

MBE for Balvantbhai Dahyabhai Patel

In almost all the countries of the world worthy citizens are greatly sought after, well regarded and rewarded. When it is the Head of the State who seeks one out and confers the award it is a rare honour for the individual, his family and his Community. We can all share in the highly valued recognition of Shree Balvantbhai by The Queen.

Balvantbhai was Awarded MBE by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II in her Birthday Honour's for 2008.

Our heartfelt congratulations go to Balvantbhai and his family for making our whole Mandhata Community proud. Thank you.

Balvantbhai is no stranger amongst us. However, many of you may not know the long list of his services to the country, his local Bilston Community, his Mandhata Community and his Gam in Bodali, India, to deserve this sought after Award. Let me list these.

Youthful 67 year old Balvantbhai left Kantha Vibhag, his land of birth at the age of 7 for Nairobi, Kenya. Here he studied to Senior Cambridge Matriculation and started fulltime job with Life Insurance Corporation of India and served for five years in their offices in Nairobi and Kampala, Uganda. In 1966 he joined his father who had arrived in UK a little earlier. In 1967 his mother, brother and sister joined them and he married in the same year to a woman who was to prove the most influential in his life, encouraging and supporting him all these 40 years and continuing to do so. Balvantbhai credits his wife and family for whatever he has been able to achieve.

Balvantbhai's service to Industry, Commerce and Community spans over 47 years and still has no thought of putting his feet up.

In UK, he worked for 30 years as a tool setter/operator with GKN Fastners and took voluntary retirement when management of the company changed hands in 1996. Thereafter he joined Parish of Bilston, a Church of England Ministry as a Project Worker for five years to develop their innovative project called Senior Citizen Link Line. These were his bread and butter jobs but he says he enjoyed them immensely.

I am not surprised as you will see he was imminently suited especially for the later job and by his present high profile service to the local Bilston Community by virtue of his simultaneous voluntary work he did for his community. For these his commitment started early in life.

- In 1973 he was elected Secretary of Bodali Seva Mandal UK, a registered Charity, and continued to be elected and re-elected year after year for 25 years followed by two terms of two years as Vive President and then President of the Mandal. He is still at the centre of the hub.
- His service to Shree Mandhata Samaj UK, an umbrella organisation for all the Mandhata Associations in UK spans another 20 years, 10 as committee member, 8 as Secretary and 2 as President. Still active.
- Since 1980, a founder member and Secretary for the first 8 years and a serving President since 1988. This is an active cultural and religious organisation.

- Bilston Community Association: served as a Committee Member for ten years and secretary for eighteen years. Working in close cooperation with Wolverhampton City Council and their prominent officers; and national organisations such as Wolverhampton Federation of Community Organisation (WFCO), Community Matters, International Federation of Community Organisation and Settlement (IFS), Single Regeneration Board, Wolverhampton Network Consortium, Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council and Local Neighbourhood Partnership.
- Represented Community Matters in Budapest, Hungary in 1993 at an International Community Conference whose theme was 'Multi Cultural Living at Local Level'. He was a facilitator for a workshop titled Communication, Education and Culture. Fifteen countries with 76 delegates took part
- In 1994, WFCO in conjunction with Wolverhampton City Council hosted East- West Conference in Wolverhampton where he was Co-Organiser/Co-Chairman. Theme again was 'Multi Cultural Living at Local Living' a continuation of 1993 conference which took place in Budapest.
- In 1996 he represented WFCO to IFS conference in Helsinki (Finland) and St. Petersburg (Russia). The theme was 'Strengthening Community in our Society'. There he was Co-Chair of a Workshop.
- November 1996: Represented Wolverhampton at 'Multi Ethnic Living Project' held in Dordrecht (Netherlands). An international expert conference on migrant parent participation in education. He was on the organising committee and co-chair of the workshop.
- Worked as a volunteer for different funding regime in Wolverhampton as an assessor for last five years assessing funding applications from different groups.
- In 1998 represented Bilston Community Association to IFS conference in Jerusalem (Israel). Besides European countries, delegates from South Asian countries, American and African countries were also participating.
- Moseley Park High School: He is a Governor for the last sixteen years and has been on various Sub-Committees of the school, currently on curriculum committee. Attended various training courses.
- Bilston College: Governor for two years from 1994-96.
- At present he is an active member of Bilston Regeneration Executive Committee, Heart of Bilston and Bilston Urban Village.

