

KS3

Lesson 2

Ugandan Asian Migration



What can we learn about identity and belonging in Britain in the 1970s from Ugandan Asian experiences of migration?



Context

Lesson 1

Why did the Asian community settle in Uganda, and then leave in the 1970s?

Experiences and Impact

Lesson 2

What was life like for Ugandan Asians arriving in 1970s Britain?

Lesson 3

How did the Ugandan Asians find 'home' in Britain?

What was life like for Ugandan Asians arriving in 1970s Britain?



Objective:

To understand the challenges faced by the Ugandan Asian community when they arrived in Britain and how they adapted to their new environment.

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The extract you will read is taken from an oral history interview conducted in 2023



Bharat was born in Jinja in 1962

Bharat's family moved to Africa in the early 1940s, when his grandfather left his struggling farming family in Gujarat, India, to find work in Kenya so he could support them. Many Gujaratis faced similar struggles as farmers and sought opportunities in Africa to support their families back home. Bharat's grandfather settled in Ramasi, Kenya, where he started a small restaurant. Bharat's father and older brother eventually joined him, and the family moved from Kenya to Uganda, where they obtained British passports and settled in Kakira.

Oral History: Bharat Joshi



Interviewer: Do you remember your feeling or your first thoughts when you got off the plane?

Bharat: Yeah one of the feelings that I had was "Okay I'm going to a new country, a new land [where] I didn't know anyone" but it was always, everyone said "We were going to London" all my friends, so as far as I was concerned "I'm going to London, okay it's going to be a new place, but when I land there I will see people I know, I'll see friends" and when we did land at Heathrow airport I had my shorts I had a jumper on, it was raining early morning and I was thirsty, parched as hell, and as we were walking past I see a vending machine, there's a Coke in there, so I said to my dad "Can I have a Coke? I'm really thirsty" and that was the first I literally saw my father cry because he didn't have any money to buy me a Coke. As we were coming out of the terminal I see a lot of white people but I don't see anyone I recognise.

From the flight, just in the airport I thought my grandparents would be there, no, no one. It was just the four of us, we were on a flight [were] we didn't know anyone.

From Heathrow Airport, obviously they went through all the medical checks and things like that, and we were put on a coach and taken to a camp, RAF Camp in Honiton in Devon, we stayed there for just under two weeks.

We were told that we would be taken to a place of safety, a camp, but we weren't told where it was or if they did my father knew but I didn't. We were taken to the camp and were shown to our rooms, our quarters that we had. Later I found out that we were one of the fortunate ones, one of the lucky ones, that we had the officers barracks so our beds were not wooden beds but they were metal beds but you didn't have a bath in there, you didn't have toilets. You had to go use the public toilets on-site, public baths on-site, so again I was in this camp with people I didn't know. I didn't know anyone there.

Interviewer: Were they all people from Uganda?

Bharat: All from Uganda, the camp it was just for the Uganda refugees. And then as they went out, my parents would go out, and then they would meet someone that we knew, so some people from Kakira they'd come [on] a different flight but they had arrived and stayed in the same camp. One of the things that I remember is the camps were kept open for nearly two years and a lot of people lived in those camps for those two years, they didn't relocate anywhere.

Interviewer: Out of choice?

Bharat: Out of choice because they had a place to stay, they were being given spending money, they were being fed and I think for a lot of people they stayed there but I think it was just in the hope that "Okay Idi Amin will not last that long, after what he's done, the outcry, maybe he's going to get thrown out and we can all go back" so a lot of them I think stayed in the camps in that respect, in the hope that "We will go back" but I think when reality sunk in after two years or so [it was like] "This is it, we need to do something".

Interviewer: And what were the helpers and the volunteers [like]?

Bharat: They were fantastic. My first memory of the helpers we had was a clergyman, a Vicar from Honiton a local church, he must have been in his 70s. He and his wife were there, they were the first ones to greet us at Heathrow, then when they heard I hadn't eaten or drunk anything his wife took us along to a table and got us tea, biscuits, and water. They got us warm clothes to wear that had been donated by people across the country. So, they travelled with us on the same coach to Honiton, but I don't know what it was, some sort of bond or something, but you know we talk about previous lives that somehow, we're connected, that's what it became with them and my father, they adopted my father as a son, and we used to see them literally every day. They'd come and visit us, take us to their home. I even remember we went there for Sunday afternoon tea, where we had tea, cakes, and biscuits, and I accidentally knocked over a cup of tea and, not in this country, but back in Uganda & India if you did something [bad] you always got a slap and that's what my mother did, just gave me a slap, and the wife Mrs Smith was livid she said "Don't hit a child! It's only carpet that can be cleaned". But we stayed in touch with them until they passed away and my only regret was that I couldn't go back to Honiton and see them before they passed away. They were elderly at that time and by the time we moved out, set up our own lives, rebuilt everything, going anywhere was not an option. You were just literally living day to day trying to save what money you can to get by and to rebuild your lives.

Listen to the extracts and then answer the questions below



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1. Pick out 3 things Bharat says about his arrival in England
.....

