

I remember... my first trip to London. The typical three hour journey took my dad 5 hours, having stopped at the service station and then taking the wrong turn out of it. The feeling of isolation from the outside world, not being able to open the windows on the motorway. Then when we were allowed to, the overthrowing smell of petrol torturing my senses. Beginning to fall asleep, but wanting to stay awake on my first trip to London, I began to count the number of red cars that drove past, choking the Earth.

With the weird names of the places such as Cricklewood, Brixton and Purley etching an impression in my mind. Never forgetting the smell of the Big Mac from MacDonald's that was on the way to the house. As we pulled into Heath field road I remember the rush we were in to try and make ourselves look presentable after the 5 hour long car journey. It was the first time I'd ever seen my aunties and uncles. The first time I saw these children that I was to call my cousins.

Being from the city of Birmingham I wasn't used to the London accent or the water. "Mum, why does this water taste so weird?" I would remember saying. Only to hear a cockney response with the odd few Punjabi words that come from my 75 year old granddad. "Hear you are beteh (child): bottled paney (water) just for you as you don't like our London paney (water)". My granddad's big white beard resembled that of Santa Clause's, along with his deep laugh that filled my heart with warmth.

Spending an hour or so greeting all of the family was the first thing we did; by greeting I mean standing still as a statue to have weird old ladies come up to you and hug you, squeezing the life out of you. Some ladies that you remotely recognised, due to distinguishing features such as a midnight blue walking stick with a snake design. This being my great Aunt Yasmin's walking stick. The aunt who was feared by everyone: toddlers, children and even adults. Her silvery grey hair that stuck out of her bright yellow scarf, half falling off. Her small posture was laughable as most of my teenaged cousins were taller than her.

An hour later we managed to sit down at the table for the long awaited typical Indian meal. Aloo Gobi roti with daal. Mmmhhh my favourite. Mind you it was a bit burnt so I opted for the sweet rice. The rice was as colourful as an African sunset with the colours of scarlet, crimson, yellow and red merged together. When I tasted the first spoonful, there was an explosion of elaborate fireworks, leaving me wanting more.

Sitting at the table with the empty bowl in front of me the next thing I remember is telling my mum I felt dizzy. The rest... well the rest is unknown as the next thing I remember is waking up to a room full of cousins staring at me. Wondering what was wrong with me and whispering to each other "Are all Birminham people like this" and no I didn't spell Birmingham wrong. That's how they said it, Birmingham without the G.

On the beside table next to me was a bottle Lucozade which I was instructed to drink. Reaching for it, I could tell my cousins had their eyes on it. I took a long gulp of the addictive drink, capable of turning any well behaved child into a hyperactive child incapable of sitting still. Once the bottle was finished I began the journey of getting to know my cousins. Cousins that I had never met before. I was excited, thrilled but still scared. What would I unravel about my London cousins?