

Ugandan Asian Migration to Britain in the twentieth century



In this lesson you will learn about the experience and impact of Ugandan Asian migration to the UK after 1972.

Many of the sources in this lesson are the voices of Ugandan Asians in oral history interviews conducted in 2022 – 23.

Part 1 - Empire

What was the link between Uganda and Britain

Part 2 - Migration

Expulsion from Uganda

Part 3 - Resettlement

Coming to the UK

Part 4 – Exam practice

Historical skills

Lesson structure:

Key words:

Coup (d'état):

...

Decolonisation:

...

Exploit:

...

Indentured labour:

...

Part 1 - Empire



What was the link between Uganda and Asia?

Highlight the reasons why Indians came to Uganda (and dates where available)

Mayur:

[my family came to Uganda] with the railways. Kenya wanted railways between the two countries, people from India were invited, my great grandparents went there [around 1908] and they stayed there. They had a business and ... just didn't go back to India and opened a business and I was born there [in Uganda].

Shenaz:

My father was in India, in Bombay, and my mother was in India too, but the economic situation in India wasn't [great] so a lot of people migrated to Africa. My dad's mum passed away in India, so he went to a boarding school. So then after that when he was about 18, he migrated to Africa.... set up a business ... in a tiny village called Nabusanke, he was completely on his own. So, then mum and dad got married ... about 1950. ... It was a nice little village and ... my dad ... was a school headmaster ... I was born in 1960.

Jyotika:

My dad was born in Uganda, [my granddad] came to Africa I don't know when. But they were invited by the British to work as tailors because they needed a lot of uniforms to be sewn for railway [workers], for police. [The British] were inviting people from India who were skilled in those areas. So that's why he came by ship to Mombasa from India, from Gujarat. ... the men always went first and then they worked, got a house, had a bit of money and then they would kind of call upon their families.

Jaswant:

My father was born in India, he went to Uganda because one of his brothers had been fighting in the Second World War for the British Army and then he went and bought land [in Uganda] and started growing sugar [cane] and then invited all three of his brothers to [come and he] opened up a factory for making sugar. So my father was born in India, my grandparents were born in India.

Can you predict how these factors might affect the future for Ugandan Asians in 1971?

Increased inequality between indigenous Ugandans and Asians	Growth of independence movements	Asians were increasingly visible as an elite as European migration to Uganda tailed off	January 1971: Britain, USA and Israel triggered a coup where Idi Amin became leader in Uganda
	Decolonisation		

Part 2 - Migration



Expulsion from Uganda

Turning point: Idi Amin 4th August 1972

Addressing a military regiment, Ugandan President Idi Amin declared that Uganda had no place for the 80,000 Asians who were 'sabotaging Uganda's economy and encouraging corruption'.

By the 9th of August, Amin declared that all non-citizen Asians must leave Uganda within three months and that those who dared remain would be 'sitting on fire'.

Extract 1:

As soon as he'd won the election [Idi Amin] there was a change you could feel in the atmosphere that something was not quite right, things were changing ... a fear that started to creep into people's lives, that this person is not the right person, that we may [lose] the freedom that we had, persecutions may come in. But no one ... ever dreamt that he would make this announcement, people thought that ... we're here for life, and that was it.

Bharat, grew up in Uganda and was 10 in 1972.

Extract 2:

Oh my god we were scared, when we knew that we had to leave, and it was just like we were counting days to get out because all these armed officers with rifles were roaming around on motorbikes frightening people to get out as soon as possible: 'don't wait for 30 days'.

Tarla, who grew up in Uganda and was 13 in 1972.

Extract 3:

People didn't eat fish from the River Nile, because we lived at the source of River Nile, because they found [body parts], watches in the fish. When they finished dumping bodies on the street then they started dumping them in the river, so all that fear! And you knew that your life didn't mean anything.

Jaswant, was born in Uganda and was 18 in 1972.

January 1971:

A military coup led by General Idi Amin removed President Milton Obote from Uganda. Amin declared himself president and starting removing potential enemies. The targeted deaths of many Ugandans followed.