2. What could Bharat's recollection about the clergyman reveal about attitudes to migrants in 1970s Britain?
.....

3. What might some of the challenges be for a historian working with oral histories such as this one?
.....

www.ugandanasians.com/interviews/bharat-joshi/

Source: Oral History interview with Bharat Joshi 2023

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Recap: Arrival in Britain

Using Bharat's testimony from last lesson, complete the following activity.



What does the source reveal about experiences of Ugandan Asian people arriving in Britain in the 1970s?

Evidence	Historical Interpretation
Children arriving into the UK thought that they would go straight to London and be reunited with friends and family.	Accommodation and facilities for refugees were basic and disappointing.
Everyone had to use shared toilets and bathrooms in the camp. Bharat said that his family were 'one of the lucky ones' because they had proper beds in their room.	Some British people were very supportive and welcoming.
In the camps, food and spending money were provided for the residents.	New arrivals to Britain did not intend or expect to stay permanently.
Some families stayed in the camps for two years.	Initially, new arrivals did not have any choice in where they would live in the UK and were placed in camps. They could feel isolated.
Bharat's family became close friends with the local vicar and his wife and remained in touch for the rest of their lives.	The British government had set up a system to support the new arrivals from Uganda.

Challenge: write a paragraph in response to the question. You can use the points on the right in your paragraph and any other relevant examples from today's lesson.

1972 in numbers



52% of households had access to a car

School leaving age was raised from **14 to 16**

3 TV channels in the UK

8% of the UK population said they had a religion that was not Christianity*

42% of households had a telephone

Average annual salary for men over 21 was **£1,903**

37% of households had central heating

1st official **Gay Pride** march took place

Cost of a can of coke **6½p**

10.3% of homes had an outdoor toilet

UK unemployment rose to **1,023,583**

Average house price was £5,158 (UK House Price Index)

1.2% of homes had no toilet

No. 1 single in August:
Alice Cooper, School's Out

From what you now know about Britain in 1972, how do you think the new arrivals from Uganda would feel?



Share your thoughts with another student:



Think



Pair
(tell your neighbour)



Share with the class



As you read through the next slides, highlight adjectives used by the young people to describe their experiences:

Adjective used	What they are describing
Cramped	Jaswant's aunt's house in Birmingham

Welcome?



When we arrived at Stansted Airport ...I filled in all the forms, and we were going to go into one of the camps and then we heard this voice. It was my aunt who lived in England ...So, she came over and talked to us. She said, "Don't go to the camps they're really horrible, they're worse than Uganda, you'll be really ill-treated etc", which was untrue, "I've sorted out houses for you and jobs and everything".

So, we got on this white minibus and went to Birmingham and guess what? She lived in a 3 bedroom terraced house with a son and a brand new bride and that was it, 20 of us and three of them! It was the most horrendous cramped house, can you imagine 20 people wanting to have a shower in the morning, a bath in those days, there weren't any showers, oh it was just awful, absolutely awful. And then in the first summer we [then looked and] found houses, we had rented accommodation, and it was wretched, I'd never seen a rat in a house, it was a room they gave us, rat infested, there was no heating and all of us had to share this one room, exorbitant rent, and so we lived from one horrible, horrible accommodation to another to another and I found that part, that and my mother's journey really difficult to get around. I find that bit harder than Amin's murderous regime.

Jaswant, arrived in England aged 18 in 1972

Welcome?



We were all taken to a Royal Air Force barracks. We ended up in the one in West Malling ... in Sevenoaks, Kent and that's where we stayed. I don't know if you know but it was basically barracks. They would have massive sort of dormitory type rooms that were portioned off for different families, so we'd just have beds there and ... just .. like a bedside cupboard. We were there for seven months. We got there on the 7th of November and we were housed in June 1973.

It was a lovely stay from my perspective. Obviously from my parents' perspective it was very different, especially my dad who'd lost all his businesses, all his properties.

But for me, as a child, it was a really nice experience because we had a purpose built school on the campus so we'd go to school there, we'd get taught, we had lovely teachers. And then we had to go to the mess hall where we had all our meals. So we had breakfast, lunch, tea, and dinner. I very fondly remember the tea when we always used to have shortbread biscuits with a cherry on top and that was really a lovely experience.

Sutinder, born in Uganda, came to UK aged 10

Welcome?



.....

Those early days were incredibly traumatic for me, I found the fact that we were brown in a predominantly white area, the fact that we would constantly be called “[racial slur]” or [told] “go back home” or “you don’t belong here”, so hard.

Between 6 and 10/12, I found the transition incredibly hard. ... [mum] would walk us to school because obviously she was worried about our safety. Safety was a massive thing in her dimension, she wanted to make sure we were always safe. So she would walk us to school and she would be called names along the way and she would always walk us back and would wear a sari with boots underneath and it was heavy snow in those days - we used to have 6 to 10 inches of snow: it was always really cold! I found being at school really difficult, I found it hard to fit in, obviously language is a huge barrier, I remember I found English so hard, [but] maths I could just do it.

