

File: MVI_0014.mp4

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START AUDIO

Interviewer: It's Thursday 3rd August. My name is [Harpreet Kaur 0:00:02] and I'm here to conduct an interview for the project 'The Partition Trail'. If you could confirm your name for me, please.

Ranjit Sondhi: Yes, my name is Ranjit Sondhi I came to this country in 1966 to study in a public school, after which I went to university in Birmingham before I started working in the community. So I've been here in the UK for more than 50 years. This is now my first home, but I always look back to India as my other home because it was my home when I was a young boy growing up in my formative teenage years, and I've got a huge sentimental connection with it.

Interviewer: Excellent. What do you know about your family history in relation to the partition that happened in India?

Ranjit Sondhi: Like very many other people in England at the moment from the Indian subcontinent, we are deeply rooted in the history of the Punjab. Now, the Punjab is an area that cuts right across India and Pakistan, as you know, and it goes back more than 2,000 years. Just as an example, it was a place where Alexander the Great came to with his Greek army, and it was

the periphery of his empire. It was in the Punjab that he tired of conquering and pillaging and whatever they used to do in those days, and went back, leaving his general in charge of the Punjab.

Now, in those days of course, many places in the Punjab had Greek associations, there were names of rivers and towns that were very much Greek in some respects, or had Greek names as well. Jalandhar, of course, which you know of as a big city in the Punjab was called [Jalandhara 0:02:41] and the Greek king [Menandez] actually converted into Buddhism at the time. So you can see that the Punjabis here in England have a very long tradition, a very long history rooted in the Punjab which goes back thousands of years. Somehow, we need to capture that because it makes our lives richer.

Interviewer: That's really interesting. I can connect with that because my family is actually from Jalandhar too in the Punjab.

Ranjit Sondhi: Yes.

Interviewer: So is that where you grew up in Jalandhar? Or was it...?

Ranjit Sondhi: Indeed, indeed. The Sondhi family comes from a small area of the city of Jalandhar called Kot Kishan Chand, what you call your ancestral home. Lots of families here have got ancestral homes in and around that part of the Punjab which is called the Doab, the Doab means 'the land between two rivers'. As you know, the Punjab has got five rivers. This particular piece of land is one of the most fertile areas in the world.

It can produce some up to four or five crops in the course of a single year. So you can imagine, there was an intense amount of cultivation, of settlement, of civilisation in this particular part of the world. That's what the Punjabis are. They are, if you like, the carriers of a very long tradition of working on the soil and building civilisations based upon that.

Interviewer: Your family pre-partition, what sort of work were they doing in India? Were they involved with the land? What were they doing at the time? I'm interested in knowing how during partition and post-partition, how did that affect their livelihood? What happened?

Ranjit Sondhi: I'm 65 plus, so I was born about a few years after the partition. The partition took place in 1947, the war had just ended in Europe. India and Pakistan were looking for independence, or at least, India was looking for independence, and the ultimate solution, of course, was that two nations were formed. So I am 65. My parents, of course, from a previous generation were part of the undivided India long before anybody had any idea that there will be two countries formed out of one. Subsequently, three countries after Bangladesh was formed out of Pakistan.

So we are talking here about my grandparents who were born before 1900, in the middle of the Victorian period in England. They were very much part of the empire's colonies, if you like. They were colonial subjects. They didn't have British passports in their pockets. They had no passports, in fact. They were called British subjects and that's how they moved among in the Commonwealth from one part of it to the other. Of course, there were people who did move in the Boer War, in the First

World War, in the war that took place in China, the Opium Wars. Indian soldiers worked within the British Empire and were taken right across the world long before I was born, in the Middle East, in China, in Afghanistan and, of course, in Europe. So they had seen action, they had been right around.

