



3 INDIAN STORY

story collected in 2005

I was a Custom's Officer for the Indian government for 10 years, part of the Drug Squad. I was given the option of going to another part of India or going elsewhere for education. Three colleges accepted me. I went to the Netherlands, spent time in Germany and Gloucester. I was the only Indian but I didn't find it difficult to live there.

It's hard to get people to change their ways. People weren't used to Indians. I'd a mixed reaction, especially in England. I travelled on the bus. Not many would sit beside me, but this was OK as I got a double seat to myself!

I didn't get a scholarship in England, so I went home to save money. I was a senior manager for companies in India. My wife is a registered nurse and she was taken with the hospitals here. She was offered a job in

Northern Ireland. I didn't want to go at first – what I'd seen on TV made me think I'd get shot everywhere. It's ironic that my grandfather was in the Irish Army and the East India Company. He married an Indian and never returned to Ireland.

I'm not seeking asylum here. Getting a job in England is very easy since I was studying at university. Very difficult to get a job here – I've had around 85 rejection letters, including Woolworth's. On the web application form they said they were looking for people of high-calibre like me. Then I got a rejection letter. There was no reason for the rejection, there is never a reason for rejection here.

I worked for charities as I didn't want to do nothing. I didn't like people's attitudes, some were selfish. When you live in a different country you have to get used to not having things. It's not conducive to me stay-

ing here. We're going back to India in July. We love travelling and might go back to England for a while. I've 2 Masters – 1 from India and 1 from England. Here qualifications don't seem to matter.

Overall I've had a negative experience here, however, it's not as racist as people make out. Some experiences include getting my car door kicked in 4 or 5 times, and having my car burnt out. The police aren't in a position to do anything about it. They are giving post-mortems, but no action. They have a fantastic infrastructure but for some reason they're afraid – whether it's the Troubles or fear of work.

I've had some racial abuse in Tesco. I work the night shift. Some customers stand in the car park talking and block the spaces. There were 2 women blocking the only space and they ignored me. I needed to get to work. One lady said "What's the

f***ing hurry?' I know there's freedom of speech here, people would be upset if women in India said that. I footed the horn and one woman went ballistic and hurled abuse. She was an elderly lady. It was uncalled for. There are thousands of people living in India from all over and we don't hurl abuse at them. My line manager told me to inform police. I did. I gave them the registration number etc. The police did nothing. There is a unit for Racial Abuse in Lisburn, but they did nothing. Tesco barred the women from the shop. They can't get enough local workers and need foreign workers.

There is a problem with drunken jobs. Alcoholism seems to be totally out of control here. Don't get me wrong, I drink, but not a lot. Sexual equality has gone mad. Women drink more than men. Drunks hurl abuse.

We didn't come here for economic benefits. I was better off at home. We pay taxes. Don't see it as necessary to sit in the house and claim benefits. There are those who abuse the system, but not us. We plan to travel. There are 7 children in my family, 5 of us live in 5 different countries.

My perceptions of Northern Ireland before I came were positive. India is so big with different cultures and languages etc. It is no different than coming to Northern Ireland, you have to make adjustments. It is a very open society compared to India. If you have a positive attitude you'll be fine. Sadly, I've had all my negative experiences in Northern Ireland. I lived in the Netherlands, no abuse. Nor in France. The only problem in Germany was the language.

Hostility here towards foreigners is discouraging. People are rude. Coming to Northern Ireland, even from Scotland or England, there are always problems with immigration. We're the only ones to be stopped and we were searched for drugs

two or three times. I've to keep my passport with me at all times.

The excuse people make is they've never had foreigners here. Don't they watch TV? Here children aren't educated that they aren't the only race. It's more to do with education, you educate children well, there shouldn't be a problem. Are they living in a glass house? People from the province never leave it. If people were better educated, there would be a better situation. People point the finger at everyone else, but have 3 pointing back at them.