

Memoirs of



Gordhan Rajshi Gadher

The following pages are some extracts from a book of memoirs dedicated to Gordhan Gadher on his 80th birthday, gifted from his children and grandchildren. We hope you will enjoy reading about some of the amazing things our father achieved in his great lifetime.

This book is Dedicated
to our much loved
Father and Grandfather.....

He was the foundation of our family and a much respected peer in our community. His passion for life, his selflessness in helping others, his sheer determination and level of achievement are immeasurable... He is greatly missed, but his legend will not be forgotten...





Any man can be a **father**

but it takes a special person

to **be a dad.**

ENGLISH PROVERB



Gordhan Rajshi Gadher

YOUNGER DAYS

1. Place of birth : River road, Ngara, Nairobi
2. Education : Ngara High School
3. Qualifications : Up to non - Metric
4. First job : Clerk in the Military camp
5. First salary : 200 shillings per month
6. First car : Vauxhall for 500 shillings
7. Emigrated to UK in June 1972
8. First job in UK: Shop Assistant at Bentalls in Kingston
9. First home in UK: 27 Hammond Road in Southall
10. First business in UK : Confectionery and Post Office in Northolt

PROFILE

1. Born : 17th May 1933, Nairobi, Kenya
2. Father's name : Rajshi Jeram Gadher
3. Mother's name : Kunverben Dhokia
4. Married : 13th February 1954 in Nakuru
5. Wife's name : Premkunver Govind Ladwa
6. Children : 6 Daughters and 2 Sons
7. Grandchildren : 15
8. Siblings : 4 sisters and 1 brother

PERSONAL QUALITIES

1. Very generous with love and money
2. Enjoys socialising and being involved in charity work
3. Loves music of different types and bhajans
4. Is fluent in many languages including Swahili and French
5. Loves talking and driving fast cars!
6. Has a HEART OF GOLD.....

TRAVELS AROUND THE WORLD

1. Africa – Kenya, Uganda, Congo
2. Most parts of India including Nepal
3. Europe – Spain, Holland, Switzerland, Norway, Holland, France
4. USA - Canada and New York
5. Far East - China, Bangkok, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong



Gordhan Rajshi Gadhre, our father, was born on the 17th May 1933, in a small house on a busy street known as River Road in the heart of Nairobi, Kenya.

He was the second eldest of 6 siblings born to the second wife of his father. Dad had an elder step brother who passed away a few years ago and 3 step sisters.

Dad had a good loving childhood and at the age of 7, started his education at the Ngara High School. Dad worked hard and soon progressed to attain a good standard of education for which he has always been grateful for.

Unfortunately, he had to leave school 6 months before completing metric (A level standard), because he had to find work to support the family. This was a difficult time for the family as Dad's father did not have enough work and the family had a lot of debt resulting from doctors bills from Dad's mother not keeping well. They did not even have enough cash to pay for the food bills and the women in the family would make do with very basic food such as tea and rotlis.

It wasn't long before Dad found his first job which was working as a store keeper clerk in a Military camp in Athi River. He was paid just 200 shillings a month. He worked here for one and half years and in 1951, he left to start work as a receptionist at Kettle Roy Tyson Motor company.

As he was such a conscientious worker, he was quickly promoted to the chief clerk to look after the battery section of the cars. This is where dad developed a passion for cars and also learnt how to repair them.

His first car was a small Vauxhall which he bought for 500 shillings in cash. This was a lot of money in those days. As he started earning more, he soon bought an old Beetle which he put together from various spare parts.

Since those early days, dad has moved up in the luxury car industry from owning an old banger to a Lexus, and today, he is the proud owner of a beautiful black Jaguar.....

Dad had always liked fast cars and sometimes, when we are sitting in his car, we have to close our eyes and hold onto the seat as dad likes to put his foot down on the accelerator!

Life was very hard in dad's younger days. There was a period of time when dad had to work two jobs. He would work in his normal job during the day, and in the evening, he would drive a lorry and transport the sand from Athi river to sell to the construction companies. He did this for almost two and a half years.





Dad's Business Empire.....

There is no doubt that dad has never been afraid to try his hand at different types of business ventures.

In Africa, he had been a successful businessman running the textile business which involved wholesale/retail trade as well as import and export of clothing materials. He started his first business in Kisoro, Uganda and then moved to Congo in 1961. The trade in Congo was very successful and dad accomplished a lot of wealth during this period. Their business was known as Congo Traders which had a very high profit margin of 150%. But this was not all smooth running, they had suffered much loss and risked their lives on many occasions, and dad was reluctant to leave Congo.

