

## Kantil Chamania - Transcription

*Audio Quality - good, but there is some music in background throughout.*

**0:00:00**

**LMI:** Right, here we go. Can you just say, speak so I can make sure that level's alright? Just say something. It's going in there.

**KC:** Hello. Can you hear me? Can you hear me?

**LMI:** Yeah, that's fine. So, I'm sat here, see I've got a terrible memory already. I am sat here with... Kantil. And would you like to introduce yourself, Kantil, tell us how old you are?

**KC:** I'm 92 years old, plus. I was born in 1931, 3rd January.

**LMI:** And your surname is?

**KC:** Chamania.

**LMI:** Chamania, that's a great name. So, when did you come to the UK?

**0:00:42**

**KC:** I was in East Africa, Kenya. I was British citizen. By the born I was British citizen. By 1934, I was British citizen in India. After that, I came to East Africa, Kenya -Mombasa, 1947. From Mombasa I lived 13 years. From there to came in England, 1960.

**LMI:** How old were you in 1960?

**KC:** 1960, I was 29 years old.

**LMI:** Right, so you were already 29 when you came over?

**KC:** Yeah.

**LMI:** And you came to Bradford?

**KC:** Yeah, so my friend was round here, they said come over here, we're going to have a nice time. Because in East Africa, they're starting a problem with the Africans. They want to be independent, they call it Uhuru. They wanted Uhuru, they said that Jomo Kenyatta was there.

**0:01:30**

**LMI:** Oh right. Yes, I remember Jomo Kenyatta.

**KC:** Right. And I came over here with friends. Looking round here and there. We lived there. We had to somewhere stay. Then they find me to work. I went to the accruant company. [Ackroyd Company?] They said, 'Right, if you look at your passport, and send some friend with me, go round the town, get a work permit.'

**LMI:** So you went into Bradford?

**KC:** The terminal freight in Bradford. I don't know which airport I landed, I don't know. From London to Bradford coming round by train. I don't know how much money paid.

**0:02:18**

**LMI:** So you'd never been to England before?

**KC:** No.

**LMI:** And did you think you were just coming for a little while, or...?

**KC:** Because when I come here, I think 'How are you going to cope with?' ...too cold days, because when I came from East Africa, Kenya, it's in on equator.

**LMI:** It's a very different climate.

**KC:** Yeah.

**LMI:** Very different.

**KC:** Coming out the hot, stay in the cold. Those days, is a coal fire and the snow. Foggy.

**LMI:** What time of year was it when you came?

**KC:** I came in like... June/July.

**LMI:** So you had a little bit of summer.

**KC:** Yeah. And then when the summer... starts wintertime, too much snow. You can't walk around here. You get overcoat and this and that. Anyway, those days old days. We call them good old days.

**0:03:16**

**LMI:** So you got here, how long was it before you got a job?

**KC:** Next day.

**LMI:** Really?

**KC:** Because they were waiting for...with this textile, it was running the very speed. They wanted some workers.

**LMI:** They were desperate for...?

**KC:** Desperate for them. They said, 'Take a jacket off, start now, [start?] tomorrow.' So [I] started working. I worked 55 hours.

**0:03:41**

**LMI:** A week?

**KC:** Week.

**LMI:** 55 hours a week. And which factory was this?

**KC:** Ackroyd and Company.

**LMI:** Ackroyd & Company. And where are they?

**KC:** It's called Dudley Hill. Factory Street. Otherwise called Recta Mill.

**LMI:** What mill?

**KC:** Recta. R-E-C-T-A. Recta Mill.

**LMI:** Oh right. And what were you doing in the mill?

**KC:** When you're doing in the... don't know what to do. [I] put in a bobbin ligging.

**0:04:03**

**LMI:** Bobbin ligging?

**KC:** Bobbin ligging, you pick it up here and there, very long, you don't know when you're used to it.

**LMI:** So, what was bobbin ligging? What was that? What did you have to do?

**KC:** So in a textile... spinning and twisting mill.

**LMI:** Oh right.

**KC:** When I worked there one there was two.... spinning and twisting. But there was a combing...a department

**0:04:29**

**KC:** So spinning wheels that are like 6 or 7 inch. That they take out and tear [the wool?]. That was like... wooden. When there is a waste tied on the bobbin, that could tear up. When they're ligging is tight, they get the spells in our finger You get the spells in the finger and hand.

