

Mrs Javed
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Interviewer: Urmala Jassal

Interviewer: I
Respondent: R

00:00 I Can you tell me a little bit about yourself, something about when you first came to this country and how you got here?

00:11 R I come from Pakistan, I came here on 1st June 1967, after getting married to Saleem Javed, my husband. And after that we are here, and whoever comes here, I think, can never go back. So we are here we have grownup children, we are married here, so of course we are here and we go to Pakistan as just visitors and when we first came, we lived for a while in Small Heath as lodgers and then we got our own house in Sparkhill on Avondale Road which is opposite the Sparkhill Library. So we spent eight years there and we were very happy there. It was very good area and we are happy that we had chosen that area to live there. We were happy, our children were happy, we had a very good time and it has been very advantageous for us to live there, because it was a very nice area having almost all the facilities within our reach, the library, the pub, schools shops, doctors, everything was there.

01:48 R Er my children couldn't get a place there in Sparkhill schools, there were four or five schools in that area, so they were on the list but we couldn't get there, so we had to put them in Montgomery School, it was in Sparkbrook. So I used to take them there sometimes by bus, mostly by walking and it was very good to go from Sparkhill to Sparkbrook, looking at, I could say the window shopping was all so, so shopping, shops there and then there was pub, there were post office, there was everything there, so it was good, and it was quite a long distance, but I never felt that because you go on walking and looking at the different things.

02:45 R So it was, I never felt that it's too far, so it was very good experience living there, and I think the best thing that we got out of that area was that as the library was just on the corner, so when we moved there, my daughter was two and a half years old and my son was four years old, so they became members and we used to go every week to the library and they use to come back with four books and try to read them, try to read them, so I help them as if they had read, so then then the next week we would go to give them back and have more so they developed a love of books and it was very good for them and still they love books, they love reading and if we got to read a good book, them sitting in front of the TV and they have learnt a lot from the books, so I'm really thankful to that Sparkhill Library. And then there was park very near so often we would go to the park and do the Sparkhill Park, this

was very nice park and we used to take a sheet with us and their toys, something to eat, we would sit anywhere we would like to and spend many hours there, children playing there, and then there were other children and mothers, and like nowadays you don't feel safe for yourself and children to be in a park for many hours. Sometimes we used to go in the evening, so, and then after playing and eating and then we used to go and do window shopping, and sometimes to buy things, there was Ace Value, very big shop at Stratford Road. That was a must to go in and there they used to buy some toys or anything, and then we would go further after the Springfield Road school and they loved to walk and look around and then we would come back and then we would go to home and sort and buy some fish and chips and come back to the park and sit on the bench and we used to eat fish and chips.

05:25 R So we really enjoyed it and in those days when we were there in, it was 1971, there were a lot of English people living on Avondale Road. Most of them were old ladies or old men, so, we used to talk to them and sometimes children used to buy something for that auntie or that uncle, so they were ever so pleased with that. Sometimes if they were walking with big bags in their hands, my children always used to offer that they would like to carry their bags and they were so pleased. Nowadays if a boy or a girl says to a lady "can I carry your bag?" they would look at them suspiciously, but those days we used to do that and my children, they just learnt to help old people and they felt happy in that. And then we were there for eight years. Within eight years we saw that some of the old ladies and men, they passed away, we felt very sorry for those and then mostly whenever it happened, the Asian people used to buy the houses, so now I still go to that road and erm look at our house. It was number 111 Avondale Road. So now I think there can maybe hardly one or two English family living there and all the houses are owned by Asian people, whether Muslims or Indians. Mostly they are Muslim people, and it's a joy to go to the actual road and see that. And when we went there to see after many years to see who lives in that house because had moved to Kings Heath. So an Indian lady was there and she said that this house is a very good house, I'm very happy here and I think that it is a blessed house. Since we have moved here, our problems have been solved, I wanted to bring my husband from India so he got it, then I got a son here, I feel so happy in this house. After four/five years again I went there to see them as a family and that family, and she also said the same thing and they said that we are so happy in this area so whenever we go there, it reminds us our own things that we used to enjoy here and still it's a pleasure to go around there.