During the 11 years that dad spent in Congo, he achieved so much wealth that he began to have a reputation as a gold dealer! However, due to the political instability in the country, dad lost all his money and all his assets when his home and business were seized by the government. This happened not once, BUT 3 TIMES. Each time dad lost everything, he picked up the pieces and started all over again. After the third time when everything was robbed in 1971, dad decided that it was finally time to leave Congo and move to UK.

This was one of the main reasons for moving to UK and partly, it was because Shobhna was 17 and getting to an age when she would automatically become an African citizen. Both the parents had British citizen rights so they decided to move to the UK in early June 1972 and travelled overseas together with dad's sister Prabhaben.

The family stayed with dad's older sister Jayaben for a short period and then, with the small savings that remained, Dad bought his first home in Hammond Road, Southall.

Dad found a job and worked for some time in Bentalls in Kingston as a Shop Assistant. However, dad did not enjoy working for someone else and he soon realised that running his own business was what would make him happy. So, he prayed to God to give him guidance and he soon had an opportunity to buy a small sweet shop in Northolt which was joined with a Post Office called The Heights.

This was a new trade for dad and even though there were certain strict rules in running a post office, Dad quickly picked up the skills and soon the business was running successfully. The family moved from Southall into a new home on Islip Manor Road.

By this time, Jayanti kaka had also arrived from the Congo without any money or personal belongings as all their assets were seized by the government. Like the exodus in Uganda, all Asians in Congo had to leave without any money or belongings. Dad and Kaka worked together at the Heights in Northolt for a while but after some time, it became apparent that it was not practical for them both to be tied up in one business and dad decided to go and work with another friend (Mr Shah) who was running a textile business in east London. Dad worked in this trade for almost one and a half years. However, the textile trade required a lot of capital and so he needed to try and find another line of business.

With God's blessings, Dad bought a small shop called Budgens in Seven Sisters Road in 1975 and that became his home and life for 21 years. The business grew from a small grocery store to a large and successful business called Ashapura Enterprises.

The whole family including the children became part of this business whether it was filling up the shelves or serving the customers at the till. Mum quickly became very involved in this business even though she had no experience and her English was basic. It is no surprise that mum soon proved herself to be a very successful business partner as she quickly picked up English and other business skills and took over the running of the business.

This prompted dad to look for another business and in 1980, he bought another shop in Caledonian road. This was a pharmacy, a business which was not familiar to him, but once again, dad rolled up his sleeves and got to work. He has proved that you can achieve anything if you set your mind to it. This was another of dad mottos. This shop too proved to be another successful addition to dad's business portfolio. The pharmacy remained as a family business until 1988 when the shop was sold but the flat above remains as an asset to the family.

After selling the pharmacy, dad went back to putting all his efforts into running the Seven Sisters shop. The recession and the popularity of the big stores meant that business was slow and so the family had to extend the business working hours until 10pm and keep it open all 7 days a week.

Though there are so many fond memories of this place as there have been many family occasions such as engagements and bhajans held in this house, there have also been some frightening times in the shop when robbers have attacked mum and dad.

There were several incidents when mum was threatened by youths with knives, demanding cash from the till. When this started getting worse, the family had to get an alsation as a guard dog. Prince became a loving and loyal friend to the family and a criminal deterrent in the shop. Mum, who had now been confronted so many times by jobs, had had enough and kept some hot chilli powder by the till and she actually used it once when she was provoked by a robber. HATS OFF to you mum!

Of all the terrible incidents, the worst was when robbers got inside the back of the shop where the safe was kept and attacked mum and dad with a sharp weapon. Unfortunately, Prince the alsation was upstairs in the house on that particular day and when mum and dad tried to shout out to him on the stairs, they were hit quite badly. Dad received severe injuries to his legs and knees and mum was hit on the head. The thieves forced dad to open up the safe and took all the cash. An ambulance and police were called.

Dignity, honesty and pride.....

Dad has ventured in many business partnerships. More recently, some have given him great rewards while those from his earlier ventures have left him with bad debts. When he had to leave Uganda and Congo quite suddenly, he did not have enough money to repay his share of the business that was seized during the Civil War. However, due to his honest upbringing, dad made sure that he repaid all his business partners when he started earning in the UK. It took him a long time to clear this debt but he would not rest until he had cleared everything. His friends, who were also his business partners, still admire dad for his honesty and hard work.

