to tell us what was beef and we didn't eat it, we ate other things they cooked. We were cooking, normal food and everything was available. Life was good but it gradually became harder.

16:22

Until communism comes was a good then the fighting started in all the problems which occurred which was made hard for us to live over there and day by day. That circle was getting smaller and smaller similar smaller until we had no choice but to leave.

16:46

When people start coming from Pakistan, they were trained in Pakistan and their mind; they were brainwashed. And when they came from Pakistan, they were different; they had a different identity. They weren't like, normal Afghan people, they study in Pakistan, they were brought up in Pakistan, so those things were influencing in the society.

17:13

When I was in Afghanistan I remember that in different governments, the life for minorities was different inside a short time. It was different in Daud Khan time. It was different in when those government came in, they have changed. Let's say people were more broad-minded and when mujahidin came it totally hundred percent everything changed.

17:46

So different government different types of life and especially even people start moving from Pakistan, living in Afghanistan, they're thinking was not like a proper, Afghani people. They were thinking like Pakistani people and that was then the main problems started. And especially was put on the businessmen, especially Hindu businessmen. And everyone tried to leave Afghanistan.

18:11

They demanded our money and ran some money looting, they wanted our houses, they were taking away the cars, killing kill people, these kind of things. So all kind of we can say all kind of pressure. This pressure started in 1987.

18:41

In 198, the person was killed was my uncle who had been abducted and been killed. And I was with them together. They fired two shots at me but I was survived. It was in the north side of the city as you went to Jalabad in Budkhel. It was a really difficult situation.

19:19

Then everybody here being like when he comes sight of the society he never made arguments. We never bear any guns, we not been fighting with anybody. We just keep keeping quiet and just concentrating on our business, and on our economy and our education mostly. We were mostly educated people over there.

19:45

All the families, all the families were pushing their kids to go to the school and whatever available, even go to US study there. And we had good people from America we studied at places like American Center and we studied at the British consol. We had an Indian high school. Our community was keen to go there to study. Whoever had money tried to study.

20:08

Later we couldn't go to school. We had to get them in our own, our own school. We had Sunday schools over there and Friday schools. We had to bring our children them over there and teach them whatever we learnt from our own education. We had to give it to them. And slowly, slowly it became a hell for us.

20:32

Those people gone from Afghanistan to Pakistan, day of starting of the communism over there as a mujahir in they change over there. They studied in madrassa. All they talked about Islam, Islam, Islam.

And what kind of Islam is that? I don't know. Because its not the real Islam.

21:25

We had schools in Karte Parwana Gurdwara and in Taimani. People were coming, kids were coming, getting learn Hindi words, go to learn religious books in this industry. So we have to keep our lives. We had from Sikh too. Yeah, we had some high school from first class to sixth standard, and then after that, we didn't have anything.

21:49

Because we didn't have any kind of resources to take this further. We were peace loving people that's why we could live for a long time in Afghanistan.

22:19

If we wouldn't such kind of people probably we wouldn't have lived such a long time in Afghanistan so we never interfered into government affairs, never interferred until people religion matters and we were always doing with our own culture, and with our own religion, our own society. So that's that's why we have lived long time in Afghanistan.

They were small temples across Kabul. We have a other cities like, where we have to go for picnic. They had land in like gardens or picnic spots around all the country, which I think most of them occupied now and we don't know who's got them. Hindu and Sikh temples bought it for the people, then you're going on the Friday picnics in this, and they have to go over there and it's surplus money, so we had to invest it.

Wwe didn't think Afghanistan would be bad. We thought it would continue like the 40s. We thought our community would increase in size to half a million. We thought we would need space to live. So we invested in property.

24:16

We invested in rai Khoja, Ghazni, Shakar Dara, Jalalabad, Charkar, Mazaar Sharif and a little in Mazar and Baghlan. But mostly Jalabad, Ghazni, Kabul and Charikar.

25:23

In the southeaster we didn't have. Their culture is different, they're talking different and they're very aggressive. As my brother said, we were not in interfering in any aggression, aggression or something, which harms us. You were just quiet and keep calm and whatever, let me live and live abd live and this love, you are, you know. There were some people in Khost, We had some people

living in the border area who said they were Afghanistan sometimes and Pakistan sometimes. Because it's the border area.

25:59

I did it go to Khost because obviously the situation got too bad and I see we had to leave.

27:10

Killing started, abducting, and ransom was from the people. So the people said, no, it's not the right way. So we have to get another way of some people went to India or there is very tough life as well, because more population over there in our nature is not adapted to that properly.

27:38

So, over there, when we go over there in India, they were telling us, you are from Afghanistan. You're not Indians. And when you go to Afghanistan they say you are Hindus and Indians go away. That's why we most probably ever had way to come out.

27:56

Were going to Germany America here in UK Canada all over.

28:30

In UK, we start building an organisation to keep people together, and this was done by one person, and then more people were involved in it. And now today, again, we can see that we have got this community centre. We are, we have seen our gathering and how we gather here, especially we are very united when we have big functions, everyone from different types of community. And they, they come here; when someone dies for condolences, we don't say that I don't know him or, I don't know him. Everyone comes. This this has been given to us by our four about ancestors.

