



Narrated by Tahera Al-Harazi

My paternal Grandfather, Nazarali Mithabhai (my Dada – father’s father), came from India as an orphan at the suggestion of another Indian who was also going to Africa in the 1930’s. Dada arrived first in Mombasa and again upon another suggestion made his way to Uganda. At first Dada worked odd jobs until a friend of his gave him money to invest in his own small shop selling miscellaneous items in Entebbe.

From 1930’s to 1939, Dada had established himself in Entebbe, went back to India to marry and brought my Grandmother (my Dadima - father’s mother) back with him to Uganda. After Dadima’s two miscarriages, my father was born in Entebbe in 1939, the first of two sons. Dada worked very hard but unfortunately, diabetes took control of his health. Dada was to the point of almost blindness and having his foot amputated before he passed away in September of 1964.

My father, at the age of 17 had already taken over running his father’s business when Dada’s health was failing, only having gone to Old Kampala Secondary School for two years. Now at the age of 25, when his father passed, my father Saifudin Nazarali turned the business around into a thriving retail/wholesale business. His store was well known, and he often made road trips from Entebbe to Kampala and Jinja bringing goods to customers and picking up goods from suppliers.



So well known that when Amin’s army went to Dad’s customers who were not short on supplies asked where the “mahl” or goods was coming from everyone named my father and his store. This had the military pick up my father and take him all over Uganda to show them who were his suppliers. After a long day of not knowing whether or not my father would be returned unharmed or even alive, the army was eventually convinced my father was in the clear and returned him home.

As a side story when my father was picked up by the army, he had told his brother to tell the family that he had just gone to his suppliers so as not to worry them, of course the Masi’s, or Aunties in the neighborhood saw Dad being taken into the military vehicle and straight away came to my Dadima and Mother to tell them my father was picked up! Yes community was a strong factor at the time, support in times of hardship and great fun on occasions of outings and celebrations, but there were always the gossipers that added fuel to the fire when it suited them! Human nature prevailed regardless.

From my maternal side of the family, my Great Grandfather, along with his son-in-law (my Nana - mother’s father), his daughter (my Nanima – mother’s mother) and their two children (my Uncle and my mother who was only 11 months) came to East Africa from India in 1945 in hopes of better prospects.





My Great Grandfather settled in Hoima where my Nana was a teacher there for 12 years until he moved to Jinja for two years where he too set up a shop selling miscellaneous items. From 1959, my Nana and Nanima along with their seven children settled in Kampala. My mother moved to Entebbe after she married my father in 1965.

And that is my family's story...



On this day exodus and resettlement:

Nov 4, 1972 - Our very last full day in a land that was home to my grandfather in his teens until the day he passed in 1964, my father's from birth, my mother's as an infant and my brother's and mine from birth.

Just a week before, after already saying goodbye and taking a number of his close friends and family to the airport, my stateless father in a country whose dictator did not recognize Asian and Ugandan born value, made his way to find who would allow him to make a new home in their country.



As he entered the building in Kampala where many had passed before him in queues, he was approached by Aga Khan and Red Cross representatives but decided he would go to the Canadian consulate first.

Since the deadline was fast approaching he was rushed through the interview process and physicals were done by recommended private physicians off site as most of the Canadian dignitaries had already departed in fear of what was coming. Our future was listed as a number in the Argus Newspaper, Air Canada tickets were booked and paid by the generous Aga Khan Foundation.

Nov 5, 1972 - With \$130 USD, four suitcases, father, mother and two toddlers left their home in Entebbe and spent one night at the Apollo hotel in Kampala before making their way to the airport the next day in vans covered with Canadian flags to avoid check points en route to Entebbe Airport for a noon flight.

On this same day we arrived in Spain at 9 pm but were not allowed out of the plane and with another final departure to our destination at 11 pm.

Nov 6, 1972 - arrived at 3 am in what became our home country for the next 41 years and counting. Landed in Montreal where we were given utmost respect and hospitality.





For that day and one night we stayed at the army base, given warm clothes and food by the Government of Canada. As dad was not aware of the geography of this country he heeded the advise of going to the Atlantic Provinces where economic boom was looming versus the west of Canada that was already progressing. Nov 7, 1972 - Our family was boarded on a train bound for Saint John, NB. With the help of manpower from Federal Government and housing and clothing by the local church community resettlement was achieved. A small quaint town with its natural beauty of forest and water reminded my parents of a very similar place they loved dearly. And the rest as they say is history....



Beirut Marching Orders
to Roger Saint-Vincent:
Your mission: proceed to Kampala... process without numerical limitations... Asians who meet the Immigration selection criteria, bearing in mind their particular plight and facilitate their departure for Canada.

PM Sets the Tone
"...we are prepared to offer an honourable place in Canadian life to those Ugandan Asians who come to Canada...I am sure that [they] will, by their abilities and industry, make an equally important contribution to Canadian society."
Pierre Elliot Trudeau