Dad, you have proved you are:-

HONEST
encouraging
Loyal
DEVOTED
compassionate *helpful*
dependable



Did you know.....

Once, when mum and dad were in India, someone walked for miles to come and find dad as he had heard that dad was going to be at a function. When he found dad he fell to his feet and said 'thank you, because of you my brother is alive'.

Dad had paid for someone's life saving operation.

Dad replied, 'don't thank me, thank God.'

Some Near Escapes!.....

Dad has always been quite adventurous and some of the incidents that have happened in his life have made him truly believe that God is by his side and therefore increased his faith in the Great Lord.

Some years ago, when dad was in Spain just after having purchased the holiday flat, his briefcase was stolen from the apartment. It contained all of his valuables including credit cards, chequebook, passport and important legal documents for the purchase of the flat. Of course dad had reason to panic but he tried to keep faith and so he prayed to Mataji for help and guidance. As anyone would do in such circumstances, he went to the local police station but found the police on duty could not understand him as they did not speak much English. They suggested dad try another police station which was nearby. When dad arrived at the other station, he was shocked to find his briefcase had been handed in but most amazingly, only the cash had been stolen - his credit card, passport and documents were all still in the briefcase. Dad could not believe his good fortune and realised that this must surely be due to the blessings of Mataji....

Yet another similar incident took place in India not so long ago. Dad was sharing a taxi with some other travellers from the UK and left behind his briefcase in the car when he got off at Ranavav. All of his money and valuables were in the bag. It was only whilst he was having tea with Govindbapa that dad suddenly realised that he did not have his briefcase. By pure luck, he had exchanged UK contact details with the travellers and with communications between London and India, the travellers managed to get hold of dad and let him know that his briefcase was safe! Dad, relieved, then went and collected his briefcase from Porbandar. This incident made dad remember one of his childhood experiences when his mother insisted he return the 5 shilling note as it did not belong to him. It must have been from this good deed from earlier in his life that fate returned the same favour. If it wasn't for the same honesty of those travellers, dad would have lost everything. Having gone through 2 similar experiences, this strengthened dad's firm belief that "what you sow is what you reap".





THE CROSS ROOM

The young man was at the end of his rope.
Seeing no way out, he dropped to his knees in prayer.

"Lord, I can't go on," he said.

"I have too heavy a cross to bear."

The Lord replied,

"My son, if you can't bear it's weight,
just place your cross inside this room.

Then open another door and pick any cross you wish."

The man was filled with relief.

"Thank you, Lord,"

he sighed, and did as he was told.

As he looked around the room he saw many different crosses,
some so large the tops were not visible.

Then he spotted a tiny cross leaning against a far wall.

"I'd like that one, Lord,"

he whispered. And the Lord replied,

"My son, that is the cross you brought in."

When life problems seem overwhelming,
it helps to look around and see what others are having to endure.
Then you may see for yourself that you are more fortunate than you realized.

Troubled Times.....

Dad has had several lucky escapes in his life time. With each hurdle, he found that his faith in God only strengthened.

Car Accident in Africa

One adventure that almost turned into a nightmare was when dad and some others were involved in a very bad car accident in Africa in 1964.

Dad, Kaka and a couple of other friends were travelling to Kampala for Benafai's wedding. The journey had already taken them one and a half days instead of a day as the weather was so bad. Just before reaching Kampala, one of Dad's friend offered to drive the car in order to allow dad to rest. Reluctantly, dad agreed but unfortunately, the driver fell asleep for only a few seconds whilst driving and the car skidded and overturned a couple of times leaving the car stuck in a gutter.

The village people helped pull out all the passengers. Dad was badly bruised in the chest and Kaka received a very bad injury just above the eyes. The others were also quite badly hurt so they were all taken to the local hospital. Dad was getting really worried now as the money which they needed for the wedding was hidden underneath the seat of the car.

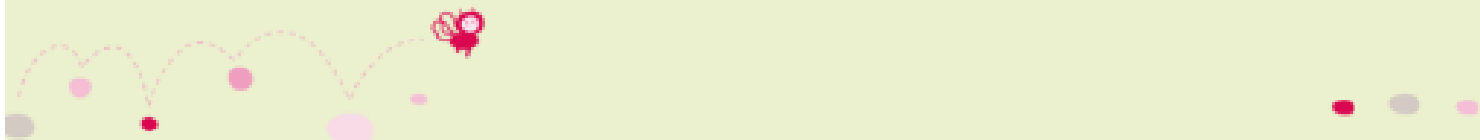
Whilst they were kept in the hospital for 5 days as Kaka's injuries were so bad, the family were all anxiously waiting for them in Kitale where the wedding was to take place. They needed the money for the final preparations and there wasn't any way to inform the family of the news.