Well we ... we had, I don’t know if it was because it’s predominantly my mum that was always with us, and whether if there was a male it would have been different, but it was very much the name calling. I remember spitting ... people would spit at you. ... I know the National Front were around but did I witness it, no, but I know it was there, so that fear factor was always there.

[My parents] accepted it, I think they had no choice really. It was very much ... “don’t say anything, don’t do anything, don’t aggravate the situation, just keep walking if we’re being name called along the street, ignore it, deal with whatever is coming, it’s their country not ours” That’s how it felt though, we’re guests here, they’ve taken us in, but it’s not our country so take the rubbish.

.....

Sophie, born in Uganda, arrived in UK aged 6



Here are some words you may have come across,
used by the young people to describe their experiences:

Adjective/ Adverbs used	What they are describing
Cramped	Jaswant's aunt's house in Birmingham
Difficult	
Lovely	
Fondly	
Different	
Horrendous	

Settling in: life in the UK



[Death Threats to Black kids,
England 1970's – YouTube](#)

© BBC Panorama

Settling in: life in the UK



.....
LEICESTER
.....

In what ways did the Ugandan Asian refugees face hostility in Leicester in the 1970s?
.....

How do you think the NF affected them?
.....

Settling in: life in the UK



LEICESTER

I struggled with identity for a very long time [first] in Yorkshire ... then aged 12 we moved to Leicestershire because my mum was very lonely ... So ... Yorkshire [was] traumatic, we were readjusting... learning the language and then aged 12 ... we moved to Leicester. ... the hub of Asian culture ... My dad's younger brother had bought a house and he said 'you could live with me because you looked after me in Africa I owe it to you to look after you' ... My mom was incredibly lonely she just missed Asian culture, missed her family, a lot of her family were in Leicester at this point, so we moved.

So I go to a school that is ... probably 50/50 Asians and whites. And then ... you have the same battle ... some ... kids don't want to know [me], because I'm ... fair skinned ... so nobody quite knew whether I was Arabic ... Iranian... Asian. So they're like "well you're not Asian you don't look dark enough" ...

I didn't know about Diwali and I didn't know about all the Asian gods so I didn't know anything about my Asian identity and in Leicester, obviously people have grown up with their own Asian identity, so they belong and I was like here I am thrown into another world where I don't ... belong even though I look similar ...

[But] they took me in, ... and I'm still friends with them now ... but then I had that whole well 'I'm not English and I'm not Indian because I don't feel Indian and I don't know anything about my culture and I'm not English because they don't want me, so where do I belong?' But you grow and you learn ... I found coming to Leicester incredibly hard ... but now I love [it], the most diverse area of the country ... people are accepting.

Sophie

Settling in: life in the UK



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Ugandan [Asian] refugees, they didn't want, but now of course we've suddenly turned deserving, and I read somewhere that the Ugandan Asians are the most successful group and have really contributed millions to this economy because they've all gone and [created] businesses, especially in Leicester.

When I talk to a lot of the women who left Uganda there is one thing we are all agreed on, and that is that leaving Uganda was not bad for many women. In Uganda the gender role was very defined and, yes girls did study and went out to study and even went university, but it wasn't with the aim of getting a degree and pursuing a career necessarily... Since coming to England I've done two degrees, I've got a career ... we have to acknowledge that England has been liberating for women. I've got friends who are in the LGBT community who are female, and they have said they would probably never have been allowed to be gay or express their sexuality in Uganda, they would've been forced into marriage and that would have been it.

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Bharti Dhir

Settling in: life in the UK



The Ugandan Asians played a massive, massive part in where the UK is right now.

I was told £6million was invested in the Ugandan Asians of 1972 I reckon that is the biggest return of [an] investment by the UK. Because if you look at the Ugandan Asians they have become in all professions, doctors, pharmacies, dentists you name it every single profession, businesses, they have absolutely played a massive part. All the shops in the 80s with Ugandan Asians opening long hours and the British have caught onto that with the Sainsbury's, the Tesco's all the shops now are 24 hours, some of them, so the Ugandan Asians have played a massive part.

And if you look at all the kids the 3rd 4th 5th generations all of them are all educated. In my time 3/10 went to university, now it's like 95% of them go to university, the first question you ask is "Oh which Uni did you go to?" expecting them to have gone to Uni. So, they've all gone to University all excelled in whatever they've done. So that 28,000 [Ugandan Asians] who came is a big family now and they have provided a massive income to the UK, the GDP, that £6million is probably worth a thousand times over.

Mayur Seta

What was life like for Ugandan Asians in Britain?



.....
Write a brief answer to the question, including both the expected, and unpredicted aspects of experiences of life in the UK
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Here are some suggestions of what you could include:

- Jobs
 - Housing
 - Racism
 - Diversity
 - Gender
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References



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ONS data on life in the UK 1972

www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/incomeandwealth/compendium/generallifestylesurvey/2013-03-07/40yearsofdatacollection

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Religion –1974 Gallup survey

www.brin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Religion-in-Great-Britain-1939-99-A-Compendium-of-Gallup-Poll-Data.pdf

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Video clip – YouTube BBC Panorama

[Death Threats to Black kids, England 1970's – YouTube](#)

