

Discovering Manjeet – Captions Text

- Manjeet using British Sign Language narrates her story -
I'm here to talk about observations in the Deaf Community,
my own journey and barriers I've faced due to culture and heritage.
Over the years I've always felt something's missing. This is my story.

A little bit about my family and background...

I have 4 brothers and 3 sisters.

My mother, father and oldest sister were all born in India,
2 brothers and 2 sisters were born in North and South Uist, on the islands.

Then my 2 brothers and I were born in Glasgow.

I have a Deaf brother called Jagjeet and a Deaf sister called Sharon, so 3 of us are Deaf

My parents have both passed away

My father passed away when I was one and my mother passed 10 years ago

Communication was difficult with my mother because she spoke Punjabi and very little English.

So my Deaf siblings and I experienced miscommunications with her.

I grew up in Pollokshields and I have a lot of happy memories.

I had hearing and Deaf friends and neighbours were all very friendly.

I went to a Deaf school; Glasgow School for the Deaf, then moved to Parkhouse School for the Partially Hearing

and remained there until the age of 13 and a half.

Both schools' social life was great but the quality of education was poor.

At the age of 13 and a half I moved to England and attended a mainstream school.

I was the only deaf girl there alongside two other Deaf boys of my age.

My brother who's Deaf was there too, but had his own group of Deaf friends who were the same age as him.

My education in a mainstream school was quite difficult because I felt isolated and lonely.

I didn't have other deaf girls around the same age as me, I had no peers.
The others were older and eventually left school, it was quite dispiriting.

For many years I experienced barriers with the hearing world.

My mother being a Punjabi speaker created a barrier

And I experienced 5 different cultures; Deaf, hearing, Indian, English and Scottish cultures

Meaning I had 5 different cultures to assimilate, which was a lot for me as a young person back then

Being at home with my mother, I grew up with her culture and her language and way of life

And my mother regularly took me to the Sikh temple where I would have to go upstairs and sit cross legged and pray

We would listen to the Kirtan for about half an hour. They spoke in Punjabi and sang too.

I didn't really understand it.

I remember going downstairs where they had the kitchen and a man and woman were cooking Indian foods, chapatis..

I would help

I'd also go outside and play with my friends

But my mother didn't explain Sikh religion to me or anything about the celebrations so I was very uninformed about all of it

When I was 13 and a half I moved to England

I remember the date I left Scotland, the 29th July.. arriving on the 30th July 1984

I went to a mainstream school and I'd go to the bus stop where I'd stand in the queue and say good morning... and people would just look at me

I realised later that English and Scottish cultures are very different.

Scottish is more friendly, and English is more reserved.

I lived in England from roughly when I was 13 till I was 40 and I struggled in the hearing world

I would try and act and talk like hearing people, but I really did struggle, it was really very difficult for me.

When I was young, I always wanted to ask my mum about my father and how he passed away and about his character.

But I was frightened as I didn't want to upset my mother, so I had to say nothing and never asked.

But I'd see my friends with their fathers, and I'd feel quite disappointed as I wanted to have the same experience of what having a dad was like.

It was saddening.

My mother did tell me that, on my first birthday, my father and mother both gave me a red dress and my first birthday cake.

After my father passed away my mother never celebrated my birthday again.

It was so dismaying.

It wasn't until I was 40 that I decided to book a hall and invite my mother and family to come.

My mother refused, saying she was still grieving for my father.

I was so disappointed.

When I had my 40th birthday party I was so surprised when my mother did come.

It made me so happy.

When I was about 40 I could see my mother was getting older

so I knew I had to ask her about when my dad had died

and I managed to get the opportunity

My mum was upset about me asking, but I said I just wanted to know

She told me the story, not all the details, maybe only about half, which was dissatisfying.

Years later when my mother passed, about 10 years ago now,

2 of my hearing siblings went up to the islands.

I was wondering why they were going, so asked

and I discovered that's where my mother and father had lived. North and South Uist.

