

Thakorbhai Mistry transcription

Clear recording but too much background noise to use the audio

0:00:00

AD So I'm here with Takabayashi Mistry and do you want to tell me a bit about yourself? I know already that you're 83 years old in October. Tell me about when you came to Bradford and what Bradford was like then.

TM I came to Bradford in 1964. I was my brother-in-law, my sister's husband to him and he was working at the textile at that present.

AD Where was he working?

TM He was working in Saltaire Mill and he asked the manager over there to get me the job there. And I started there.

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AD So where did you come from?

TM I come from Africa, Tanzania.

AD Oh yeah. Yeah, and then... And you, how old were you?

TM About 26, 27, maybe, around that.

AD And what had you been doing in Africa?

TM Oh nothing. I was studying and then when I took my senior Cambridge exam, I failed. But I had a good company there and secondly, I was working in a bus company just to pass my time for a year or so and then my uncle from Rhodesia, that time it was called Rhodesia.

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So he said, you want to go to UK? I said, yeah, why not? Because he is the boss at that time, my father died in 1958. So he was the one who looked after me.

AD He was like your father.

TM Yeah, that's right. So he said, all right, then I'll arrange for you. So, he arranged me tickets and everything and I went to Dar es Salaam and came in the plane. First time in my life, the plane.

AD What was that like?

0:01:52

TM Oh, well, it was all right because there were some people beside me and they were talking to me, oh, I have been to England for so many years and I've been two years or three years and do you want to come and stay with us I said no I've got my brother-in-law to go. So I came in plane and dropped in in London and I don't know what to go so there was the next door next place next person who was sitting with me said I'll help you out in that case so he helped me up to the bus stop and he said you are going to Bradford so take this bus so I took it up to Leeds and then took the other bus from Leeds to Bradford

AD and you didn't really know where Bradford was?

TM Yeah, no nothing, nothing. So I went there and when I dropped in in Bradford, now where to go, I don't know where my brother-in-law was living.

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So I took a taxi, took a taxi and went there. And he said, where are you from? I said Africa. Oh, he said, oh, you are all right then, in English or anything. I said, yes, I am a bit alright with it so he took me to him and we met and everything. I stayed there for a week and then he said now it's time to go for work so I started working in CF and in this saltaire mill I was just experiencing it first time

AD What was that like for you?

0:03:41

TM Well, the thing is, if you don't know anything about the machinery or anything, it will be hard for you. But after one or two days, I said, ah, this is easy. So I skated on, kept on going. Then one day...

AD So what were you doing in those first weeks?

TM That, you know, we were making big lump of, I don't know what it's called now.

AD Were you... Yeah, in the mill, they're, in the wool.

AD You're making the threads.

0:04:16

AD You were spinning.

TM B Yes, not spinning.

AD You're weaving.

TM Weaving also not. thick to go for the making into a thin thread.

AD Oh, I, okay, so it was a big thick piece of wool.

TM Yeah, thick piece of wool. I was making that into the roll. And then it goes into the, I don't know what's called, spinning I think, goes into it and then makes thin thread.

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And then it goes into weaving or whatever they want to do.

AD And you said, oh this is easy.

TM Yeah, because I haven't done it before but that's the way it was. And then after about four, five weeks, my brother-in-law said, oh you got another, there is another mill down under there, CF Taylor's. I said, all right. Oh, he's got winding, so I said all right, winding is easy. I went and see it, it's easy, so I just said I will have this one.

AD You're winding the wool into a sort of thicker.

TM Yes, it was a thin thread, and then going round and round so that it can make a bit of rolls. And then goes into this weaving

AD the big bobbins yeah, the big bobbins

TM yes so I said alright so it was but in nights so I said I haven't worked in a night so he said alright I said I'll try but not sure so I went there I was introduced to a lady and she helped me how it works and what to do and everything.

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So I worked there for about two years I think.

AD And this was a different mill?

TM A different mill.

AD What was the name?

TM CF Taylor's in Shipley.

AD CF Taylor's?

TM Yeah.

AD Whereabouts in Shipley was it?

TM It was, you know, near the river, near the canal.

0:06:27

Yes, around there, but not near, right. There's no river there, but there is. I'll find it. Find it.

CF Taylor's. So, it was, you know, the park there, going up the hill and into that, I don't remember.

AD Roberts Park? Is it near Roberts Park?

0:06:37

TM I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.

0:06:47

I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't remember.

AD Robert's Park? Is it near Robert's Park?

TM No, I don't know. I know, I, yes.

AD I'll find it.

TM Yeah, so I worked there for two years on mill.

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Then I got tired of it. So I said, I went in the mill. You see, there was some problem. There was a problem, not for me, somebody else.

AD What was the problem?

TM The problem was the overlooker was, you see, he is slang language. It doesn't mean that he wants to tell it, him, that word, but he is just slang, he is just kind of saying it all the time, sometimes somebody said, ah!