29:20

So, this a culture, really like a culture that always keep a united and that's the way we are living here. Our database we have about 1000 families in London. Yeah, of Hindu and 1,000 families and most of us families live in South.

29:47

I after say, thanks to the government of UK because they put us, most of us put us in this London, this way. We are here all of us, but I think about 50 or 45% we are in West London. The rest are around London, as well. And this temple acts as this centre.



30:11

? When first, come about 10 or 12 families they were there. So, they say we have to keep our culture alive.

They just organise in some small and parties and you heard about Glassy Junction. Oh yes, they were hiring the basement for there, then a bit more people come in. So then we have to go out around and find another good place for them in Southall or somewhere.

30:52

And there were about 200 families, so they was no place; we needed a place to be together. So we hired a small place in Convent Wy every Thursday. So we were paying and getting over there, then we said no, we have to look around him, find somewhere then Brenley Way in Southall, there is a cultural site and they have a pavillion. and Thomas will south. So So we rate renovated place to use and we were there about five years and again when the population gone grown up grown up that's place was small for us. So you have to look around. At the time our secret brothers, they were gonna build a centre. We bought a place. And that temple, which is Gurdwara, Guru, Nanak Darbar. That was aware of, for part of patience. And the first thing we had is his niece, got married over there and we hired that place for him and then we approached him six in English both together, we approach them. So, can you give this place to us?

32:27

And we have to use as a community centre or a good water or Monday or whatever the guy was interested. And we bought that place but later on Sikh said, no, we need a for ourself and we said no problem, that's fine. It's yours. So we got one place over there then we need it for us as well, obviously.

32:47

So we been checking around and as you know we need someplace which is being a good parking and a bit in the city and centre of the south. Also, we found this in 2012 and we bought this one.

33:07

We were together with the Sikhs, but as you know there are family relations and engagemet, Well, we give our together as, you know, this some small. It's gonna be sent together. And we some of us be too family, relations like engagements in this and all some facts mature, and they're richer trying to, I fell apart between both communities but as we try to be unite but you know the factor, the factors are there like Sikhism or they want to make Sikhism separate from Hinduism.

34:16

Our culture is different from Indians. Ours is totally afghani culture, Afghani Hindu culture, So we can't mix easily with other people? the way, the, the Afghani people, the Muslim, the other Muslim people, they brought up their kids we were living the same community suppose. We were going the same schools. So our culture, a bit mixture of Afghani, pure of Afghani culture and our Hindu culture. But this other Hindu culture there is totally Indian culture which is religiously, we follow the same thing but culturally are a bit differences.

35:22

We in Afghanistan, our people are more tight in their, let's say, our our daughters in Afghanistan. They were allowed to go to school till 6th or 7th standard or few of them very few of our community, went to higher school. Because of our people are scared if suppose from my family goes to school, what will happen tomorrow to her?

35:54

We were not sure. That's why we were restricted. So those retriCTION was still in place when we moved to to London because our mindset was still those Afghani minds, and so we couldn't mix up with other.

36:25

As I said before, there are some good, very good, very good families (Afghan Muslim) who were there, which were mixed up with them, and some of them one or two families here or somewhere, so, we have still relations with them London, like hello hi. No a part of this more than. The other thing is I've gone embassy. Time to time some people need some clarification is used really Afghan or not. So that's only source which is they rely on this I've got embassy then after that our two societies, which we have to verify they are Hindus or Sikh Afghans from Afghanistan.

37:47

No, no, nobody went back to Afghanistan. Because the fear was still there. The devil was still there. Yeah. Even they changed the clothes from the turban. They chaged to good cloth about the devil was still the same. TRhey are the same people. They were in Dau time, They were in communists. They were in mujahidin. They were in Taliban

38:24

At the same thing, most of the same thing, they were just changing cloth. It's the same people.

38:45

And most of I, I know they were in previous government. They were in the next government. They were in the next government. So they still carrying on. Yeah. And still we see those faces. And, and the situation in the majority time is change, probably for other people or other people who are living in Pakistan.

39:04

That I mostly live in Pakistan, but not change for Hindus, because we are not minority and we have, we had the same pressure on us.

39:25

Everything was lost. We lost our identity, we lost our culture, we lost lots. Financially lost everything as well because we couldn't take anything, only we are allowed to take over essentials.

39:58

Only two, three percent people who are lucky, got their properties been sold or whoever left over. Only people who have a good neighbour give their life and contact it. Okay, I want to buy. Okay, that property might be now is five million on that day for 50,000 but he bought it.

40:19

Yeah, he was honest, he given 50,000. But only a few percent, most people lost everything. Maybe five percent, rest scared of their lives. You can go there, you can yeah, but you never know if you can bring the money or you can even get the money or you can come back alive.

40:43

Some people went there to get money. But couldn't get it. They lost the money and property.

41:03

Maybe most of the property taken by force. Gun culture is very popular in Afghanistan. If you go there, you have to face the gun culture first. If you're strong enough to stand against them, that does lucky for you, otherwise, nothing.