Us 3 Deaf siblings were shocked because we remembered when we were young

that our mother would always gesture and use a lip pattern for the 'Islands' (when talking about ghost stories),

but we had always thought she was saying 'Highlands'.

We now realised it was Islands.

We looked to one another realising we'd missed out on so many opportunities to ask our mum about the Islands

so that was a real communication breakdown in our family.

We were floored.

In 2012 my mum passed away and I grieved my mum for 2 years.

After 2 years I decided to go to my mother's home, which was still there in England.

I had a look in a brown bag, it had belonged to my father.

Inside I found information, like my father's passport and his death certificate.

My father's handwritten notes were there, in English and Punjabi (Indian language) and also Arabic.

Also, there was invaluable information about his job, how he had travelled as a salesman and the work he'd done travelling Ireland and North and South Uist

There was also information about how he'd bought a white van, a Morris.

The 3 of us decided we wanted to go to the islands

as we felt we were so lacking in knowledge about my dad and his character.

I was about 50 when I decided to go to North and South Uist, the Islands, with my Deaf brother and sister.

When we got there we had to work hard to find a house with someone who knew my dad

We met Angus whose father Donald had known my father,

then we had to wait till Donald finished work at 5pm, finally meeting him at around 7pm

When we asked if he'd known our dad well, he said no, but his sister Catriona had

So, we waited until I could meet Catriona the very same evening.

She'd been 13 and a half when she met my father.

She knew him well, as my father had stayed in their house with their parents.

Catriona remembered my father having the mumps, I'd never known about that.

My father had also made curries and chapatis and Indian Pudding.

She told me that he was a very religious man and would pray every day.

The other man, Angus, told me that when he was 16 (now over age 70),

but at 16 my father had taught him how to drive a car.

And another man said that my father had a motorbike, I never knew my dad could ride a motorbike

Also, before that, he had a pedal bike and would work around the island, travelling by bike.

In rain, snow, wind and freezing cold temperatures my father would brave it and go out on his bike.

Later he got a motorbike and then the white van, a Morris

I was just so happy to know these things about my dad

And at the same time people were saying he was a very honest and truthful man

and it just made me feel so good, getting all of this information from people

We all talked, communicating using paper and pen and also by lip reading.

It felt great to finally be able to learn about my father's character.

For many years I hadn't know where my dad's ashes were

I'd asked my mum where they were and she explained they were in Loch Lomond

And at that time we'd lived in Glasgow, and thought Loch Lomond was miles away

And I remember when I then lived in England with my husband and 2 children, the 4 of us came on holiday up to Inverness

My 2 sons were about ages 2 and 18 months and I wanted to really look for my father's ashes.

I asked my husband where he thought they were and he called my mother

They had a chat about it but my mum didn't really know exactly where because Loch Lomond is so vast

and she didn't know which side they were scattered

but gave a description of where she thought they might be.

My husband and I decided to just drive there with the kids.

We arrived at Loch Lomond, but were still unsure where exactly my father's ashes were
I had to respect that things were different when my father had passed,
we were in the right area but didn't know exactly where.

In 2012 my mother passed away and it was her wish for us to scatter her ashes in Loch
Lomond,

like her husband, my father

At the time we didn't realise, now we do, but back then the 3 of us thought it was miles
away.

We realised how close it was, just half an hour from Glasgow.

I wish I'd known it was so close when my mum was still alive,

I could have brought her or we could have visited the loch

I regret such a missed opportunity

And that's where I am now

It's my favourite place for remembering my parents as I do know both their ashes are
here,

they're there

We come here twice a year, March for my mum's anniversary and November for my
father's anniversary

We've done that every year, leaving flowers for my mum and dad

It's great to finally have found the right place.

My auntie from Scotland has said she remembers when I was just one year old,

holding me while my father's ashes were scattered here

That's another bit of the story

Now I'm a lot happier

I think because I have my deaf identity back

I also have more understanding about my mother, her Sikh religion, culture and
language. That's become clearer.

I think there's contentment within me now

as I've learned new information about my father's character

And now I want to find out more about my parents' lives in India and what it was like growing up there.

So one day I would like to go to India.