So my father's father, my paternal grandfather, was born in a town called Lyallpur. Lyallpur is named after an Englishman, General Lyall. Of course, the name has now changed, Lyallpur is now, I believe, Faisalabad in post-independence times. But at the time he was born it was Lyallpur, and he had set up his family in Lyallpur. My grandmother was also born in one of the villages in Lyallpur and that's where they settled.

My father's father, my grandfather, was actually a very prominent lawyer. He rose in the ranks to become the director of public prosecutions during the time of the British. He was [fated 0:07:34] by a lot of dignitaries at the time and he was given the rank of Rai Bahadur, a bit like one of the titles that you get if you are in England if you have done good work. So Rai Bahadur the title was given by the British to prominent Indians.

He had a practice in the middle of Lyallpur. He lived on a road which was one of the most prominent roads in Lyallpur in what I would say was like a palace. It was a magnificent mansion with four turrets on each side which he had built for his four surviving sons and that's where the family lived. He was probably, I suspect, one of the richer men in that area. He had, for instance, a horse and buggy to take the family around. Each son of his as they got married had a part of the household, so there he is in a large house bedecked with marble in the middle of the very prosperous town called Lyallpur doing his practice.

My other grandfather who was in medicine, had been to England and rather my other grandfather had done his public health medicine in London, and had returned to take up a post in what is now called the North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan. He was born in and around that area, rather like my grandmother, and my mother was actually born in Dera Ghazi Khan. Now, Dera Ghazi Khan is in the middle of the North-West Frontier Province. So you have my family from both sides well established in what is now Pakistan.

After marriage, my mother, of course, came to live with my father in our grandfather's house in Lyallpur from where... Sorry, they didn't come to Lyallpur. After marriage, my mother had joined my father who had just been decommissioned from the army to join the civil service. They built their home in a place called Montgomery, again, named after an English general, as you know. Montgomery was a little town not so far away from Lyallpur and it is now called Sahiwal, I think.

That's where my father started his civil service and probably one of his first jobs was a sub-divisional magistrate, or something like that. So he was, kind of, a low ranking civil servant in Montgomery when partition happened. There was obviously a lot of talk around 1947 as to what's going to happen when the British left. Now, Muslims in India, as you know, felt nervous about being in a country with a Hindu majority and wanted to have a place where they felt more secure.

The Indian Congress Party, which was the motivating force for independence could not plicate that nervousness, they could not deal with that nervousness and ultimately the split took place, much against some of the best efforts of the leaders of the time. People like Gandhi and Nehru and Jinnah and so on,

they were trying to look for a solution, it didn't happen, and the split became inevitable.

On the one side, there was the Muslim League, on the other side there was the [Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh 0:11:29] and these were the people working on the ground full of very narrow, sectarian interests who did not want to live in the way that Indians had lived for thousands of years together.

Let's not forget that India was a receiving place. Punjab was a receptacle, as it were, of different kinds of religions, different faiths, different cultures, different languages, different nationalities, of course, there were not nations at the time, people from different principalities, people from Persia, people from Iran, people from Europe, Russians, the French, the Spanish, the Portuguese, they were all established in many ways in India, moving in and out, around in society. So an intensely multicultural, multi-faith environment.

Akbar, one of the great Mughal kings had actually married a Hindu princess, yes, a Muslim marrying a Hindu princess right at the top end of society. There were many such examples where Muslim and Hindu people lived together. [Oronsay 0:12:49] had a very close relationship with an Indian woman before he married his own wife and so on. There were all sorts of other examples you can see in history where Muslims were employed in Hindu courts, and Hindus were employed in Muslim courts, and very high ranks. So all of that was taking place.

But then somehow, with the unsettling that took place with the partition, people tended to suffer from what I call a historical amnesia, forgetting their past and focussing on some very, very narrow communal interests. That ultimately led to a partition that nobody could really prevent. That resulted in the Punjab, this great land with a tremendous history being split

into two, on the one side of the continent. And on the other side, Bengal, yet another great area for culture, civilisation and all of that, again being split into East Bengal and West Bengal. East Bengal, as you know, going into Pakistan, and subsequently to become Bangladesh.

