

## **Kahaani 1: Shahina's Story – transcript of all extracts included on slides**

### **Slide 11 & Slide 12**

#### **Watch 0:00-0:30**

**(0:00)** So my parents decided to come to England and they arrived in 1967 and that was a massive decision for them – they had three small children who were my two older sisters and brother – and I think I realised that they just about knew that they were expecting me at the time they travelled, which must've been incredibly brave. **(0:30)**

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### **Slide 13**

#### **Watch 02:43-04:11**

**(02:43)** I think my father's dreams were absolutely around education – and around being a lawyer – that was his absolute aim in life and he was able to train as a teacher and he practised as a teacher for many years – but he did train as a lawyer and became a lawyer – and partly I think that dream was achieved – but I think he became frustrated with the constraints of some of the systems in Pakistan – in the legal system at the time and also maybe what was happening in the wider society and he wanted a more liberal and fair and just kind of system for his family to grow up in.

So, in terms of deciding to make the journey to England, there were a few opportunities – people were being invited to come from Pakistan and India and other parts of the Commonwealth to come and sort of rebuild England after the war really – and – um – so they did have a couple of opportunities to think about it – and I believe that they had what was called a voucher – or something like that ready to come some months before they finally did. I think they bottled out the first time – it was such a huge decision to leave their families behind – but the second opportunity – and I think possibly the last opportunity to come, they did decide to make that journey with their three small children. **(04:11)**

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### **Slide 14**

#### **Watch 06:05 – 06:43**

**(06:05)** We built our family in Aylesbury in Berkshire, which was a market town and um – it was where dad was able to get a job as a ticket collector on the trains. Um – he wasn't able to get – um – work as a teacher and certainly not as a lawyer, because his law degree wasn't accepted in England – even though being in Pakistan, the law degree would've been based on the English system having been part of the Commonwealth for hundreds of years – um – but interestingly, he wasn't able to practise as a lawyer which must have been really disappointing. **(06:43)**

## Slide 14

### Watch 08:16-09:05

**(08:16)** People talk about when we were in the supermarkets – people coming up to my mother because I was the baby sat in the trolley – and coming to talk to us because they hadn't seen a brown baby before and they thought it was wonderful – and saying how lovely the baby was – and yes – it was me! But actually, they didn't seem to experience racism in those early times – they did later – but in those early times people were more interested and fascinated and because my parents both spoke good English – because they both taught English in Pakistan, I suppose they were able to communicate and to build friendships with neighbours and colleagues in a way that perhaps other people might have struggled with if they didn't have the language. **(09:05)**

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## Slide 15 and Slide 16

### Watch 24:42 – 32:38

**(24:42)** So, after uni I decided to try and get work in film production because I'd always had a passion for it and I got my first job in Oxford with a production company there and it was during my time in Oxford that I met my husband, who's called David – who was an English person – and so that was another 'first' that my family incorporated into their experience.

I was really nervous about introducing him to them because, even though my parents were really lovely, and really liberal people, in many ways they were very traditional – their faith meant an awful lot to them – they'd been arranging marriages for my older siblings (some with success and some not with success) and I think they'd expected the same for me – so I was really scared when I introduced them to my now husband and we had a difficult few months as they came to try and accept it, to try and understand it, and understand what that would mean for our family – the pressure that they'd be put under in their community as this was the 'first' – it was another 'first' – we were the first family in Aylesbury to have someone who was not an Asian enter that family.

But you know, they were such lovely people, my parents, and when they realised that we loved each other and that my husband was sincere – and I was sincere – they supported us to be married – and we had two weddings – we had a Muslim wedding, which was in the new Multicultural Centre of Aylesbury – which my dad had helped to make happen – and we were one of the first events in that multicultural centre ... and then a week later, we had a church wedding – and what I'm so proud of, on behalf of both of our families, is that both families came to both celebrations – nobody stayed away from either celebration – and we built from that point – sometimes it wasn't easy, but it's because we decided that we were going to make it work, that we did make it work – and it was a really beautiful thing and they grew to love and respect my husband so much he actually taught Islam to his students as an RE teacher, and he would talk about that with my dad – have long conversations and my dad would say that David respects Islam more than some of his other in-laws did... and I'm so proud of that and I'm so proud of them giving me – I would have made that marriage anyway, it meant so much that they did it with me; and dad always said he would never let me walk down the aisle by myself – he would never let people think that I didn't have a family who

supported me – and it was such an emotional time – ‘cause I know it was really hard for him and I have always appreciated and loved him so much for being the brave one.