**LMI:** From the wooden bobbins?

**KC:** Yeah, because they're using a knife to cut the waste to clean the bobbin, and this waste is split, they split at the finger and hand.

**LMI:** So, were you cleaning the bobbins?

**0:05:08**

**KC:** Yeah, cleaning, we were packing it. They're going to pack the machine.

**LMI:** You were packing them? Or putting them in the machines?

**KC:** Machine on top of bins.

**LMI:** Oh okay.

**KC:** Then the fill the up...repeat it, that take you off, put in a bin to the right place, right twisting place. Spinning to twisting.

**LMI:** Spin... so you first of all you spin the fibre and then it's twisted together.

**KC:** I don't spin fibre. I'm helping them.

**LMI:** Yeah, you're helping them. Right from the... and you did that for how long?

**KC:** Day after day, I was working a little bit... experience. Then one of these, our tailor, I [he] did another job. So I go into his job. There were machines running it, like a spinning wheel, rolling. There was a belt on it, if the belt break down I had a new belt on it, the sewing it will... that's what I do.

**0:06:04**

**LMI:** So you were like looking after the machine?

**KC:** Looking after the machine, every machine, all around the mill.

**LMI:** This was still in Ackroyd's mill?

**KC:** Still in Ackroyd's, I worked in 33 in Ackroyd's.

**LMI:** You were at Ackroyd's for 33 years?

**KC:** Yeah. Until they closed down.

**LMI:** Yeah. So...

**KC:** Then I was... starting from there, then I started learning with something more. And sometimes they send me down to the warehouse, and look at this the yarn, the bag and tools are down. Then I did a little bit of learning, then I put with an overlooker and [he] say, 'Right we shall do this and that' and [I] do.' I find it out and put it on...

**LMI:** You became the overlooker?

**0:06:48**

**KC:** No, I'm not became, I'm working with the overlookers.

**LMI:** Oh, you're working with the overlookers

**KC:** A very good overlooker, they were doing something for me. And then afterwards I was running the, what they call, winding machine.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**KC:** So then I see that there's some yarn, I said to the overlooker, 'The yarn looks a little different.' So the overlooker got like a certain length of yarn, winding up, put in a skein and find out... a 20, 48, 50, 42, 32 different yarns, different size. In a yard... 3 in a yard, only 1 to 3 pound a yard, material.

**LMI:** Oh right, so it had to be exactly the right size.

**0:07:38**

**KC:** Exactly the right size. And then I learned something that I could put meaning. Help you to go to warehouse. [Checking in tubs?] the winding on the cones. There are certain cones, weft and warp. Warp shrine and a warping. The warp goes in a warping machine. Weft you have to go back on the other side.

**LMI:** That's right.

**0:07:59**

**KC:** I was checking if they were all right for doing that job. Then I was checking out... they said, they called me Hawkeye.

**LMI:** They called you Hawkeye?

**KC:** Because anything, any wrong thing, I already reported 'It's not right.'

**LMI:** You could tell just by looking?

**KC:** Yeah, I could see what feeling, I'm feeling, Hawkeye, yeah.

**LMI:** Did you rub it between your fingers?

**0:08:20**

**KC:** Yeah, I know, I can know, the size and the end, the thickness. They called me Hawkeye.

**LMI:** So what would happen if it was the wrong thickness? Would you have to send it back or...?

**KC:** Where?

**LMI:** If it was wrong?

**KC:** Yeah, we report that to the manager. Manager will go to the overlooker. They're changing the wheels. How thick is the yarn going through?

