

Memories in a Box

Collection of stories celebrating rich diversity of
Birmingham





Dilwara Khanum

As you can see my two prized possessions are the most colourful things I own and the two things that mean the most to me. The fan is something me and my husband made together just after we got married. I remember we had a silly argument of which colour to use and in the end I remember he backed down and went with the colours I wanted. We spent that evening drinking tea and he talked about the life that we would have once we got to England. Before I knew it, we had finished making the fan. It was the first thing I packed when I was coming to England.

The saree pictured is one of my favourite saree's. It holds a lot of sentimental value as it was a surprise from my husband for our first Eid together as a family in England. I remember thinking at the time, whether I would like it or not as our tastes were so different, but when I opened the bag I was pleasantly surprised. Our pictures came out very nice with the saree on.



Rukya Khanom

My husband died when our only child was still a toddler. Being a single mother with English as a second language has been very hard for me, but whenever I looked at my daughter it gave me an uncompromising strength to not feel sorry for myself but to get on with life and take each day as it comes. I carry my daughter's first picture of her to remind me of how far we have come.

My daughter is my life and my reason for being. Everything that I do, I do for her. That is why her first baby picture is one of my most beloved possessions. As the her baby picture signifies the beginning of our journey in life; her graduation photo signifies just how far we have come as 2 women without her father in her life. Her graduation is one of my most proudest moments.

Who would have thought that when her father left this world that she would grow to become an amazing daughter, a woman and now a hard working social worker. This photo represents the feelings of pride, love and strength that we get from each other



Shamim Akhtar

I have a very old scarf which is extremely precious to me. I make sure that I look after this scarf, ensuring it doesn't get damaged or dirty. This scarf is very special to me because not only did my mother gift it to me but she also did all the beautiful crochet work on it. So it is something from her creative hands.

It has a very special place in my heart because my mum sent it to me from England when I was still living in Pakistan and missing her very much. My mum is no longer with us so whenever I see the scarf it reminds me of my mother and I get emotional thinking about her. I miss her so much. My mother made many scarves for me but I left them in Pakistan when I came over so this is the only memory of her I have. I kiss the scarf as a sign of respect and live for my mother.





Ful Bibi

When my eldest daughter got married I insisted on wearing something that their late father had gifted me. My children really wanted me to wear something new just like them, so they decided that they would buy me an Abaya similar to the saree that I wanted to wear. It is a gift that all my children brought together to celebrate a happy family occasion. I then decided to wear the same saree to two of my other children's wedding parties.

Shamsun Pravin

A week before I was scheduled to arrive in England, panic set in at the thought of leaving my family especially my parents behind. I hid my emotions from my parents. I didn't want them to see me upset as I was afraid it would make them sad. While I was packing my suitcase my father came into my room and handed me the gold ring in the picture. He told me that even though he gifted me gold at my wedding, he had kept this particular ring to gift me before I left for England, so that I would always remember him whenever I wore it.

I hugged him and told him that he would always be in my heart regardless. We both had a cry together even though I tried to be strong. I put the ring on in front of him and I will never forget that smile of his that beamed, ear to ear at the thought of his gift on my finger.



Shamsun Pravin

This hair flower was a special gift from my mum when I last went to visit my family in Bangladesh. She told me to wear it on special occasions and even though I wear a scarf when I go to celebrations I always wear it under my scarf to remember my mum.

Red is my mother and my favourite colour, so I pretend that she is close by whenever I wear it. I sent her a picture with me wearing it and she was so happy to see it. I hope to be able to see my mother soon it has been too long.



Rema Begum

This gold chain and locket is about 30 years old. It may be a small chain but it has a special big memory and meaning for me. My father gifted me this chain and locket for my 16th birthday and personalised the locket with initial of my first name. I wore this chain everyday until I got married, when I was given a gold chain as a wedding present from my husband. I still keep my father's locket safe, as it is very precious to me. My father had spent a third of his weeks' wages to buy this for me and hid it until he surprised me on the morning of my birthday. I remember wearing it with such pride and I felt so special as I showed it off to everyone I met that day. My father had chosen this particular locket because the 'R' had a crown on it and he told me it was because I was his princess. My father died suddenly in 2005. The grief overtook me and I was confused and upset for several weeks. About a month after his death, as I was tidying my room, I came across the chain. I remember sitting on my bed with the chain held against my cheek crying. I decided then to remove the chain I was wearing and put back on the special 'R' chain gifted by my dad. It helped in the healing process and although I will never get over losing my father, I have been wearing it everyday for the last 17 years and find comfort that a reminder of him is always with me.





Noor Jahan Khatun

To some people this walking stick maybe a funny thing to put here, but for me it's not only sentimental but it has a lot of history and some of the best memories in my life attached to it. You see this walking stick belonged to my uncle Anwar and after away it was passed to his wife, my aunt Aysha who used it until the last day of her life and then I inherited it. You see they are not my uncle and aunt by blood, but by association. But you would never know the difference.

When I first came to England, I had little or no family. My husband was at work all day and I was so lonely. They took me under their care and treated me like a daughter. More than my elders, Aysha especially became my best friend, my confidant and a travelling partner. We did everything together when we weren't busy with our own families. We spent all our spare time shopping, visiting each other, visiting each other's relatives and our favourite pass time cooking. She taught me everything I know about food today. I can say any food that I bring to Dosti group I learnt to cook from her. If she ever made any special dish she would always call me over or send someone with it to my house. She always gifted me with money and food during Eid and treated all my grandchildren like her own. If she was going anywhere she would ensure that I went with her and would get a taxi to pick me up . She looked after me and my children when we were ill, always sending food over. She would go above and beyond in everything she did for me, even when my children got married or when any of my 12 grandchildren were born, she would give gold and money as gifts.

Whenever I had issues in my life she gave the best advice and would not leave until everything was resolved. Unfortunately in January 2021, when covid was at one of its highest levels in the UK, I lost her to covid induced pneumonia. Due to restrictions I was not able to say goodbye to her or see her before she was buried. It is one of the greatest regrets of my life. My life is never going to be the same again. I pray that my best friend and I are reunited in heaven.

My Amazing Hen

When I was a young girl, we used to live a very simple village life, in Pakistan. We had a lot of goats and chickens in our yard. I used to look after this amazing hen that I became very fond of and began looking after it as my own little pet!



I remember one morning when I woke up; I could hear a constant clucking sound coming from somewhere. I realised it was coming from one of the rooms, and when I went inside, I was absolutely amazed to see that the hen had laid 30 eggs all in one go!! Some eggs had already hatched with chicks.

A few days later something really bad happened. A snake bit the hen and my beloved hen was dead. I was really sad and remember crying for two whole days after this happened

The remaining eggs had hatched with chicks after the hen had died. We had 30 chicks and I was so happy. I still had the job of looking after the 30 chicks so I soon started getting busy with taking care of them but the hen still always remained my favourite pet.