It was him who, when my family were really angry with me for having – wanting to marry an English person, it was my dad who drove to where I lived in Oxford – and I remember him sitting in my kitchen in Oxford and we were both crying – and he took out a card – it was an engagement card and he’d written in it all by himself and he said that I’ve heard you’ve got engaged, so you should have a card – and how hard it must’ve been for him to make that drive – and how generous of him to do that for me, his daughter who he loved, to support me like that, to give me that permission – it was massive – and I will always remember that and always appreciate that... **(28:48)**

**(28:50)** So, when we were growing up in England, as teenagers, we were very aware that we were kind of between two cultures really. So, we really loved our parents, they were very lovely people, but they were quite strict – they were Muslims, their faith was really important to them, their values of – um – were very traditional and yet we had school friends who were English – um – we were encouraged to join fully in, you know, school plays, and have friends and bring them over to our home and so forth, so , it felt, to be honest, like we were fluid – between two cultures a lot of the time and as we got older – and I may have liked to have had a boyfriend – I know my older sisters would have liked that – um – but they felt absolutely that they couldn’t do that – it was a thing that they absolutely could not do. It would not have been countenanced to have a relationship like that. Even when they went to university, um – they were older than me so they did it first, you know, they might have fancied people, they might have had a boyfriend – I’m not going to comment on that, but they could absolutely not share that at home with my parents – um – it was something that was taboo really – you just couldn't talk about it. And there was this pressure, because they were like the ‘first’ of a community that then had grown and was very much – everyone knew them because they’d been taught by my parents – literally, he was called Masterji in the community – he was Mr Bhaloj Masterji because he was the teacher.

So, when we came home from uni – we came and went, um – we were very aware that people were watching us to see what we had done and to know what had happened, and I remember once, an old school friend – I’d graduated by this point, I was in my early 20s, and an old school friend was going to go to the cinema with me, we were going to go and literally see a Disney film together. And um – my mum knew this person and um – she said he mustn’t come to the front door – um – you know, he can’t be seen to come and knock at your door and be seen to walk out together, so I had to meet him on the corner to go and watch this Disney film. He was not my boyfriend – he was never my boyfriend - but it was that kind of thing, it was that you were part of this wider community that would allow certain things, but there were other things that just could not happen. And, that’s why obviously when I was older and I did meet my husband, it was absolutely radical that I married an English person – and absolutely radical that my parents welcomed and accepted him – for which I’m so proud of them.

But it’s quite interesting – um – when years later, my father passed away, and I met some old family friends who we would have known at that time, and they were talking about their grown-up children, and they said, ‘Oh yeah, our son’s up in Leicester and his wife’s English’ and , ‘Oh yeah, our daughter, she’s married to this English man up in Nottingham,’ or whatever, and I was just amazed, because these were very, very traditional people - who

were the people I was a little bit scared of when I was growing up – and – I’m not taking credit for it, we happened to be the first – but what’s happened over time is as that integration has grown.

**(32:30)** Of course people fall in love with each other, of course families are made – that brings people together in the long run. **(32:38)**

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## **Slide 17**

**Watch 36:59 – 38:44**

**(36:59 )** What I noticed is when they would see my husband as a white man and me as an Asian woman and our child in a pushchair or a toddler walking along – people would smile at us - people loved that we were a family of mixed heritage – they loved that – and I think it’s what I taught my children when they became aware that maybe they were different in their class or different in their schools or friendship groups.

I would say to them, ‘You’re so lucky, you’ve got two cultures that you can draw on when you want to; you’ve got two parts of your world that are really special.’ And also, I told them that story of about how when I noticed people looking at us and how they’d smile, it would make people happy – because to them, it represented something that was positive, that was good, that was accepting, that was about England moving forward.

And um – what’s quite interesting is, maybe fifteen years later, going to IKEA, in Bristol, where I’d been lots when we first got married – and I went later – maybe it was more than that, maybe twenty years later, and I was walking round with my husband and there were so many young couples of mixed heritage going around, just like we did, choosing their IKEA things – and I remember David and I sat in the café, feeling quite emotional, saying we were one of the first to be like us – and now it’s so normal and accepted – and here they all are building their lives just like we built our life. **(38:44)**

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## **Slide 19**

**Watch 42:11 – 42:45**

**(42:11)** ... It’s part of accepting my whole self and being proud of all that I am , you know, I love that I’m a British Asian , I love that I move between cultures and that I bring cultures together through my work – it’s the most important thing in my life, I think – if you had to pin it down – um, I’m really proud that my life has been about helping people understand each other because I think we’re all human and we have so much to share that is really positive. **(42:45)**

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**(End)**