**LMI:** I've seen those wheels, I've seen... They're at the end, aren't they? And they have to change them on the machine?

**0:08:47**

**KC:** On the wheel, they change the machine, they change the wheel. The wheel changing, how many twist to thread the wheel. As the yarn get, how many twist on the yarn, certain length. That's why, like there's 240, 48, 50, something like that, different size thickness. Bigger one, 48, 50 right timing. 30 to 40, 20, they give, you had to get a sticker.

**LMI:** The bigger the number, the thicker it is? Or the thinner?

**KC:** Thinner number, bigger number is the thinner

**LMI:** Ah, ok.

**KC:** So that's why textile, they only began to do cones and send it away. Sometimes sending to Scotland here and there. That's why I found a job in Canada.

**0:09:38**

**LMI:** So what was the yarn used for? Was it used for making cloth?

**KC:** The yarn used for making cloth. When they're going from the warping, warping, they make the warping tight ready. Next door was a Scotch mill. They got a weaving shed there. Yes, they were making a nice.... One time they weaved something, the gold weaving in the cloth.

**0:10:00**

**KC:** Door, next door is a weaving shed, not for us. They call it Scotch Mill. And there weaved a special material, root [suit?] length, Harold Wilson's.

**LMI:** Oh, they wove Harold Wilson's material for his suits?

**KC:** Yes, next door.

**LMI:** He was from Huddersfield as well!

**KC:** I know, there's a big statue in Huddersfield station.

**LMI:** Wow. So they wove Harold Wilson's suit material?

**KC:** They did, no?

**0:10:39**

**LMI:** Was that when he was Prime Minister or before?

**KC:** Yes, Prime Minister when he was... special for him.

**LMI:** Oh, very good.

**KC:** By the way, I worked in there, I worked there about 25 years, and I said, I asked the overlooker 'Anything I get? A watch or anything?' They said, 'This is slave shop you don't get anything you don't get anything.'

**LMI:** They said it was what?

**KC:** Slave shop, slave, slave,

**LMI:** Slout, I don't know that word.

**KC:** Slave, S-L-A-V-E

**LMI:** Slave?

**KC:** Slave shop.

**LMI:** A slave shop? Oh my word!

**KC:** 'You won't get anything from here.'

**0:11:19**

**LMI:** After 25 years you said, 'Do I get anything for working here for 25 years?' and they said, 'It's a slave shop.'

**KC:** Some people have [supplied] good service and get the watches or something like that. I don't get anything.

**LMI:** Did that make you unhappy?

**KC:** But see what happened, I look after my family, they need some money to go.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**KC:** That's why I was sticking there. Then I also take that overlooker, sometimes said 'I'm not doing any work, but when they're doing overtime, evening time, they do double work.'

**LMI:** So was the management not a very good management?

**KC:** Management all right, but forcing, we joined textile mills, during a labour... union, trade union. Union don't do anything.

**0:12:07**

**KC:** They say, 'Oh you have to pay a little bit, 5 pence, 10 pence extra, little bit.' That's not much.

**LMI:** No.

**KC:** I worked all the time, the last 33 years. When they're closing down, still working there.

**LMI:** What was it like when it closed down?

**KC:** They got the... they had 3-4 mills round the... one in Halifax, one in the... one or two in other place. So many places they have the mill. All closing down. Last mill closing down is Keighley. The person came down to work in Bradford. He had a night working there. Then I said 'I'm not working overtime.'

**0:12:41**

**LMI:** So did it just get less and less work?

**KC:** Less and less at that. They sold out.

**LMI:** And then did they just make you all redundant?

**KC:** So many people had a redundant. I didn't get redundant, I'm still working there. I would be here and do that.

**LMI:** Were there less and less people working?

**KC:** Less and less people working. But they were only working less and less people to sort out the problem.

**0:13:03**

**LMI:** Oh right.

**KC:** I put this one out there, then I sell this one out, go to the... At the end of the day, at the end of time, the mill is closing down.

