



Gamanbhai Morarji Patel



Gamanbhai, was the youngest of three, born in Malawi in 1950. He attended boarding school for 11 years in Blantyre. He used to wake up at 5.30am to collect a bucket of water from a local well for himself and his brother. He only saw his parents during the holidays, every three months.

He acquired a real passion for reading and was determined to study and become a doctor, but his parents could not afford it. As a result, in later life he made education a priority for his children.

When his parents retired back to their village in India, he completed his studies at the age of 17. He worked several jobs and continued to support his parents in India. Back then, air travel was unaffordable, and the only other option was to travel by Steam Ship. Hence, travelling required a great deal of planning as it took around three weeks and he suffered tremendously from sea sickness.

He became self-sufficient quickly and started to acquire a flourishing entrepreneurial spirit. He started his own business before turning twenty-one. Too young to register a business in his own name, he sought help from a friend, and his brother Mohan. In 1970, he opened a high end cosmetics and toiletries store that served the President at the time.

In 1976, he went to visit his parents and it is here that he met Sangita. She had never travelled abroad and nor had anyone from her entire family.



She was excited about starting a new chapter in their lives. When they got married, Sangita spoke very little English and nor did she speak Chichewa (the native tongue of Malawi). Gaman on the other hand was fluent in Chichewa and English, but spoke minimal Gujarati. Times were going to be exciting and a learning curve for them both.



Gaman and Sangita before marriage

Lacking the presence of both their parents, Gaman and Sangita grew very close to Gopalbhai Patel, more fondly known in Malawi as GP uncle. They admired his warm, kind hearted generous nature and quickly he became a father figure to them both. He had a positive and long lasting influence and they still use his teachings today for their children and grandchildren. His breadth of knowledge, honesty and supportive advice was invaluable and to this day he is still remembered affectionately.

She became one of the first ladies to start working independently. She was chosen to place a garland on the President, Dr Kamuzu Banda in honour of women. Both were heavily involved in numerous local charitable organisations.

In 1988, they decided to move to the UK for a safer future given the political unrest in Africa. At the time it was impossible to transfer financial assets out of the country and as a result, the couple started over again with almost nothing. For Gaman, having become a successful self-made entrepreneur and then to give up everything over night was extremely difficult. The family had appreciated their privileged life which was a marked



contrast to the life that they had waiting for them in the UK. Their two children feel grateful for their parents' massive sacrifices to better their future.

On arriving in the UK, Gaman tried to settle in several cities without success; Bath, Coventry and London. They finally settled in Leicester a year later. It was a far cry from the hustle and bustle of Malawi and the love that surrounded them. In Leicester, Gaman and Sangita tried looking for business opportunities, but these were not fruitful, and they eventually decided to start employed work. At one point, between them they had five jobs to make ends meet. This hardship however, did not stop the family from enjoying sporting activities and Gaman continued his interest in both badminton and volleyball. He also instilled this sporting interest to his wife and children. Meera and Nakul went on to captain Badminton for their University. Sangita instilling cultural and religious values in his children and as a family they went to Swadhyay kendra every Sunday morning.

The whole family have had many achievements throughout the years. Sangita and Meera regularly won Leicester's Annual Rangoli and Aarti competitions. This led Sangita to design and create the world's largest Rangoli pattern, and in 2000 this entered the Guinness Book of World Record's, raising thousands of pounds for charity. Finally, Gaman's wish of a medical vocation was finally fulfilled through his children (Meera, dentist and Nakul, doctor).



(From Left to right) Amba, Amit, Meera, Jai, Sangita, Shree, Gaman, Raam, Sheetal and Nakul, 2019