


Establishing Communities: South Asians Muslims in London from the 1950s

Source Sheet

Source 1a

This photograph was taken in the 1950s in a shop on Boundary Road, Walthamstow, London.

QUESTION ? MATRIX	IS? DOES? (PRESENT)	HAS? DID? WAS? (PAST)	CAN? (POSSIBILITY)	SHOULD? (OPINION)	WOULD? COULD? (PROBABILITY)	WILL? (PREDICTION)	MIGHT? (IMAGINATION)
WHAT? (EVENT)							
WHERE? (PLACE)							
WHEN? (TIME)							
WHICH? (CHOICE)							
WHO? (PERSON)							
WHY? (REASON)							
HOW? (MEANING)							

Source 1b

This is an extract from an oral history interview conducted with Raza Saddique (female, born in London, 1974) talking about her father's shop [pictured above].

"... my uncle and father used to grow coriander, methi [fenugreek] and spinach in the garden. Once it was ready they washed it, bunched it up and sold it in the shop. We also kept chickens in the garden that later were slaughtered in the basement of the shop. They sold other meat too, which was prepared in the butcher's section. I don't remember where that came from though."

Source 2a

Photograph of Leyton Public Baths. Courtesy of Vestry House Museum, London Borough of Waltham Forest.



Source 2b

Extract from an oral history interview conducted with Habib Hussein (male, born in Pakistan, 1930) who arrived in London from Pakistan in 1965.

"I know that in Leyton there was a public bath and they had a big swimming pool and we used to hire that for Eid prayers. Obviously they would empty it and clean it and make it available for us but we had to take our own praying mats and sheets with us."

Source 2c

This is an extract from an oral history interview conducted with Habib Hussein (male, born 1930) who arrived in London from Pakistan in 1965.

"Before we were all concerned about mosque and we used to ask people if we can, especially the taraweeh namaaz [Ramadan congregational prayers] if we can read taraweeh somewhere and anybody with a cellar was an easy

target for us. And in Albert Road, number 6 Albert Rd he had a cellar...The first taraweeh we had was there in 6 Albert Road.

[...]

When the demand got bigger, then we got together. We used to have meetings and we need a place for worship what is the answer? And then the suggestion came that we could buy a house and convert it into a mosque, but you can't do it just like that, it has to go through the council for their permission, and get their permission. It wasn't easy, but if you abide by the rules you would usually get the permission. But neighbors didn't like it, there was all these complaints... And all over England we used to buy the house and convert it in to the mosque and obviously the neighbors used to write to say yes or no. I think a lot of people complained but most borough councils were very tolerant and they were quite favorable because they knew there [was] religious freedom in this country and in the end the neighbors had to give up and allow them to have a mosque.

We used to have two houses in Vernon Avenue we had converted to Mosque. But then the demand became greater. So we were looking for a place, a bigger place, and we found this place on Lea Bridge Road. In those days there used to be this London Co-operative Society it was [a] warehouse, they wanted to sell it, to dispose it, and we wanted to buy it. We thought it was reasonable. And then there was the question of finance. To find £110,000 in those days was very big project...All the committee members used to go knock people's door and ask for donations. And with that we managed to raise some money. I think it was £50,000 or something we managed to raise... And the people who was selling us the warehouse gave us a target and said if you don't find the money the deal is off. Then one Friday we were saying prayers and this blessed soul, Mr Maniyaar, being a Muslim he came read jumma [Friday prayers] with us and he could assess we were worried ...he was a Bengali Muslim Mohammad Suleyman Maniyaar. He said what is the problem? We said we are short of money, we are short of I think £50000, £45000. If we don't pay following Friday we cant read namaaz [prayers] here, the time has run out. He said 'Dont worry, here's my open cheque, whatever you need fill it out. But I need security. I am a businessman, I can't give you money without security'. And three of our members gave their houses deeds to him for that amount of money what you borrow from him. And then obviously gradually we paid it off. But he was, Suleyman Maniyaar was the one who gave us the open cheque."

Source 3a

This photograph was taken in 1983.



Source 3b

Extract from oral history interview conducted with Aga Rais Mirza (male, born 1938) who arrived in London in 1960.

"In '76 we used to live as individuals. So my friend called Rasheed, he was a very close friend of mine.... He did not contact us for three days. So we were quite confused, we used to ring him up there was no answer. After three days, we went to his house, looked in the letter slot and found lots of letters lying down there. So we became quite suspicious, we knocked the door and all that. In the end we called the police, the police came and broke down the door and went up the stairs and we found him dead. So after finding him dead, all community was shocked because he was a very good friend of ours. He used to have musical evenings, he used to sing quite a lot, funny songs too. So since that time, we decided that we should have some organization to do things collectively. So we started thinking about it. So we found a group of people... So we hold a big meeting and in that meeting, a couple a friends were also introduced. We work very hard, we founded this society. So we ...wanted Muslims functions, plus the cultural functions as well..So our group, they make a society called the Islamic Culture society. In this society we have Islamic things and cultural things as well. So this is how this society was formed."

Source 3c

Extract from oral history interview conducted with Nusrat Syed (female, born 1943) talking about the Islamic Cultural Society activities. She arrived in London in 1967.

“On Saturdays there were Arabic classes, Urdu classes too. Children could learn our language and culture... there was Mishayra [poetry recitations], Eid Milan parties [gatherings] and meena bazar [charity fundraising].”