08:33 R Those days they were mostly, there wasn't any decoration shop or anything, there were for household things, and as far as I remember, there was one or two meat or vegetable food shops, but now when you go there, there are a line of those so big shops that people come from so faraway places to do their shopping. It's very hard to get a place for parking and there are takeaway and sweet shops and erm there are restaurants as well, so

there's a big change. Those days the main attraction of Stratford Road was the saree shops, the Milan shop there, and many other as well and there were some clothes shop and readymade shops, but now there are now hundreds of them to go and, it's very hard to choose anything, there's so much variety of shops and so much things are there, so now it is all changed as if the people are flourished their business there, and there always lot of customers in every shop. It is changed in this way, in a good way, that too much business is there and that on that shop in those days as well, no takeaways and restaurants or fish shops were there, not many clothes shops, but, in those days we couldn't buy our material for salwar kameez and there were two, one Indian man and one Pakistani man. They used to have big bundles on their bicycles or in boxes. They used to come around in that area and we just to waited for them.

10:38 I You were talking about growing up, sorry you were talking about your life on Avondale Road.

10:46 R Yes.

10:47 I And you were talking about the men that used to come round and sell material.

10:52 R Yes

10:54 I Tell me about that. What else do you remember?

11:01 R Like that, err. Now you don't see the milkman round the road, those days children used to if it was weekend, they used to wait for the milkman and he used to offer them to sit with him in turns, and erm they were very nice to children. Nowadays if the milkman says "I can give them a ride", you won't let them. So he would give them a good round and one day when he came and I was just standing with my son there, so he comes and makes him sit there, so he didn't stop and he said no, no and he went further, and my son was just disappointed, he said that there was nobody sitting on the seat and he just said no, no. So in the afternoon he came and he said that I have come to apologise that I hadn't time to explain but now you come out and see a big thing written on my wagon. It said that you're not allowed to sit children, to have children something like that. He said now we have prohibited, so this is why I said no, and you must tell relatives who have come to tell you. So it was so nice of him, and they were so friendly those days that erm children used to have some stories of their place to tell them. Like my son said when you will come I have to tell him the thing, it happened yesterday, so when he came my son went running and he said I have to tell you a good thing. He said what is it and he said yesterday we went for shopping and there I found a ten pence piece there near the counter when my mum was just standing in the queue and I picked it up, then I saw an old lady, she had a purse in her hand and she was closing the zip, I thought it must be her ten pence, so I went to

her and said that “have you dropped this coin so please have it back”, so she was so pleased she said “oh you are an honest boy, yes it was mine but I give you as a reward for your honesty”, so he probably said to that and then the milkman say “oh that was a very good thing, I must give you ten pence as well.” So he gave him a shiny ten pence coin and he was so pleased and then he wrote this short story in the Evening Mail Chippers Club page and then he was given fifty pence. Well he had three letters published, they used to get fifty pence so he was ever so pleased and then he stood there “I will tell the milkman now I have got seventy pence because I was honest for ten pence.”

14:24 R And in those days you could take five pound note and your trolley was full up with everything, but nowadays it's not like that. A big difference I see nowadays is that in those days there wasn't any mosque on Stratford Road at the right end. It was Paigham-E-Islam, it is still there, that was a big shop with the religious books and things, and then they had a Madrassa, a school for children, to give them a religious education and to read Holy Quran, so we used to go there as well, and it is still there and then there wasn't any mosque or anything. People had to take children to mosque far away, so nowadays there are some houses (**inaudible**) and there wasn't any, like the colleges things, they had just started last ten/twenty years, so now you say this learning centre, learn direct and this college branch and this and this. Those days there was the Sparkhill Centre, it is still there, so that was a very good thing for all the human living around, it offer so many courses. I did cookery course for three months or six months it used to be. Then cake making and then sewing, so it was very nice to meet all the ladies there living around and doing different courses there. And there was Paylo and nowadays it is Azad supermarket or something next to that Sparkhill Centre, it used to be Paylo, a very big market it was. So we were happy to have it there, so a lot of people used to go for shopping, and the bookshop that used to be in those days Kashmir bookshop, it is still there.