So that's the kind of background we are from. We are Punjabis who go back thousands of years for whom partition is just a kind of a flash in the pan against the whole background of our history. Who knows that in another hundred years' time, perhaps Punjab will be reunited, as it were, and become one again, and assume its prominent position in the history of the world?

So partition is like that, it's a political device, as it were, to create nations out of what was a united and a culturally uniform continuous land on which people had settled from various different parts of the country to create that extraordinary dynamic that is so typical of the Punjabis.

Interviewer: Thank you, Ranjit, that was an excellent summary. I'm getting a really positive view, actually, of what things were like in Punjab and India pre-1947. It looked like a very thriving, peaceful, multi-faith, multicultural, international hub of, you know, everyone is getting on, everyone is working together well. Just to clarify, so your grandparents, both sets of grandparents were in what is now called Pakistan.

Ranjit Sondhi: That's right.

Interviewer: And one grandparent was doing medicine, one was a lawyer, they were all very successful, everybody was happy.

Ranjit Sondhi: Yes.

Interviewer: So once the partition actually happened, did your families have to relocate? What happened with that? Were they uprooted? What happened to them?

Ranjit Sondhi: Sure. The reason for that historical interlude was to try and establish how people who regard themselves as Punjabis first before anything else were to be located in all parts of northern India as far up north of North-West Frontier Province, and as to this side as, say, Delhi and Aliabad and so on. Punjabis all of them, my grandparents would probably fall into that category as well, yes.

Now, when the partition happens, a discussion starts as to what's going to happen to people. The reason for partition was so that people could feel safe in particular areas. So it was inevitable that when Pakistan was formed for the safeguarding of the Muslim interests, not necessarily as a Muslim nation, but where Muslims could feel safe, then it was inevitable then that Muslims living in India would think seriously about relocating themselves into that area, and the opposite as well. The Hindus and the Sikhs and the Christians living in Pakistan might feel that they might have to move towards the other side because they might then become a minority with a Muslim majority and begin to feel the kind of discrimination that the Muslims had claimed in India.

So you see how the whole thing happens. You plant an idea into people's minds that the majority will be tyrannical, that it will exact its toll on the minorities, and the minorities will have

to somehow regroup so that they can resist this tyranny of the majority. That's why people started to move. Once the movement started across the border, it became a rush, it became a torrent fuelled by stories of what was happening to people as they moved across. Because when the unsettling takes place of a nation, it can very quickly get out of hand. There is a, kind of, mass hysteria that grips the nation. The only way that one can resolve that is by relocation. That's what happened.

My grandfather, for all his contacts and all his intricate networks in Lyallpur decided that it was no longer safe to be there, and therefore sent the word around to his children that if you're not already on the Indian side of that line, you might wish to relocate. That's what happened to my parents, and that's where the story starts about why and how my mother and father left everything behind in Montgomery and came, literally within a day, across the border. We can go into that in a minute.

But you can see how on both sides people began to move. First slowly, and then rapidly, and by the time that movement was complete, it had left behind a large-scale tragedy where lots of people had been killed along that journey.

Interviewer: So it's interesting the way you've described it and how you're saying the seed was planted and it created fear. Would you describe it as it was enforced by – I don't know – the state or the leadership? Because it almost sounds on the one hand it was, kind of, voluntary. So where would you draw the line? People had to move? Or it was inevitable that you would do that for your own safety? Or it erupted, like, that wasn't the original plan, but that's why it ended up happening? How would you describe it?

Ranjit Sondhi:

Okay. It's interesting to study who moved and who didn't move after partition. There were pockets of Muslims who were left behind in India. In fact, there were so many Muslims in India that the number of Muslims in India is greater than the number of Muslims in Pakistan. So it's obvious that not all the Muslims moved. Clearly, those who were living in Hyderabad, for instance, and that was a pocket of Islam, if you like, a highly cultured city which had developed over many, many years with Persian and Iranian input, in the middle of India, but that was a thousand miles away from the border. So you couldn't imagine a vast exodus of people moving hundreds of miles to get to the border.