**LMI:** So what happened to all the machinery?

**KC:** They sold it. They sold it, the machinery. Changed the label and sold the machinery.

**LMI:** Who did they sell it to?

**0:13:26**

**KC:** Nobody knows. That's what happened. Sometimes, the machinery, old machinery, they sold it. Some foreign country, they came around to buy the machinery, and they work in their own country for textile. And the textile company here in England, more and more they want



to work. If you are there in the night working, they are very greedy. They want to make more money all the time. After work, they say 'No work.' 'How can I get the work?' 'You are done in the work in no time.' They probably will be done in the afternoon, they say 'Right, you're down to three days of work.'

**LMI:** So you went down to three days.

**KC:** Three days of work then, you are going to sign up for this. If you get poorly, you don't get paid, go down there, doctor gives certificate poorly, you're not getting enough.

**0:14:12**

**KC:** Go down and sign here and there. That's what the problem. And I left it. I finished it, All finished, 1933. 33 year I worked for it.

**LMI:** So when you left it was not in a good way?

**KC:** No, that is a complete close down.

**LMI:** But you were not happy anyway?

**KC:** A little bit happy, not happy as life. I feel you're right. That's it. That's my life.

**0:14:38**

**LMI:** And how do you feel about the mill now?

**KC:** No mill left anything now.

**LMI:** But do you... when you look back on it, do you remember it in a good way?

**KC:** Yes, a good way, but to say, you won't get anything out of there. Forced to do this, forced to do that, running around, 'Don't sit down. Do that.' Then a new manager came around, I said 'My work, my job is to do this. Not this,' I said. 'Your job is to do this. You pay for an hour, anything you can do.' I said, 'Not my job', 'So go home.'

**0:15:12**

**KC:** That's what the[y] forced it. Say you are textile operator, you're running a machine, right? Then I says, 'If machines over in Hong Kong, I say 'do this.' I'm not an operator, I do this machine. Then I [if I'm called?] call the textile operator, then I'll turn up. But they say 'I can give you any job. Before the machine do this, then do that.'

**LMI:** So they thought they could give you any job?

**KC:** Any job, any job.

**LMI:** Any job at all?

**KC:** Any job at all, because they had enough.

**0:15:39**

**KC:** They want to do everything, they want to squeeze, squeeze, squeeze out everything.

**LMI:** Sounds like very hard work.

**KC:** It is hard work, it was hard work.

**LMI:** And you worked, when you started you were working fifty...

**KC:** Fifty-five hours.

**LMI:** A week.

**KC:** About five pounds a week.

**LMI:** Was that for six days or seven days?

**KC:** Yes, Saturday and Friday, six days.

**LMI:** Golly, you worked six days a week?

**KC:** Monday to Friday, Saturday sometimes.

**LMI:** So it's like 10 hours a day?

**0:16:14**

**KC:** Yeah, look at this.

**LMI:** What's this? Oh, it's a penny, an old, an old penny, pre, before decimalization.

**KC:** Yeah, decimalization since 1973.

**LMI:** 1938, it's got on it 1938 and you were born in '32?

**KC:** '31.

**LMI:** So you were 7 when this penny was made? Wow, that's fascinating.

**KC:** One shilling was 12 pence.

**LMI:** I know.

**KC:** Those days half a crown, everything half a crown.

**0:16:50**

**LMI:** So tell me about... So you came over here and you were... Were you married when you came over? Already married?

**KC:** Already married. I married in 1953.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**KC:** When they conquered... Everest. That time we got married, 1953.

**LMI:** Right. Oh right. Conquered? Oh when Everest was conquered.

**KC:** That time

**LMI:** Oh yes, and the coronation the Queen was crowned, wasn't she? It was the same week I think. And so you got married then.

**KC:** No, Queen crowned in a...

**LMI:** 1953. It was '53.

**KC:** No after that. Because see what happened two sisters came in the Kenya...

**LMI:** Margaret and Elizabeth.

**KC:** And they were in Kenya they heard this father off.

**LMI:** That's right.

**KC:** And they had to go back to England.

**LMI:** So when you came over did you come over with your family or did they come later?

**KC:** I come myself.

**LMI:** You came on your own?

**KC:** I'm coming on my own looking for here and there to live. I found some place. They had one room, two people lived there, separate bed, no bathroom.