16:37 R So but many shops that used to sell different things, now almost all of them have converted into either clothes shops or saree shops or takeaways or restaurants. Nowadays the Hajees restaurant used to be a pub so now it has now been a Hajees restaurant and there used to be a Barclay Bank it was I think, a big building and in those days, then in 1990, the South Birmingham College, they purchased it and that was a big campus of that college, it used to be called Hall Green College those days, now then it is South Birmingham College, now it is called The South City College, so now it is there and from Kings Heath I used to go there when my children were grown up, then I started teaching and I used to go to that Stratford Road Campus outside Birmingham College, it was called 524, the number is five hundred twenty four, so it was called 524 centre, and it has served the Sparkhill people, especially the ladies a lot.

18:02 R I have taught there for many years, so all the ladies living around, they have

had a very casual thing just to cook there something and then put the cooker off and to go there and they said that if it was Hall Green College, campus in Hall Green, then there are young people and how will we mix with them, there are fashionable boys and girls, and there it was homely atmosphere, so many ladies joined different courses and then I think a few years ago, I shall say six years ago or so, then it was closed and ladies were very, very disappointed and then somebody bought it so now there are different educational centre there and the continuous lines of clothes, so youngsters like to go there to have big shopping of jewellery and clothes and everything. So there's a big change and it is you see a board there that welcome to Sparkhill or something, so it looks nice and it's more hustle and bustle there and especially you see how school children are walking and eating something, they have bought from the shops, and in those days actually it wasn't hard to be good thing, children walking up, not children, young people as well, walking on the roads and eating, having breakfast in their hands but now you see everywhere, they are and now that health centre near Springfield Road, that's very good, very nice building, so I think nowadays it is more convenient and good to live there, because you can buy everything. So I think we were fortunate to have a chance to live their college years so children they did learn a lot on there and they had a chance to meet English people there, the old ladies and gentlemen, and erm because those days there was the school, Greet School and now the beautiful park, little park for children playing thing for children and it has developed, there are good developments that have been made in that area, so it has made it more beautiful. So my son got a place in Camp Hill here so we had to move here, otherwise I would have loved to continue to live there, I was very happy and the ladies living there when we go to library or somewhere we talk, they are very happy there, they say we would love to live here and some of them who have moved to some areas and joining areas like Hall Green, it's not very far from there, but they still say we miss many things that we had over there. So I think it was a joy for us to live in that area.

21:43 I You talked about a time when you were living there when your children were little, and the leisure. Do you have any other memories of the area when you first lived there compared to what's happened to that area now? Is there anything that really sticks out in your memory?

22:09 R And erm Piccadilly Cinema, that was a big attraction and we used to go there because it was quite near and in the centre, so many people used to go there and now it is a cinema but people do hire the halls for different occasions as well, but those days it was only cinema and once many years ago there was a very big mushaira held in that cinema and that was a record. Mushaira is a poetry reading, that poets read their own written poetry and usually there isn't any ticket for that, people just come there but, very prominent Pakistani poets were coming there, very prominent the top poets and like Faiz and Faraz and Hafeez Jullundhri. So they thought there would be many people and if we can't accommodate them, some people just said no it won't be a