The people who were able to get across the border did so, and that was in the Punjab, the line ran through the Punjab. Hindus on one side wanted to go to India, and the Muslims on the other side wanted to go to Pakistan. So that's how it happened. Clearly, the Muslims who didn't move devised other methods of surviving in an independent India. Similarly, there were Christians and Hindus who are still left behind, who are still in Pakistan who are doing okay, they are fine. They are actually part of the society there.

So not everybody chose to move, but the people living close to the border, the people affected by what I call that panic and that hysteria that was generated largely for political reasons, I believe. Or for narrow political interests, which was this hysteria that was fanned by what might happen to minorities in a majority state.

Interviewer: Okay. Let's talk about your parents and your grandparents, then. So you're saying that they made the decision for their safety to leave, and you said that they left everything behind.

Ranjit Sondhi: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a bit more about that? Where did they go? How did they get there? What happened? How did they continue with their careers and livelihoods?

Ranjit Sondhi: So many stories, so many stories. You know, when we were growing up in India, I was born in India, of course, because my mother had by that time – and my father – had resettled in a town called Firozpur. But we were very curious as we were growing up through the '50s and '60s of what had happened to our parents. That memory was fresh in their minds. They had just come across, literally a few years before then, before our births, and tried to re-establish their lives and their livelihoods.

So we were always curious and we learned from them. People of that generation with those kinds of terrible experiences don't often talk very much, but we managed to get these stories out of them. Then we realised what extraordinary things had happened, tales that spoke of on the one side cruelty and terrible killings. On the other side great stories of courage, of togetherness, of brotherhood, and of a great love and affection between people of different faiths. And it all mixed together in a sense. So what happened to my parents?

END AUDIO

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Date: 26/10/2017

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START AUDIO

Contributor: My father and mother were settled in Montgomery, and were deeply connected with the communities around them. Now, it just so happened that, I think, almost 90% of my father's friends in that particular area were of Muslim origin. They were actually Muslims. He was functioning like a civil servant.

My grandfather, of course, was also well connected with the community. He was known for his philanthropy. He had kept a secret diary that we discovered later, in which he used to give scholarships to poor children.

As a Hindu, he had given about 90% of his scholarships to Muslim children. He didn't talk about it, he just did it. There were many other stories of this kind, where Muslims had helped Hindus, and Hindus had helped Muslims throughout that.

Nevertheless, the troubles happened, the killing started. My parents are somehow oblivious to what's going on in the community, because they're living in their lovely, little sheltered middle-class professional home, and they think nothing is happening, until one day, my father looks out of the window and sees a man with a blade coming from behind an elderly gentleman, and knocking his head off. He then realised that something was not right, that the stories that were coming around really had to be taken seriously.

Nevertheless, they stayed, until one night they invited an army major, who had been posted in India, to dinner. When the major came to their house in Montgomery, my mother was in the kitchen preparing a meal for him.

He sat down and my father introduced him to my mother, and the major said, "Mr [Sambhi 0:02:09], are you crazy? Why do you have your wife in this place? I can understand you being here, but have you not heard about all the troubles that are taking place? She should be back safe in India, on the Indian side. Send her immediately".

My mother was really worried when he said all that. She was making a roti on the [baba 0:02:37]. She left all that. He said, "What are we going to do?" He said, "I'll send you a truck, and army truck tomorrow. Just pack your belongings, just maybe one or two suitcases, no more, one or two suitcases. Put them in the truck, and we will get you into a convoy, which is going across the border under military protection," so that's what happened.

Next day, they got their little things together. In those days, they were just starting their lives. They just tried to pack anything valuable into these couple of suitcases. The truck came, and they put them in the back of the truck, and they got into a car.