Dad finally managed to inform a friend of the family and requested that the news of their accident was kept a secret from the family as this would cause them all a lot of worry. It was only when Grandfather insisted the friend tell him that he spoke of the accident.

Finally, when they were released from the hospital, dad and kaka took a bus to Eldoret and then another bus to Kitale. They arrived just one day before the wedding instead of a week before!

Car Accident in Gilgil

There was another accident in dad's younger days when he was working for a motor company. He was travelling with a friend and were on their way to see motor racing. They had just reached Gilgil when the car turned suddenly due to a sharp bend and car coming from the other side. Dad was thrown out of the car. Though this was a lucky escape, dad dislocated his shoulder and even today, his shoulder is slightly out of proportion.



Jaundice Fever

In 1967 in Kampala, dad had a severe attack of jaundice which almost killed him. He could not eat and suffered from high fever and damage to the liver leaving him extremely weak. The whole village worried for his wellbeing, hopeful that he would get better as he had such a large family to look after. Whilst the doctors declared they could do no more, mum prayed to God. Slowly, with the help of ayurvedic medication and mum's caring efforts, dad finally came out of this illness.

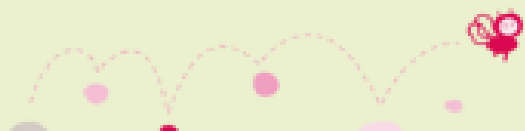
It took dad almost 5 months to recover but even today, due to the damage caused to his liver from this illness, dad suffers from many problems and has to be careful of what he eats and drinks.

But by God's grace, this is another episode he has survived.

Knee Operation

Another scary episode in dad's life was when he had a knee replacement operation a few years ago. After coming out of the operation theatre, dad did not receive proper medical treatment and started hallucinating. When mum came to visit him, dad became confused and disorientated and wanted to go home by himself. Due to the tranced state he was in, it took a couple of nurses to calm him down and he was sedated. With good fortune and God by his side, once again, he made a full recovery.

Perhaps one of the reasons God kept dad alive during all of these incidents, and when doctors had almost given up hope, was that he was destined to do a great deal of good things in his life....



Dad's love for Congo

Although dad has had to deal with many bad episodes during his stay in Congo, he still has very fond memories of his many years in that country.

One scene that has stuck well in his mind is when during a civil war around 1964, dad and Hirjifuwa had to lock themselves in the bathroom for 3 days without food and water as there was gunfire everywhere around them. They were stuck in there with a few other people for their own safety.

There was another time when he risked his life by driving his van through a lot of gunfire trying to get to the Rwanda border for safety. Dad wanted to save all his textile material from his shop otherwise it would get looted. So he loaded all this into a van and made his way towards Rwanda where one of his friends would help store the goods. Luckily, he managed to reach safety without getting shot on the way....

The army and gunfire became a regular scene for dad in Congo. Even when it was Kaka's wedding in Kampala, dad managed to reach there just in time as there was a civil war going on in Congo. He had to take a lot of risk to get there and managed to arrive just one day before the wedding! Such determination!...



FOOTPRINTS IN THE SAND

One night a man had a dream.

He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the LORD.

Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him, and the other to the LORD.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the LORD about it:

"LORD, you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way.

But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The LORD replied:

"My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you.

During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."



Visits to India and Charity Work

Dad's first visit to India was just before Jayanti kaka's wedding. It was Grandfather's wish that dad should go to India and perform certain rituals (shaving of head and other religious rites) before the wedding took place which dad honoured.

Since then, India has become one of dad's favourite destinations. Apart from going there for pilgrimages, dad's visits have been to achieve bigger things in life.

One such achievement has been the setting up of a charity trust which helps the needy with medical costs, education fees and other personal difficulties. As dad felt that all his wealth was due to the blessings of his KuldeviMaa, he decided to name the charity Ashapura Charity Trust which was set up in 2004. Even before all the paperwork was formally completed, dad decided to make his first major donation in providing a wheelchair to a young man who had suffered from an accident. This was about 8,000 rupees.

Dad has always believed that happiness lies in giving, not receiving. This is why he is so popular as he has such a generous nature. He loves to give everyone whatever he has and when he returns from India, his wallet is considerably lighter!