41:28

I remember in th last days. A man was living behind us. His family wasn't living there. He left Afghanistan five years before mujahidin. He left his relatives. Someone came to his house, made false documentation. Knocked the door and kicked him out. I was there. Is said its not your house. But there's nothing we can do. This is tip of ice berg.

42:28

Younger generation here don't even want to hear about Afghanistan.

42:48

You tell them about interesting places, but they don't want to hear. They don't even want to go to India

43:14

Relation wise they are quite close. They are quite close. Because those children, those youngsters have been brought up here, or who wound here. But now they are learning the local culture..

44:02

Mixing with English people. The other Gujarati people, the Punjabi people and they make relation to make friendship in this. That's why is a bit. We are trying to keep our culture alive, but its difficult. We come see a bit difficult because young generation.

44:29

Whoever is there is level of education is too high, then ask is that difference because they are all pure English here and they got fluent English. And they know what is difference between A and B nowadays, everything is in Google. They just put in there. So don't need a dad. Don't need your mum. I've got it here and that's what this. All right, what do you think? We are trying here in the community centre. The family is also we are trying to tell them who we are, how we were living in Afghanistan.

45:18

And what what were our relation between us? What were our relation outside? The community, we're trying to teach them. We are not sure about it because when we come to the gathering here, most of the young people, they are not interested. They don't come, we try a lot but they are not interested.

45:45

Yeah, So living in UK or in Europe, or America's totally different than living in Afghanistan or India. There's totally different. So they are being brought up as UK culture or in Europe, if there are in European according to Europe culture. So not like Afghanistan? There, even your 50 60 you have to obey your dad and mum and listen to them.

46:17

But here as English culture, when they are on the age of being young, they don't care about whatever it's okay. You are thankful to them. Still, they are most of them are listening. Most of them are okay and I think I can say all of them, but as we say, the culture is still affecting.

47:08

All the Asamai temples are our community. We visit each other for weddings and celebrations.

47:34

Our weddings are influenced by Afghanistan. The song, the the dance the songs, which are played on the wedding, the party. Yeah suppose my age generation their love Afghani songs, even the youngster who have been brought up here, they love the Afghanistan songs.

48:01

There's still something on there. Yes. Yeah. So they love it. Religiously it's all based on Hinduism. Yeah, so that that's, that's the other part and culturally when we are in transport. We have any sounds we have when we are setting together. We talk about Afghanistan, we discuss the matters in Afghanistan.

48:21

So those things still in our age its there. We talk about current affairs. We talk here to see, still like here talk about politics, because a bit of our mind goes over there and it.

48:46

When we see people's got no food, kids are dying on the road. All these things happens and the guys, which were not even human being, they are billionaires this. All looted people of them. Yes. Youngsters are their kids which are dying on the street, that's their money, they looted and they are warlords

Only seven or eight families left over there now, because mainly because it's not maybe single only two couples left over there and about six, seven people more.

You imagine from a community of 150 or 120,000, people, not only four or five people left.

They suffered a lot and because there no one is interested to leave a land where he was born he was brought up and then suddenly forced to leave the country. So there was lots of pressure loss of those things, another people have left because after the Taliban came there and this year some of the left of.

50:08

What do you think is the prospect for the temples there in Afghanistan now? Because if there's not a community and people question for us in, that's the thing is religious places. And you cannot imagine even somebody talking about selling them or and dispose them, or whatever you call a no.

50:34

If you talk about this because it's religious place, everybody is against you but God nobody's got solution for it. We had a debate. I was three four months about this all over the community wherever they are. We spread this was who gave us your ideas, so what to do. Everybody saying save them but how nobody's got solution Somebody saying, give it to Indian government.

50:59

Somebody said to British government, somebody's gay sales together to UN. But whoever we approach Indian governments is my own properties are occupied by Taliban and warlords, and I got no control of Afghanistan.

51:20

United Nations is now we have anything over there. America says, no hands up. I'm not doing a British Government says, well, out of my control Park is done. As you know, if you say to Pakistan Pakistani local themselves. Fingers crossed nothing will happen to them.

51:42

Small properties gone. But the big ones which are about 10 to 12 which is all look like fingers to us, they are there, how long? We don't know. Religious artefacts remain there.

Yeah, some books or some things which are for teaching or for study to get our culture. We have them. These are also the main things which we had a like this. We do believe that Asamai was one of the Goddess had set there one day and let that diva over there and still sat from from that day.

52:34

And I think one of the kings because you've seen something on his dreams, any next day, coming in order to make a street over there, then given the place, whatever, which is Asamai at the moment, there wasn't any mosque next to that at all. They build a mosque.

52:59

If you go to or somebody now, the next way is a big mosque there. We had very big argument with them. They said its just for people. But they then moved our crematorium and built a big mosque. They destroyed everything.

53:20

53:46

We hopefully and received because these are heritage in the moment, they are all has to be taken care of, by UNICEF or United Nations. That's why we think.

54:13

Aga Khan Foundation is now helpful. Now Taliban are against Hazara, Tajiks and Uzbeks. Taliban bring in Pashtuns from other areas. They got nothing. Most Talibans are Pashtuns.