AD All right, swearing.

0:07:43

TM Yeah, swearing. Yeah.

So, he didn't mean to him.

TM It's just...

AD That's what he was used to .

TM Yeah, used to it. So, that fellow went to the manager and said, he's telling me about it. So, I knew English, so they took me there, and I explained to them, him the fellow, that he didn't tell you, swear at you, it was his language, he was speaking of it.

0:08:11

AD So the other man, was he Indian as well?

TM Yes. The other man? Yes. He thought he'd been sworn at and insulted. Yes, he insulted him. And so he said tell him to make him, tell him sorry and I'll forgive him. He said sorry and that's it. Finished my job.

AD Oh, that's interesting, isn't it?

0:08:40

Yes.

AD So, you were the mediator.

TM Yes, there, yes. Nobody, because they were from Pakistan and India, they don't know something about English so I had to calm them down.

AD So did you have some English when you came over?

TM Yes.

AD You spoke English when you came over?

TM Yes. Because senior Cambridge in FIFA was the papers coming from here to there and we have to do examination and we have to do it.

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So I was quite good. I was good in Maths, the next subject, but only English, the spellings, so it's no good for me.

AD Oh I think you're not alone there, I think a lot of people have that trouble. It's not a very easy language to write down is it? So what did you think of Bradford?

TM Bradford, what it is, when I came in, I was something like not knowing a country and everything. I was just confused about it. But when I went up to one year or half, one and a half years, I said, now I'm all right.

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I know the Bradford and I know the people and it's all right.

AD So when you came, did you think you would stay in Bradford or did you, well, thinking you might go back to Africa or...

TM No, I said I'll stay here, see how it goes for 3-4 years and then put it here and then said oh this is alright, no problem of going somewhere else

AD So you liked Bradford?

TM Yes

AD Did you like it as a place? Pardon? Did you like Bradford as a place?

0:10:23

TM Yes, I did, I did like it And the people?

AD People as well.

TM They were not bad. They were alright. They, uh, what do you call it, uh, make us like friendly people. Yeah. And there's no problem with me. So I stayed in for a long time. Now it's about, I don't know how long.

AD So how long did you work in

TM Oh, until 1999. 1999? Yes. And then I retired because I got a back problem. Oh. I was pulling one of the strings, I fell down and there was a big wheel, I fell on it and I hurt myself on the back.

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I couldn't stand up. I could stand, do work, you see. But because I was, at that time, promoted to Overseer, right, like...

AD You were an Overseer.

TM Yeah. So, I said, alright then, I'll work for this time. And then the... I was working at... in wool combers. Wool combers, yeah. Yeah. And they were closing down.

AD So, I'm interested in the mills closing down. You watched all that happening, did you?

0:11:42

TM Well, I didn't watch it because, you see, because of that pain, I didn't went to a mill for about three or four weeks, and then they said, you are not redundant, you will be going into another mill to work. But then I said, I've got back pain, how can I work? I said I can't bend down that much and everything because this is the work of a horse here, is to repair some machinery as well and look after the people who is working and what material and how it is, machine is working, going straight or not. So I was doing that and this happened so since 1999.

0:12:29

AD So but you were there, you were around that time all the mills were closing in Bamford weren't they?

TM Yeah yeah.

AD What was that like?

TM Well for me I don't know but because I'm retired. For other people? Yeah other people you see they were young, they were thinking of what we will do and they were telling me that now if this mill was where I will go and I said you can have many other jobs like shop you can go and work in the shop and for an assistant or something just filling the shelf or anything if you don't know English got for you. So they did, some of them. One last two years ago I met a man in the next road here, there is a similar shop isn't it. So he went, he said, hello Mr. and Mrs. I said, who are you? I don't remember you, because it's a long time.

AD Long time ago, yes.

TM So he said, no, you know, we were working there, I was in World Commerce and you were in the other section of the mill.

0:13:44

Maybe you are good, I...

AD And now it's all gone.

TM Yes, now it's all gone. Can't help it, that. And now all the mills were closing and all of them, I don't know how many mills now it's open. Maybe.

AD Not many.

TM Not many now. All gone.

0:14:05

Only in Austin I have got some friends.

AD Did you like working in the mill?

TM My wife, well I did marry her in 67.

AD Did you like working in the mill?

TM I liked, yes I did like. I didn't like, but the... which I didn't like is to... to work is alright, but one thing is I don't like to...

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somebody standing over my head and saying, you have done this, you have done this, because I don't... I'm not interested in that. I say, if you want me to work, leave me alone, I'll work. And he said he didn't. I was alright, so I was promoted into the overseer. I was happy then.

0:15:04

AD Did they have trade unions? Pardon? Did you have trade unions?

TM Yes, I was in trade unions. Yes.