Since setting up the charity trust, dad has donated tens of thousands of pounds towards medical fees, education and housing arrangements but to name a few.

Another reason for travelling to India was to do the family Sapta in 1988. This was a truly memorable event for dad as it brought together all his family members in India. This included his brother and all his sisters as the Sapta was performed in memory of his parents. This was a joyous occasion and dad believes that his fortune has changed for better since then. He had fulfilled his wish to free the spirits of his Pitrus and with their blessing, dad's chain of businesses started to grow very successfully.

Two other major events in India that will always make dad happy are his major contributions in Talara in 2003 and Bhavpura in 2008 - these were the opening of a Community hall and Temples, and the ritual ceremony of Paras Shivlingh.

In Talara, dad donated a large sum of money (15 lakh rupees) towards the building of a marriage hall and rooms for overseas visitors. This was dedicated in memory of our Grandparents and was a very big event with two days of tremendous celebrations.

Five years later, in 2008, the family travelled together again to perform the religious rituals involved in establishing a large mercury (Parth) shivling in a small town near Porbander called Bhavpura. This was another major event lasting 4 days and involved a lot of joyful celebrations.

And earlier this year, in March 2013, dad contributed towards some building costs and meals in a town called Menderda in Gujarat.

Dad has always enjoyed giving a helping hand to others. He gives from the heart as well as the cheque book! Charity work is his way of giving back to mankind the wealth he is given from God. Dad is a firm believer that what goes around comes around and charity begins in the home. His wallet will never empty as he gets in return as much as he gives.





Ever since Dad read the Karma na Siddhanth philosophies (theory of Karma), dad's life has changed dramatically.

He has become a firm believer of WHATYOU SOW IS WHATYOU REAP. The theory explains that if you do good, you will receive the benefits and if you do bad, then you will have to pay the price for it. Whether it happens in this life or the next, everyone must settle their good and bad deeds.

Dad is also a firm believer of CHARITY BEGINS AT HOME. This he has proved by his love and generosity to the entire family, always advising, helping and giving.

Dad believes that everything he has in his life has been given to him by the blessings of his Kuldevi Maa.

Mum and dad have witnessed a lot of hard times in their early lives but they have achieved a lot and have come a long way, which is why they are truly thankful to their Kuldevi Maa for all the wealth and happiness they have been given. They are our Role Models and set a leading example to us all.

When dad was once told he was a rich man, he replied 'I am a rich man, this family I have - my children and my grandchildren, are my wealth, I am a very lucky man.'

Dad, you are

K *considerate* thoughtful
CARING **i**
n
understanding
generous
GIVING **d**

In Dad's own words.....

During my life , I have driven tens of thousands of miles and have made hundreds of friends in Kenya, Uganda,Zaire, UK and now even in India.

I am a big lover of music since the age of 7 when I used stand outside hotels listening to the music being played. I have a huge collection of film songs on audio cassettes, CDs and DVDs but I have now moved on to bhajans which I find more peaceful and relaxing.

If I have to leave this world tomorrow, I don't have any regrets or any wishes because with blessings of my "MAA", I have enjoyed the best life and best family.

I am a very jolly person as most will agree and tend to mix with everyone. Being the eldest, I have had to take on the most responsibility, but from an early childhood, I have enjoyed serving others (there were many times when I used to take ill people to the doctors).

The most influential person in my life has been my wife who has been a pillar of strength to me and has guided and driven me to achieve everything I have now.

I pray to God that I may have the same partner in my coming life as we Hindus believe that there is another life. If I could ask for anything, it would be to share another lifetime with Premi and have a family like I have today.

My wish is that I may be blessed again and again by my goddess mothers who are AshapuraMaa, BalviMaa and SriBaiMaa.

"Hazo khwashi heiaisy ke muje mery maa baar baar mile".

Apart from Maa's guidance, something else that has influenced my life has been the Geeta gnan from "Karma Na Siddhanth".

It has changed my way of life and thinking. The teachings have made me realise that what you sow is what you reap and I am a firm believer of this.

I love being part of a close knit family but in my long and hard life, I have also had to deal with a lot of issues which arise within a big family. I have learnt to encounter and accept problems which are inevitable with extended families. There is no doubt that having such a large family has made me a stronger and more tolerant person.

I have also witnessed a lot of sad episodes in my life. This includes losing some of my dear family. This made me question my faith in God but I have now become a stronger person with the knowledge that God works in strange ways.



Dad, we
hope you
will always
smile like
this!