problem, but there were a thousand people, that was a record for that, so that was the first time we had paid £1 each for ticket, and even then there were a thousand people and it was a very successful, very memorable poetry session there. We still remember that. And nowadays even if there's a good film on, we do go there and we love it. And what else is there now on the corner, there is beauty corner or somewhere and nowadays a mosque on Showell Green Lane, and it is very good, especially for the old people because the old people, they have a chance to get out of the house four or five times, and they just meet there, they talk to each other, and I think a doctor had said that that mosque is a big help, as well as (inaudible) it eases concerns, those people they have a chance to come out of their houses and share their worries and problems and thinks it's a good thing. So if there wasn't a mosque and what else is there now, there wasn't, yes the President restaurant was there, so some of the shops, a Milan, people do miss it, that was a big place that people used to come from different towns to buy sarees, Stratford Road Milan was just the main saree shop. In those days the fashion was the shirt, the dress was very short and it didn't look nice to walk on the streets like that, so we used to wear sarees. So there was always a lot of women there in Milan, buying sarees, and nowadays there are two or three tailors as well on Stratford Road, those days there wasn't any tailor shop there and I think now there are more facilities. It has got more things that are useful for people to make their life convenient, that they can buy anything, and it was useful because I can say for myself because, going every day to and from, I used to go the side of Springfield Road, just from starting there, and there was something to go to post office, the big post office is still there. So just if I had to go to post office I would go that end and from there towards Montgomery School, it was a long road, and I used to see the clothes there and their shoes and sometimes I would go into the shop as well, so when you had to buy something, you had clearly in your mind, that that thing is in that shop, so I shall go there. So usually we all knew the shop keepers because every day you were going there so it was a joy to go around the big streets and Stratford Road and when I go now, I remember holding the hands of my children, and sometimes we use to sit in the bus and while we were waiting for the bus we would go to a shop and just look around, and nowadays it's a tragedy that if someone is very familiar to your child, being kind to your child, you become suspicious, those days it was alright, so we used to be on the bus stop and when we knew it would take some time, we go into that big shop and my son always had some marbles or the little balls, the rubber balls, and he would play inside the shop and his little balls would stick somewhere under the counter.

27:42 R So the lady was so nice, she would just leave her counter and look around for his ball and would take it out and now I have met that lady after so many years in a day centre and I said "oh you are the lady", she say "yes I do remember your son, always used to play with his balls in my shop and I had to look for his stuck balls." So really they are very good memories and there's a church as well, so we used to stop there and I used to say to my children,

look what is written on this board today, so he would try to read that, and if passed by that, they just stand there and say "oh look mum what is written today." So and they used to stop and read the shops names and it helped them and in those days it was 2 pence for me and one pence for each of them and five pence would do for that and sometimes they would say "no, we don't want to sit in the bus, we would like to walk." And they would happily walk all the way, looking at different things and sometimes we would stop and buy something as well. So and there was an old ladies shop as for sweets and some childrens toys and things and she was a very kind lady. The first day I went and I gave her five pence or something and then she gave me a packet, that was quite small, and I was thinking for five pence it's only small and then hiding from my children she gave me a big packet and she said I didn't want your children to have a look on this big packet, otherwise they will eat all the sweets, so hide it.

29:50 R So they was so kind and loving, and there was an older gentleman and he lived on our road and he was on his own, and he had meal on wheels and my children used to say Mr John eats every day the same sandwiches. So sometimes once a month or so while we were coming from the park, they would buy fish and chips for him and then they would go to his house and say "Mr John don't cook anything this evening, eat this." And he was so happy, so thankful, so they used to sit with him and he would eat all his fish and chips. And nowadays I think you can't do these things. My son has still got this habit and he is now married, and when he was at university as well he said that if I see some old people, especially ladies with big bags in their hands, like the childhood habit, I would just offer, "can I carry your bags?" and they look suspiciously at me and I say that I only want to help you, don't be afraid, but they are reluctant. So those days they happily handed over their bags to my children and they would carry them, and there was one Mrs Stroud living on her own, we used to go to different ladies who were living on their own, we would go into their houses and take some little presents for them and sit with them and talk to them, it was good. And nowadays it is different. All the Avondale Road people and the adjoining Road, Percy Road, it was like a big family, and as if everybody knew each other, and if you're walking and they're standing on their door, they would say hello, and if they offer, you go inside as well and sit there and be very happy, so they are good memories.

32:14 R My children developed a habit of being very friendly, courteous to people, to be helpful with the people, because nowadays, now we living here and it is thirty two years now, and actually we know people here, living in Harton Way, but still there are some people we don't know, so we send them Christmas cards and when they send us, we know each other's full names or children's names. So those days we knew which house belongs to which person, and we used to see all the people quite a lot and while we are living here and sometimes we see some people around after so many weeks or months. Those days it was different, especially I think when children are

young, you should live in those sort of part of the city where children meet a lot of people, they learn a lot and if I compare this Kings Heath area, it's a very good area, Harton Way, cul-de-sac is very good, people are very nice. There are nearly more than half there English and then we are Indian and Pakistani, but it is different from that area. We knew each other very well and then it was when Prince Charles got married. When did he get married?

