



Late Ishwarbhai Ranchhodbhai Patel

04.07.1937 - 13.04.2001



Ishwarbhai's father Ranchhodbhai moved from Sevni gaam, as he was the middle of 3 sons, at a time when the one third allocation of farmland would not be enough to sustain his family. As well as working in Chennai for a while, he moved to Navsari to become a diamond trader and polisher. Ishwarbhai was the eldest of 5 brothers and sisters, but none of the others survived childhood diseases that could have been cured by vaccines, as his parents were from a generation that did not believe in medical intervention.

As the diamond trade was proving tough, Ishwarbhai cut short his English medium University studies. In May 1960, he married Dahiben (aka Savitaben to avoid confusion with her grandmother-in-law) from Asta. Just a few months later, he had the chance to move to the UK at short notice because a similar aged person named "Vasantbhai" was willing to forego his right. This explains why he was also recognised by 2 different names in the Gujarati community in the UK.

He flew with a friend (Govindbhai, West Bromwich/Nizer) and initially settled in West Bromwich as several men from Asta were there and willing to help him because they knew Savitaben's family. Sitarambhai (Asta), also featured in this directory, was one of them. He faced the same housing, food and other hardships as the other LPS men at the time. For example,



he and Govindbhai used to take the bus from West Bromwich to Walsall as the public baths there allowed you to have a second round of hot water and Govindbhai's sister, who arrived relatively early compared to the other ladies, lived there and would make them something nicer than Beans on Toast to eat! Because of his Navsari "city" background and above average English for this time, he was able to try different jobs after his first job as a road sweeper and help others with their paperwork.



60s seaside trip with friends by car.



A rare trip aboard in 1985 for their 25th wedding anniversary.

The network of LPS and Gujarati married men who travelled alone was very close knit. He also bought his first property there in partnership with another LPS man (Maganbhai Govindbhai, Bajipura/Walsall). Even though Govindbhai, Ishwarbhai and countless others of the early men passed away over a decade ago, their widows and families have kept strong ties.

It's through that network and another origins' story of Bhikabhai Khushalbhai (Soyani) that Ishwarbhai got a job at the West Midlands Bus Corporation that set him and Savitaben on an unusual road.



Savitaben arrived in West Bromwich in 1962 after a sea-sickness filled, 19-night boat journey from Mumbai. She arrived in Tilbury and saw snow for the first time and did not believe her Asta cousins when they said that there is green grass underneath snow as it did not melt away for several weeks. She had only attended school until aged 13, but during her 2 years in Navsari she learnt tailoring skills and some basic English in preparation for her forthcoming life.

Because he had good English and was one of the first to own a motor vehicle, he was asked to take some family members from the West Midlands to show them London before dropping them to Heathrow as they were returning to India in 1964. Because of his willingness to help others, he made the trip and himself saw London for the first time, at a time when house prices were not that different. He decided to make the move for a better future for himself and his children, which worried his risk-averse Asta in-laws in the West Midlands, but they still lent what little money they could.



Ishwerbhai and his Mama at West Bromwich Bus Corporation



Govindbhai at Ishwarbhai's wedding in May 1960



They moved to London with their baby daughter Vandana that year. While they waited for completion on their new home, they rented a room from an LPS origin, single youthful school teacher in Chiswick. He went on to tutor some of the couple's 5 children born during the 1960s and early 1970s. Savitaben would cook for him while they temporarily lived there. His widow is still a very close friend of the family and living at the same address.

During this first difficult decade, they only went to India once and they also housed Ishwarbhai's mama and his children in the UK until they married and left for the USA.



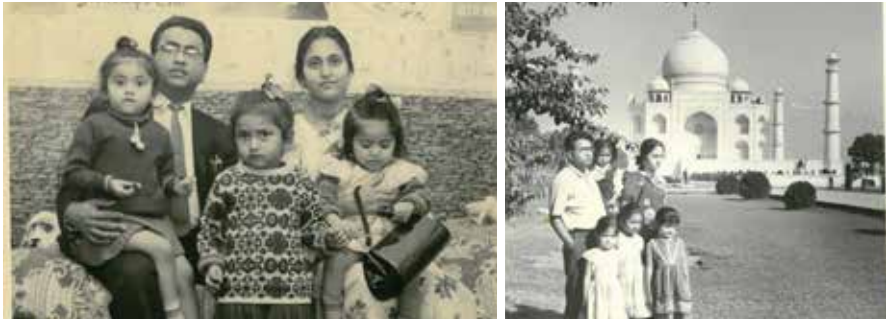
*Savitaben bottom right at sewing and English classes
in Navsari in 1960, aged 17*

Although he had stints at other jobs and made more friends that have lasted generations, his transferable bus skills got him a job at a bus station near his home in West London, whilst Savitaben brought up the family and looked after the room renters they had, which were crucial to pay the mortgage and repay the sums lent by family to buy their home.