AD And did that help?

TM But I didn't use it at all. Even now, if somebody says you are still in the Union, I say yes, but I'm not interested anymore now. So, they do send me some research about Union and everything, but what can I do? I'm retired and I don't know what is going on now, so there's no idea.

0:15:40

AD So how would you describe your life in Bradford in the textile industry? Would you say it was a good thing that you did?

TM So many people have said to me, go away from Bradford and stay in Leicester or Birmingham or go somewhere else in London. I said I don't want London because it's very expensive. Leicester is alright because there are some people there I know and they're all friendly people and here as well. So I don't wish to go. So that was the life I had.

AD So you're going to stay here?

0:16:17

TM Well I'm nice. I'm staying here, they're all good friends and everything, this fellow here is from the same place I was studying and yes we are good friends so just maybe

AD So how would you say Bradford has changed?

TM The change in Bradford is not much change but the thing is there are so many people here. Some of them are very nice, very good. Some of them are not good but you see if you mingle with them and do some talking and everything. They are not bad, they are very good people - some of them. Some of them bad but you don't know who they are, that or...

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unless they...

AD Unless you talk to them.

TM Yes, but I would not, not to worry about it.

AD So just tell me about what, where you lived when you first came over, what kind of house did you live in?

TM Well, first when I came in it was back to back, where my brother-in-law was staying in a back to back house. So I was living with them.

AD Was it all men?

TM All, not all men, young, about 50, 45 or 50.

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So with them about two weeks in a small two-room house we were about seven eight people to his brother one himself my sister and two sons I think they were at that time we all were accommodating ourselves whatever how we can then after three four weeks they They said, I will arrange for you to move into another house, where you have to pay the rent, and boarding, not boarding, boarding you have to do by yourself, but rent for a house, but what it is, you have to sleep with another companion in a room. We were about 4 of us, two were upstairs and two with me here in the middle. I said, all right. And then we were good friends then. Afterwards, firstly we didn't know each other, but then after a little while, we got well,

very well, and then I got married there. So one of them shipped up there and my wife and me were in that.

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After about four months or so, we found a house. So we went into it, me and my wife, it was just a pound rent. Why? It was...

AD How much? One pound a week.

TM Yeah, a week. So my wife, it was going into demolition. And the fellow who was living there was a friend of my brother-in-law. So he said, if you want to come and stay here, you can come and live how many months, four or five months or six months whenever they say you have to empty it, you have to go there

AD Was it very basic?

0:20:10

TM Yes,

AD Toilet?

TM No, yes, it has two rooms, living room, kitchen and in the bottom cellar it was bathroom and everything and the toilet was outside you have to go outside.

AD How do you think young people today would cope with that?

TM I don't think so, I don't think so. They were so nice, these young people these days are very very choosy. Very choosy? Yeah, very choosy.

0:20:45

a house on St. Michael's Road, four bedrooms, and living room and toilet, bath, most of everything inside, one was outside, and we were happy there. I said, why? Oh, there are so many people coming in here to stay and outside and this line and that line and all friends are gone. I said, all right. So they chose the house. I didn't choose it.

So where did you move to?

0:21:32

TM Allerton. Allerton.. Right far away. And so I said, okay. So we moved there and we were happy. All children got married there. My wife died, my mother died, everybody just lived there for now.

AD So you're in the house? Yes. And your children are around you?

0:21:53

TM No, no, they're all, they're in their own house, car, everything.

AD Do they live in Allerton or have they moved away?

TM No, we've moved away, not outside. One is only in Leeds. Yeah. The rest are in there. All right,

AD OK. Not too far. We just finished this. We're just doing a recording. We're recording now.

0:22:13

AD OK, we're going to finish. Yeah. So, just to sum up, how was, how have you enjoyed working in the mills for all that time?

TM Yes, I worked there, I was happy there, not bad. I was happy because I was appointed as a trainer as well. Some people who are not training...

AD So you were doing training?

TM I was doing training. And then I was promoted to this overseer and I was happy there. I had no problem with anybody, even the managers were happy with me.

0:23:07

AD Which mill was that?

TB This, Woolcombers Woolcombers, yeah. But they have another mill down there, man fiber. Man fiber? No, man, what you call it? I forgot the name. Not the wool, but... So it's artificial fiber, is it? Yes.

0:23:29

Nylon or... Not nylon, but similar. One of those. Yeah, it came from Japan or somewhere and then we were making it into string and everything and dyeing it and then going to machines and then making it thread and going in a lot of places to get it done into threads. So, it was alright, I liked it. and still if they say, do you want to work? I would say, no! 83, how am I going to cope with it?

So you finished at the end of the millennium, was the end of your job.

0:24:14

TM That's it.

AD Okay, thanks very much indeed. We're going to have to stop now because we're about to start. So I'll just turn this off.