**0:18:12**

**KC:** If you're in a bath, you have to pay the shilling, for a bath.

**LMI:** What, in a public bath?

**KC:** No, public bath only 3p.

**LMI:** Oh right, so where did you pay your shilling for?

**KC:** Shilling, in the house.

**LMI:** Oh right.

**KC:** You go in a public bath, only three pence.

**LMI:** All right, so you had a bath in your in the house, but you had to pay extra to use it? I think children today would be astonished by that. And was there an outside toilet or an inside toilet?

**0:18:37**

**KC:** Inside toilet in house... when I bought the house, back-to-back on Otley Road, toilet outside, no bathroom, so I had to go into by the pill bag there the bathroom there. A bath, for public bath there.

**LMI:** Yeah.

**KC:** Three pence

**LMI:** Three pence. Three pence for a public bath.

**KC:** I used to deal working there, sometimes coming around the Wakefield Road there a bath house there that the bookshelves of the Jack Gillam. There was a public bath there.

**LMI:** Oh yeah.

**KC:** I used to go down there three pence for bath, penny for soap, and a penny for a towel.

**LMI:** So 5p all together.

**KC:** Yeah.

**LMI:** And so when did your family come over?

**KC:** I brought in on site 1962.

**LMI:** All right and that's when you settled down.

**KC:** Settled down.

**LMI:** Yeah. And did you... when you came over did you think you would be in Bradford for all these years or was it... did you think you might go live somewhere else?

**0:19:39**

**KC:** I was thinking to go somewhere else. I was thinking to go to Preston for ? Mill. Very bad, people said that 'Courtauld's Mill is not good for you.'

**LMI:** Which mill?

**KC:** Courtauld's Mill, they make the yarn, the nylon yarn.

**LMI:** All right.

**KC:** Don't go there.

**LMI:** In Preston?

**KC:** Yeah, Preston.

**LMI:** All right.

**0:20:01**

**LMI:** So you stayed in Bradford?

**KC:** Stayed in Bradford.

**LMI:** You got used to the weather, did you?

**KC:** Used to the weather, I'm tyke. I'm tyke, Yorkshire man.

**LMI:** Tyke, a proper tyke, yeah. Yeah, I try to be one. I came from London in 1967 to Yorkshire. So, my daughters, they say, 'You are not really Yorkshire yet.' I've got the wrong accent.

**0:20:26**

**KC:** Yes, that's it. If I go in the south, they don't understand what I'm talking about.

**LMI:** Yes.

**KC:** Usually, one time, if they hand me a bag, a bag, hard words out.

**LMI:** That's interesting. So, have you got any particular memories of things that happened in the mills?

**0:20:46**

**LMI:** Any unusual things that happened? Did you have, um, sounds like they were working you very hard. Did they have parties for special times of the year?

**KC:** Yeah, once a long time ago, when Ben Joy came over the next, they were taking out the Blackpool for a day out. They're giving a one pound.

**LMI:** The mill took you out to Blackpool for a day?

**KC:** Yeah, all mill.

**LMI:** For all week?

**KC:** Yeah, so many coaches going down they won't give us pounds for spending money. And then after they stop.

**LMI:** How many years did they do that for?

**0:21:24**

**KC:** I don't know, first time I had a chance, then they stopped it.

**LMI:** You only did it once?

**KC:** Then they stopped it completely.

**LMI:** And what about holidays? Did the mill close down completely for holidays?

**KC:** Yes.

**LMI:** And what did you do when that happened?

**KC:** Nothing. Went here and there with my friends and family.

**0:21:44**

**LMI:** Was it for a week or two weeks?

**KC:** Two weeks holiday.

**LMI:** And I presume that's when all the mills are...

**KC:** Closed.

**LMI:** They're closed, and all the machinery is...

**KC:** Closed down completely.

**LMI:** Do they go in and kind of check all the machines?

**KC:** They know what to do, no. When the mill is closed, it's closed.

**0:22:05**

**LMI:** Completely closed. Oh right. Oh interesting, interesting. Because that doesn't happen anymore, does it now?

**KC:** No, it's nothing there. Now it's just 4 hours, 8 hours work here and 8 hours after, you give a night shift, then sleep. Everything changes.