They did not sell the house when they returned to India in 1970, which was supposed to be a permanent move. But the lack of gainful work in Navsari meant they returned to the UK, although the eldest two daughters Vandana and Aruna stayed with their grandparents in India for 4 years, and only met their spoilt, naughty baby brother Shaylesh when he visited India as a toddler and broke his leg!

Ishwarbhai's business knowledge from his father meant he was willing and able to take some risks. To make ends meet, he started to teach driving part-time in his spare hours and he opened a driving school from the home's front room.



A possible permanent return to India, 1970, with 4 daughters

Although Savitaben, who had a more sheltered upbringing, suffered several health issues (inc TB and thyroid problems) and had five young children, and was sometimes reluctant to take risks and try new things, she did help in the move and administration of the Driving School. She would worry about what people might think or say, and at a time when it was unusual to even add your wife's name on to a bank account. With her husband's support, she went on to learn to drive and became the first Asian woman driving instructor around 1975 and even drove in India until recently. Even though she has always lived with her son and his family, her driving and strong English have allowed her to share the driving with



Ishwarbhai during his last 10 years after his stroke in 1991, and remain mobile and independent since then. They both taught many drivers, including LPS men and ladies until they stopped due to ill health when Ishwarbhai suffered a stroke, aged just 54.



Ishwarbhai "Driving Schoolwala's" West London business, named after his oldest daughter.

Working hard, building assets & educating their children, sometimes in private schools, for their betterment came at a price for many of this generation – some could not afford to be there for their parents in India for their final moments; and also they neglected their own health leading to shortened and poorer quality lives.

With the limited income they had, and the need to support family members back in India, holidays and leisure were simple affairs. Such as ITV's wrestling at 4pm on Saturday, a day at the seaside once a year or a weekend with cousins in Melton Mowbray as hotels and flights were not an option. When video cassettes came out, weekly Bollywood cinema trips became a weekly trip to the local desi version of Blockbuster video!

Fortunately, they kept their ties to India and family around the world. This meant that, in the early 1970s, they left the children in the care of family for



a few weeks to visit family in California to see if they wanted to settle there. Similarly, the ancestral houses in Navsari and Sevni and small amount of land were not sold, which meant that, after forced retirement in 1991 (after Ishwarbhai's life-changing stroke), they were able to spend time in India every winter. Although as his only son was reluctant to let them go, the first LPS Doctor in London (Anilbhai Manilal, Nizer/London) shared some sound advice, for which all his children are forever grateful, as he had a wonderful final "bonus" 10 years during which time his son (the youngest) got married and he lived long enough to see his son's son, Akaash, but sadly not long enough to see his youngest granddaughter in 2002, or his first great grandchild in 2021.



Trafalgar Sq. with 4 daughters in 1970 before returning to India.



One of his early cars.

The family homes in Gujarat and some of the land is still held in the family and Savitaben and children, grandchildren and friends have made many trips over the years. For example, Gulabbhai and the Late Maniben (Kuched/London) also stayed with Savitaben in Navsari one winter whilst their own home in Kuched was being built. These trips have helped build bonds and kept members of the family grounded and grateful for what they have.



Many of the origins generation felt an affinity and desire to connect with others from a similar background, especially since racism and segregation was still quite prominent. This is partly why the LPS registered charities in London and for the UK were created in the 1980s, followed by others in the 1990s.

Those early days of fundraising was hard, but the desire to hold events at Diwali, Navratri and stay in touch were strong and many regions have kept the connections going personally and professionally.



Proudly with first grandchild, 1988.



Main picture Vandana, Shaylesh and Aruna in 1973. Smaller pictures Chhaya and Rajani

The founders of these charities and LPS networks would probably see themselves as the prequel to linkedin, facebook, BNI and match.com.

Much of what Ishwarbhai was able to achieve has been because of the family network and the support of his wife, Savitaben and her family.

When asked what recollections of him they had, his grandchildren recalled that from their perspective, Ishwarbhai was also aware of the changing social landscape around him, and willing to embrace and consider change – provided it didn't detract from his understanding and appreciation of his roots and the background. For example, he attended drama



productions put on by his grandchildren (at a time when most men of his background would have been unlikely to know what drama was!) and will be particularly proud of having managed to pass down his passion for Indian cricket to four of his English-born grandchildren, including his most Westernized ones!

We encourage everyone of you to explore your family's origins story, stay in touch with extended LPS family, heal rifts (if any) and visit Gujarat if you can. Please feel free to call me if you would like to chat about any of the themes in this history or any matters you would like LPSUK to explore. Shayleshbhai Ishwarbhai (Sevni/London), President for LPSUK and LPS-London.



Ishwarbhai's grandfather and his brother, Sevni, early 1900s