As soon as local people saw my parents getting into this car, they realised something terrible was going to happen. They also needed to get out, so they brought their families along, their children, their wives, elderly people. They got to the truck and, of course, they had to make room for all of them.

Inevitably, all the trunks, and all the stuff that they'd gathered, came out of the car, out of the truck, and the people were put in. They left absolutely, truly everything behind. They came to

India, in that convoy, with the clothes on their backs, that's it, full stop.

They went in a car with another lawyer, and a couple of other people. They were not stopped on the way. They were lucky. In any case, they had the military, and they were not stopping military convoys, and they got through.

Then, of course, they went, in the first instance, to Jalandhar, and then my father got reposted, because the civil service, there was an arrangement whereby civil servants would get relocated on their own side. He went to [Firozabad 0:04:24], where I was born.

We have this extraordinary story of people who were just sitting, completely oblivious to what was going on around them, until it came home.

My grandfather also had to leave, of course, but he exchanged homes with a Muslim family settled in Jalandhar, in their own home, so they just exchanged homes, and they came across in a slightly more orderly fashion.

My uncle, who was an engineer in Delhi Cloth Mills, or I think the equivalent on the Pakistani side, had an interesting story to tell. For some reason, he was left on his own. His family had gone to India, but he was still there, I think in Lahore, working away, and then, of course, it certainly clocked that he had to leave.

His name was ____ [0:05:30]. He used to sit and tell us a story, to the young children around his knees. He'd say he joined a train. He got a ticket somehow, and he got onto a train, and the train was stopped before the border by a group of Muslims. Trains were being stopped both ways, by the way. Trains coming from India-

END AUDIO

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Duration: 0:17:22

Date: 01/11/2017

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START AUDIO

[Start MVI_0017 (online-audio-converter.com)]

Respondent: -precious than even your own family, that's what my father said to me. In Afghanistan, in that sort of culture, your guest is far more important than your own flesh and blood. You've got to be completely courteous, totally giving, totally hospitable, to the foreigner. That's the tradition.

The partition, in a sense, went right against that. But not for very long, because then things started to die down, partition became a terrible aberration, if you like, of history, and people started to mend again. But, for some people I can understand that will take a very, very long time because they lost things, they lost lives, they lost livelihoods, they lost wealth and they lost their lands. They lost everything precious, so to rebuild from that was very difficult.

Interviewer: When did you come to live in England, was that when you were quite young or...? I'm just interested, as well, in how-

Respondent: The interesting thing is that immigration is not totally unconnected to these great events, because when a nation is unsettled, and people have begun to move then they carry on moving, as it were. If the Punjabis had been removed from

their soil and transported elsewhere, to another part of the country, then there's a kind of disaffection that stays with them and then projects them further into Africa, into Europe, into England, and so on.

So, you have these immigrations trends which are born out of historical facts. That's why I'm here. My grandfather came to England to study law, he went to Aberdeen, he got himself photographed in a Scottish kilt. My dad came to England, of course, after the war. By the way, he also fought in the war but that's another story.

He came after the war for his operation. He went to Aberdeen, he got into the same kilt as my grandfather and has got a photograph. We have two photographs, one of my grandfather and my father, in the same kilt, taken in Aberdeen.

That was the connection we had with the mother country. That's why some of us, after that period when we became displaced, found ourselves homing in on here. My uncle was here to study medicine during the war, while my father was fighting in Monte Casino, in Italy, which was a terrible war and one of the worst wars towards the end of the Second World War, battles I should say.

But here we are. My uncle comes to Birmingham and goes to Birmingham University. When I was to come here he asks his friends, who were his classmates and who were also doctors, to look after me, and I became part of their family. I came in '66 and immediately became part of his English friends and families.

I am going to India, in two months' time, with one of their sons because they have extended family there as well. That's the connection.