August 1972:

Amin announced that all Asians who were not Ugandan passport holders would be expelled from Uganda in 90 days. The British Government reluctantly agreed to accept migrants who held British passports. Approximately 28,000 Ugandan Asians (who had British passports) came to Britain in 1972. The first evacuation flight organised by the UK Government landed at Stansted Airport in **September 1972**, carrying 193 passengers.

Make a short timeline in your book of the events leading to, and then arrival in the U.K. of Ugandan refugees.

Date	Key events
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Part 3 - Resettlement

Coming to the UK



Part 1: Challenges

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 ... it was basically a barracks ... massive dormitory type rooms that were portioned off for different families, so we'd just have beds there and ... a bedside cupboard. We were there for seven months. We got there on the 7th of November 1972 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.

At that time you had Enoch Powell a Conservative politician who was so far-right and making speeches about the Rivers of Blood he was stirring up. This was a mainline Conservative party MP talking about, what was going to happen if [the government] let all these people come into the country, and the newspapers obviously jumped on that and they were spreading that hatred. I don't think either of the political parties really wanted to take us, it was because of pressure from within the country from a lot of the population that they felt they had to, and also because it was from a Commonwealth country they felt that they had to. ...It was very much to show that we care, because they didn't want us, they really did not want us.

In those days there was safety concerns because you had the National Front, you had the skinheads. So when you were going out you were always fearful ... I felt it on a few occasions, coming home from school on my own. There were skinheads that didn't beat me up badly but kicked me, punched me, and these were older children.

Bharat Joshi, born in Uganda, came to the UK aged 10 in 1972.

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 Nagi, born in Uganda, came to UK aged 10 in 1972.

My dad .. was an architect, and ... a really successful businessman, [he] had a lot of wealth and lots of connections ... So, I think it really affected him a lot ... to start from scratch again. We had nothing, ... and my parents had to find a job and the only job he could find was factory work. Although he was an architect, he couldn't get a job because ... he was a foreigner. So he ended up having to work in a factory and he did his time, he was very good, [he] kept the house going and he used to travel, get up at the crack of dawn and travel a long way to get to work and come back. He even did shift work for years and years just so we could manage.

Sutinder Nagi, born in Uganda, came to the UK aged 10 in 1972, with her family.

Do you think Ugandan Asians expected these experiences in the UK?

Explain your answer



Sep. 09, 1972 – Anti Ugandan Asian March in London

Source A: A photograph published in a daily newspaper

Opinions of the protesters:

People at the protest:

Target of the protest:

Politicians' views at the time:

Notes:

- This question asks you about the impact and experience of migration to the UK – and what the source tells you about that.
- Make sure you mention the provenance of the source and what that tells you (eg date). Firstly, look at the date.
- It is from the time when the first Ugandans were arriving – most would come after this date. So in terms of impact, it can tell you about how some people in *Britain* felt. It might suggest what experiences would await the Ugandan Asians. At this point, the 28,000 Ugandan Asians will not have encountered the people in the photograph and vice versa.
- Does this source contradict / support what you know about Ugandan Asian experiences of arrival? Make sure you add your own knowledge.

Mark scheme:

7-8 marks

Level 4: Complex evaluation of source with sustained judgement based on content and provenance Extends Level 3. Students may progress from a developed evaluation of the source by sustained, balanced judgements of the source supported by factual knowledge and understanding related to the enquiry point and the broader context of the thematic study.

5-6 marks

Developed evaluation of source based on content and/or provenance Extends Level 2. Students may progress from a simple evaluation of the source with extended reasoning supported by factual knowledge and understanding related to the enquiry point and the broader context of the thematic. This may evaluate utility either on the basis of content and/or provenance.

3-4 marks

Level 2: Simple evaluation of source based on content and/or provenance Students may progress from a basic analysis of the source by reasoning supported with factual knowledge and understanding.

1-2 marks

Level 1: Basic analysis of source Answers may show understanding/support for the source, but the case is made by assertion/basic inference Students identify basic features which are valid about the source related to the enquiry point