**LMI:** Overall, did you enjoy, overall, did you enjoy working in...

**KC:** Yes, because people going all the time. There were ladies working there.

**0:22:28**

**KC:** Everybody helped me out. I said wrong words. They said, 'Don't say this,' they said 'that way' Talking... this way of talking...

**LMI:** So when you were there, were you the one... were there many other people from India or was it mainly just you and...

**KC:** I don't know. Some people was there. I don't know where they come from.

**LMI:** Was it mainly a kind of white workforce?

**0:22:48**

**KC:** One or two come around. The white workforce was smoking all the time, going to toilet, the cigarette kicked out and we don't go out, I don't smoke.

**LMI:** No, no, so, so but was it, um, the people who worked in the mill, were you one of the only Indian people in the mill?

**KC:** Sometimes one or two come in and out.

**LMI:** Oh right, ok.

**KC:** But they always want to some more money, that's why leave their job. Because some people, the big family, they came round, look at the job, they say 'how much?' A certain amount of pay, they say 'I stay home get more money.'

**LMI:** Oh really?

**KC:** Child benefit.

**0:23:26**

**KC:** Yeah. They don't like to go to work.

**LMI:** But you just carried on working.

**KC:** Carry on. I do my work faithful.

**LMI:** Obviously did you well because you're... 92.

**KC:** 92 plus. January I'm going 93.

**LMI:** That's very impressive, very impressive I wish we'd filmed this because you look If I had to guess your age I would say...

**KC:** 65, 6

**LMI:** 60s, early 70s.

**KC:** When I used to work in Ackroyd Mill they call me Clark Gable.

**LMI:** Clark Gable, I want to see a picture of you when you were a young man.

**0:24:03**

**LMI:** I bet you were a handsome fellow, were you? Are you going to show me a picture?

**KC:** Yeah.

**LMI:** Oh, very good. I'll tell you what, show me when we finish the interview and then I'll take a picture of it. Are you going to show me now, OK. I'm going to see a picture of Clark Gable any second.

**KC:** It's a holiday on Caribbean cruising.

**LMI:** Caribbean cruising, very good.

**0:24:50**

**LMI:** And how old are your children now?

**KC:** My oldest one is 62.

**LMI:** 62. Oh, that's very good, very good. You don't look like you've changed at all.

**KC:** Yeah, everybody says you look the same.

**LMI:** And there you are. Oh there you are looking very very handsome. Golly, what a fine head of hair you got there. How old were you in that photograph? How old?

**KC:** I was about 30, 32 I think. Now I'm about 30, 32.

**0:25:34**

**KC:** This is my good half.

**LMI:** Oh, very beautiful. She still with you?

**KC:** Yeah.

**LMI:** Great.

**KC:** She's always with me.

**LMI:** How old is she now?

**KC:** She's 78.

**LMI:** 78.

**KC:** No, 86.



**0:25:47**

**LMI:** 86, 86. Oh, well you've had a great life together. So you've been married for how many years?

**KC:** 70 years.

**LMI:** Wow. 70 years?

**KC:** 70 years in March. 7<sup>th</sup> March 1953.

**LMI:** That's incredible. That's impressive that's very impressive.

**KC:** But don't give anything I don't want to do advertising here and there, that's it.

**LMI:** Right I'm going to turn this off now. Is there anything else you want to say about working in the mill, that you haven't said.

**KC:** It's alright.

**LMI:** You are happy with what you've said?

**KC:** Forget about it, don't understand.