For me, I think, because I was born in India, and Pakistan was a distant country which I then, subsequently, visited... I told you about my Pakistani brother, as it were, his daughter was getting married and we went. I went from England. I was treated with royalty wherever I went in Pakistan and they knew I was Indian. They made a special effort to make sure that I felt completely at ease, and I felt privileged.

All that old tradition of being hospitable towards the outsider came right back and became a reality. So, wherever I went, in the streets, in people's homes, it was as if I was part of them. I was back in the Punjab that my parents had left behind.

So, I see it slightly differently from my parents. My parents are probably less likely to go back, or would have if my father was still alive and my mother's now too old to travel, they would have different kinds of memories. But, I was born on this side and I longed to find out where my roots were, which are in Pakistan. One of these days I will go back to, what we now call, ___[0:05:22], to look where my parents lived before they left to come to India.

Interviewer: When you were growing up, in this country, I'm interested to know about your experience of working, studying, or whatever you'd going, around other Indians, Pakistanis and Muslims. Was there anything, in particular, that somehow connected with what had happened with the partition? Were you all just getting on? Is there any sort of connection there or not necessarily?

Respondent: That's interesting. You know, when you're growing up in your own country, like India or Pakistan, you're almost in a virtually monocultural environment. Everybody around me, in

Chandigarh, in Delhi or in ___[0:06:14], were Indians. I hardly ever met anybody other than an Indian. Occasionally you would see an African face and you'd wonder where they came from. We had no idea what countries they were from, Nigeria, Congo, Kenya or wherever. We hardly ever saw an English face. It was largely, and probably, more Russian than anybody else. So, we didn't see the whole spectrum, if you like, of humanity in the Punjab.

The moment you arrive in England, and you go to a big city, you are completely bowled over by the number of different nationalities that are around you. Caribbean folk, African folk, and Pakistanis, who were then also to further become Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. I grew up in an intensely multicultural environment in Birmingham, and I thought, "What a wonderful thing."

Of course, when Indians were talking to Pakistanis we would always talk about where we came from, and virtually everybody would make a special effort to say, "That was in the past, we are now brothers", Indians and Pakistanis living together as brothers, as colleagues and as fellow countrymen of [whatever squad 0:07:39] of undivided India here because we're allowed to do so, because our rights are guaranteed, and we do not feel like minorities, in relation to each other. We may feel like minorities in relation to the majority society, which led us to come together and fight discrimination.

So, we all became part of the black community, and the black community included Caribbeans, Africans, Pakistanis and Indians. That's what I did in my life, I trained as a physicist in order to go back to India to follow in my father's footsteps, who retired as a commissioner of the Punjab. But I set that to one side and began working in the community in some of the most deprived parts of Birmingham, like [Handsworth 0:08:35],

because I felt a tremendous sense of injustice and of lack of quality, and I wanted to do something about it.

This was not just me, it was lots of other young people. We are talking about the '70s, when the students wanted to change the world. They didn't, particularly, want to be part of the establishment while they were doing it. That is what we became. We set up what is called the Asian Resource Centre in Handsworth, in 1967, sorry, 1976.

We set up the Asian Resource Centre in '76 specifically with the intention, not only to provide high quality advice, information and support to people in minority communities, but to ensure that there would be no distinction made between Indians and Pakistanis, between Hindus and Muslims, between Gujarati's and Punjabis, and so on. And we achieved it, until today the Asian Resource Centre remains Asian, not Pakistani, not Indian, not Bangladeshi.

That kind of solidarity, which we managed to get here, was because people wanted to be together, partition had got in the way. Now, in 2017, when I get into a taxi here, invariably driven by a [Mayapuri 0:10:08] Pakistani, within seconds we have established our brotherhood status. "Oh, you're Indian. I'm Pakistani" but, they will say, "That doesn't matter, we are all Punjabis together" or, "We are all from the same part of the world. We speak the same language. We eat the same food. We talk about the same things. We bring up our families in the same way", so, what's the problem? We always leave these taxi journeys the best of friends, worried about each other's families and asking about each other's families in the way that you'd expect your own family to be asked about.