33:58 I 1981.

33:59 R 81, then we were here, when we moved here soon after that, there was the party, street party, but we had big party over there I think, Queen was passing by there, it was something big happened in Sparkhill in every street, we were just standing there to have a look. It was I think the Queen there or was it Prince Charles? So, it was great hustle and bustle and we are there, I don't remember was Jubilee or something was it? Big parties in that areas.

34:39 I 1977 the Queen's...

34:42 R Yes because we moved here in 79, yes it was that in the streets, in the side streets there were people just celebrating it. Children wearing the hats and things, Union Jacks, it's a good memory of that time.

35:05 I You talked a lot about family in the streets.

35:09 R Yea.

35:11 I Tell me about the different communities that you saw when you first moved to Avondale Road and how the communities have changed.

35:22 R Yes there were, mostly there were English people there at that time, and they were very kind, very good, very friendly. If you were passing by just standing there say hello and then sometimes we would take something for them or if they saw my children somewhere, they would call them and talk to them, so nowadays it's not that, as if there is distance and some people are like strangers, and it is only to say hello and something or weather is fine or how are you. Those days we knew who is selling the house and when he or she is going, who is ill. There was a lady at Avondale road opposite our house, she used to put the milk bottles, empty bottles in the morning and say hello to children, and we didn't see her for a few weeks, then I asked her daughter, when I saw her daughter, and she said my mum has got cancer. In those days cancer wasn't so common, so and I went to see her and she was just lying there and her daughter said that she's dying, within in a few weeks. We felt so sorry, so the lady's told us, now my son is coming to see me, now I'm going to see my daughter like this things we knew. I don't know about nowadays what's the atmosphere, there are still some English people there but those days there were many and we almost knew many of them. Not me, all the people living there, and it was very nice, we knew about each other and, we

used to share if they were happy or if they had any problem. And I do remember sometimes, I was quite young those days so, but if I was coming with children and they had something, carrying their school bags, and I was carrying some bag, if some of the English people, a man was going, he would offer help, and would just call children and say hello and "oh, you are having so heavy bags, can I can I help?" I would say "oh thank you it's alright." So nowadays you miss those things, and I've got some pictures of my house and how children are playing in the big garden and. They didn't used to play a lot on the streets because it was busy street but sometimes they had little bicycles, they had cars on the footpaths and they enjoyed it.

38:45 I You mentioned the educational places were on Stratford Road, what's your experience been of working in education?

38:57 R I didn't work when I was there earlier in Avondale Road, I always believed that you should get out of the house to work if you have to, otherwise there's children's precious time. So I spent the time with them, I taught them everything in the Qur'an, the language myself, and in those days some ladies living on Avondale Road, they came from Mirpur and villages, I used to help them to go to doctors and hospital or school to interpret for them, and some ladies had managed to get a English tutor would come and just to teach them English, and I helped them just whenever I had time, and then we moved here and my children finished there. I used to help them with homework and studies every day, almost an hour or so.

40:05 R So when they were in A Level, we moved here, when we were here, so I thought now they don't need my help, so then I did a teaching course from Birmingham Polytechnic, and I just started teaching one or two years at different schools, and then I joined South Birmingham College and in the main campus at Hall Green, and after a few years when this 90/91, a new campus was built, not built, it used to be a bank, a huge bank, so the principal bought it and it was converted into a big nice rooms and 524 because five hundred and twenty four, so it was a big thing on Stratford Road, so then mostly because the language classes were there, Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Pashto, Japanese, Persian, so many languages were there and computers and some other courses. I taught Urdu language. I have great love for Urdu language and I did enjoy it there at 524 Centre, that was a very successful, very prominent, very popular education centre since 1990 to almost 2006/7, so the Sparkhill area women they joined courses and it helped them a lot and still on the side, almost on every side road of Sparkhill, there are two/three houses of my students, so I love to go to Sparkhill, back to for this teaching, and it was very convenient next to 524 there was a big grocery shop and opposite, still is there, the chemist, so on coming home I would just buy, not me, the other teachers as well, buy whatever we wanted to from that shop, so it was very good, I loved it. And then when it was sold, we were sad about it, and it is sold now and again the classes were moved to Hall Green campus. So I started from Hall Green campus and I for eighteen years, sixteen years, I

was at 524 Centre, and then the last two years again back to Hall Green campus.