If this was not enough to keep him occupied more than full time, he collects stamps, watch cricket, and is mad about Bollywood films and serials. So if you happen to ring him when he is seriously enjoying his leisure activity don't be offended if he sound to be in a bit of a hurry.

No wonder the Queen is proud of a subject of her who has and still continues to serve humanity so fully. Once again, congratulations, Balvantbhai.

Report prepared by Keshavlal J Patel.

Balvant Dahyabhai Unka Patel, affectionately called Bidi.

I was born on 1st August 1940 in Nani Pethan, Gujarat, India. My father's name is Dahyabhai Unka Manga Patel and mother's name is Kuverben Dahyabhai Patel of Khadi Falia, Bodali.

I immigrated to Kenya, East Africa in March 1947. I had my formal education in Bal Mandir, Park Road Primary School, Juja Road Primary School and City High School which I left in 1960 after appearing in Senior Cambridge Metric Examination. I passed in six subjects.

I worked for Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) in their New Business and Maturity Section as an Insurance Officer for five years in Nairobi and in Kampala (Uganda)

My father, Dahyabhai arrived in England in 1965. He started working in Wembley Central as a carpenter and then moved to Bilston, West Midlands and settled there. I followed him in 1966. My mother, brother Ramesh and sister Vasanti arrived in 1967 and in the same year I married Indira Jasmal Patel (Onjal). We have now been married for forty years. Indira has been supporting me in all that I do and a big chunk of my achievements in all fields of my interest goes to her.

I have been blessed with two children a son, Daevan and a daughter, Punam. Punam married Vijay from Ancheli in 2003 and we have a granddaughter called Laila who is seven months old.

My hobbies are collecting stamps, watching cricket and football, reading and now waiting on my granddaughter, Laila! My favourite cricket team is England and I have a soft spot for India too! It goes without saying that I am a keen supporter of Wolves!

I worked for GKN Fasteners, Darlaston for thirty years as Tool setter/Operator. The management changed hands and when I took voluntary redundancy in 1996 it was called Armstrong Atlas Fasteners of Caparo Group Ltd.

I then joined Parish of Bilston, a Church of England Ministry as a Project Worker and worked five years for them. My main duty was to promote and develop their innovative project called Senior Citizen Link Line.

I enjoyed working very much for both the employers. It was varied with friendly atmosphere and co-workers/officers were also very supportive - they paid me too!

I have been interested in doing voluntary community work since my early years but it escalated after 1973 when I was appointed as Secretary of Bodali Seva Mandal (UK) to whom I served for next twenty five years as secretary and two years as Vice President and then two years as President.

- Bodali Seva Mandal (UK) was in its infancy in 1973. It needed to be established in all the ways not only in UK but also in Bodali. Communication, vital projects in Bodali, organising meetings/functions in UK were at fore.
- Hindu Association Bilston was established in 1980. I was the secretary for the first eight years and have been President since 1988. This is a social and cultural organisation comprising of mainly Gujarati Hindu. Objectives are many to promote Hindu religion and culture and live in harmony with other communities.

- Bilston Community Association: I served as a Committee Member for ten years and have been in the position of secretary for eighteen years. This gave me an opportunity to come in contact with various services of Wolverhampton City Council and their prominent officers; and national organisations such as Wolverhampton Federation of Community Organisation (WFCO), Community Matters, International Federation of Community Organisation and Settlement (IFS), Single Regeneration Board, Wolverhampton Network Consortium, Wolverhampton Voluntary Sector Council and Local Neighbourhood Partnership.
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- Worked as a volunteer for different funding regime in Wolverhampton as an assessor for last five years assessing funding applications from different groups.
- In 1998 represented Bilston Community Association to IFS conference in Jerusalem (Israel). Besides European countries, delegates from South Asian countries, American and African countries were also participating.
- Shree Mandhata Samaj (UK): Committee member for nearly ten years, Secretary for eight years and later President for two years.
- Moseley Park High School: I have been a Governor for the last sixteen years and have been on various Sub-Committees of the school, currently on curriculum committee. Attended various trainings.
- Bilston College: Governor for two years from 1994-96.
- At present I am an active member of Bilston Regeneration Executive Committee, Heart of Bilston and Bilston Urban Village.