So, I think what I'm saying is that in England there is this space in which those national divisions can be set to one side as being less significant than some of the other things that

bind us, common cultural histories, common traditions, common music, common languages... I love to speak Urdu whenever I can. Urdu is not a language that is associated with Hindus anymore, but it used to be. My mother and father couldn't write Punjabi and Hindi, they wrote in Urdu. As you can see, she has just sent me her little recollections from the partition in Urdu, which she has then transcribed into English.

In every way it made sense for the Indians and Pakistanis in this country to find common ground, and find it they did, in large measure. That is what people are like, they like to find commonalities, especially across difference. What I always say is what attracts us to the other person is our differences, but what keeps us together is our commonalities which cut across those differences.

I have a great deal of hope for the future. Wherever there are warring nations and sectarian differences I regard them as episodes, short-lived episodes sometimes, in the history of the world. If we take a long-term view we will realise that, actually, we do not need these nation states anymore. They are political devices, constructions. They can be deconstructed and they can be remade into all kinds of other configurations which are much closer to the lived experiences of the people on the ground.

Interviewer: Pause.

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[Start MVI_0018 (online-audio-converter.com)]

Respondent: Was like a brother to my father. He taught my father Persian. They went to Government College Lahore together, and

Government College Lahore was like the Oxford or Cambridge of Asia. They went together and they were very, very close, in fact, my father was closer to Ashraf than he was to his own brothers.

Then, of course, they got separated by partition. But Ashraf took every opportunity to engineer a trip into India whenever he could, they would meet at the airport and just spend half-an-hour crying with each other. They just could not be separated. Then they would sit down and talk, and so on. Then, of course, Ashraf started bringing his young family, which is when I got to know [Naveed 0:00:45].

Naveed and I have grown up from that size upwards. Now we are trying to get my son and his son together, and they look very sim-

[End MVI_0018 (online-audio-converter.com)]

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Respondent: My experience of living in the UK has been entirely around people of different nationalities seeking their differences, minorities I'm talking about, minority nationalities, Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Afghans and so on, seeking their differences and coming together, in friendship, in communities and neighbourhoods.

Now, I think that's very precious and we need to keep that going. But we also have to guard against people who try to divide these communities for their own purpose, along the lines of narrow nationalism. Politicians, particularly, unscrupulous politicians will evoke the sentiments of nationalism in order to say, "You're an Indian first, don't forget it. Don't get too close to anybody other than Indians." Or, "You

are a Hindu, stay a Hindu otherwise you will weaken the cause of Hinduism.”

I think that’s utter rubbish. That kind of narrow nationalism, whether it’s Muslim nationalism, or Hindu nationalism, or Sikh nationalism, or English nationalism, whatever it is, is ultimately a kind of cancer in our society that we’ve got to really exorcise, because it leads to wars and it leads to distractions from the real questions that we have to solve together as people from different parts of the world.

That’s really what [I want to know 0:01:43]. Partition, in a sense, will be evoked, from time to time, by people who want to encourage this kind of sectarian, nationalistic further. They will say, “Look what they did to us” on both sides, “That is why you can’t trust them.” I’m saying that that would be going, absolutely, the wrong path.

What we need to do is to learn how events, like partition, can, for a moment, disrupt the course of human history and make sure that it doesn’t happen again. We don’t want another war in Europe, for instance. Two world wars have been enough, thank you very much, which is why I think leaving Brexit is another form of nationalism which is, ultimately, not good for anybody in Europe, not good for anybody in Britain. But I don’t want to become political in that respect.

What I’m saying is, that at this moment in time nationalism is raising its ugly head across the world, for whatever reasons. We have to be particularly mindful that our discussion about partition, and indeed we must discuss it, doesn’t feed into that sort of nationalist further, but counters it.

[End MVI_0020 (online-audio-converter.com)]

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