43:01 R So we have got very nice, pleasurable memories attached with 524 Centre. It was a family atmosphere, very nice, friendly, very casual atmosphere and it has been very good and as there are schools Anderton Park and Greet School and others, so our principal had arranged for mature ladies, girls as well, ladies classes in their schools and the tutorship lady and the pupils should be only girls and women. So it was very good, many Sparkhill ladies who had never been to schools back home, they joined their classes and you would be surprised to see now many of them never had been to school, because they were mature ladies, they did learn from the beginning then did their GCSE and As Level as well. So they enjoyed coming to classes, sometimes it would be that the ladies who have passed or the girls, next year they will just come to sit and say "oh we just thought we should go again." And sit there for a while, and so I enjoyed teaching them in that area. Many women up til now, if I go there they will meet me and they say Mrs Javed we do remember 524 Centre. We miss it, it has been very, very useful for Sparkhill area. It is a big attraction. People still become sad at why it was sold because before that it was not only that centre, Sparkhill Centre, but they had some courses, not languages or things, so our ladies, the Indian ladies, they all just did so many courses, came out of the house and did it. So we always will remember 524 Centre at Stratford Road. Anything else?

45:45 I I was going to ask you about your MBE.

45:50 R Yes.

45:51 I Do you want to tell me something about that.

45:56 R One interesting thing is that when I was in Pakistan, just left school and college, so if I was teaching my younger sister, brothers, and if they were just naughty or something I will throw their books around and say "no I'm not teaching you just you are not good enough, get out of my sight" and then my mother used to say "I just beg you, whatever you become in your life, never become a teacher. The children will be crying all the time and their mothers, they will be cursing you. Never try or think about being a teacher." So and I never had an idea that I will ever be a teacher, so when I started teaching here, I enjoyed, as I told you before I love teaching Urdu language so I never felt I'm working, it was like a hobby, enjoying myself, and I did love my students. Every girl seemed to be and still seem to be like my daughter Neelofar, every boy seem to be like my son, and they love me as my elder sister and them like a mother. So when I retired in November, I retired in July and in November I got a letter from the Queen that you are nominated by your principal for services towards for further education an MBE of art you will get. I was so surprised, so then we went there in July and I got the MBE and I said to Prince Charles that it is a credit half goes to me, half to my

students. They were very cooperative, very hard working very committed, so they really worked hard and I was in a way not only in the college, but I give tons and tons of homework to my students.

48:23 R I always used to ask them on the very first day, "which grade you want to get in your exam?" They would say "C will do." I said "no you have to have A and you aim for A and promise me what how much work, I want you to do, you will do in the class and at home." And they did and my results were the best in the college every year, and almost all A level students got A grades, two thirds will get A grades and all GCSE almost the whole class will get, and then they were thankful they used to ring me "Oh Mrs Javed we are so thankful for being so harsh to us", in the matter of homework and classwork, otherwise I was very loving to them, very friendly, but as far as the homework was concerned, I wasn't very. So I was so delighted that I got that MBE and then I remembered my mother who had passed away, that if she was alive, I would have told her that I have been given this award from the Queen for being a good teacher, and you said never ever think of becoming a teacher. I think when you have got your own children, you get some patience and I will again say my stories were very good, and all staff English and Pakistani women as well, so they were very nice, very friendly, we had a very good time at college at 524. Is there anything else you would like to know?

50:25 I Is there anything else that you would like to talk about that you haven't?

50:30 R I think I have almost talked about everything. If my daughter was here she would have told you almost the same thing about how we enjoyed living there.

50:48 I Thank you very much.

50:50 R Thank you for coming and having interview. I'm pleased that I had a chance to talk about the area that made me so happy and I still remember the time, the happy time I spent living there, 111 Avondale Road, Sparkhill.