

# LONDON LOHANAS

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Many of you may have read my article in Asian Voice on UK Lohanas where I covered the fascinating history and background of Lohanas leading to their presence in London.

Today, London represents the highest number of Lohanas outside India.

Our London Lohanas come from different parts of the world ranging from India (mainly Gujarat), Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and other African countries. It's really a beautiful fate that we are all together here. We have to thank our adopted mother country for this. It has enabled us to make new friends and relations that might have never happened if we had lived in the countries we came from.

Today's London Lohanas have really prospered in every way. We are living longer – you see many of our friends and family in their 70s and 80s and still in the pink of health. I remember as a kid in Uganda, the normal old age was around 55 years. We are living 20 years more!

Our Lohanas have also made significant progress in business and in various professions. We have a natural flair for business. Our interests are spread in real estate, hotels, nursing homes, pharmaceuticals, trade, wholesale, retail and others. Our professionals are leading in accounting, legal arena, medicine, architecture and banking. We can only be proud of our achievements. Two years ago in both Houses of Parliament there was a debate on immigrant groups in the UK. The Uganda Asians, largely Lohanas, were marked as the best immigrant group in British history. This reflected the value system of Lohanas who are very



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proud of looking after themselves. We have relied less on the state handouts, contributed to the nation in our taxes and hardly depended on dole. Self employment and looking after our families is in our blood. These values come from our warrior background.

The most notable achievement of Lohanas is (yet another warrior quality) being generous to the needy. Philanthropy has taken a stronghold amongst Lohanas in various ways. Today our Lohanas are leading various organisations like, Sanatan mandirs, Swaminarayan temples, Shirdi Sai organisations, Anoopam mission and Jalaram Mandir. Narendrabhai Thakrar heads the Sanatan Mandir, Satish Chatwani heads Anoopam Mission, Rashmi Chatwani, Prakash Gandeche and Pramod Thakkar head Jalaram Mandirs and Vinubhai Bhatessa is Trustee at Swaminarayan Mandir. Dinesh Thakerar and Ashok Bhagani head the Saibaba organisation.

We are at the forefront when it comes to charitable giving. One such generosity

is the support for projects like Samuh Lagna where Lohanas like Manubhai and Amratlal Radia have regularly helped in getting 100 couples get married in India at one go. Most such people would have had no means to get married otherwise. Many of us support projects of food camps, medical camps and education. We are always willing to give our time and money for social and charitable purposes.

We are proud of our community achievements. Today we have two centres for Lohanas in London. These are RCT centre and the Lohana Dhamecha Centre. Yes, we can always dream for more grandiose community centres, at least we have something that the community uses.

In business, we have leading names like Dhamechas, Madhvanis, Mehtas, Sachdevs, Thakrars, Nagrechas, Chatwanis, Chotais and others.

In commerce, I have been fortunate enough to be elected as Chairman of the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry for 3 years running. I also served on the board of Commonwealth Education

Fund and OFWAT Thames region water regulator. I am on the international board of the World Hindu Economic Forum.

We have also made inroads into politics led by our own Lord Papat in the Upper house of Parliament and holding ministerial position. We have Lohana councillors like Bharat Thakkar and other budding politicians like Kishan Devani and Resham Kotecha. Yes, we need more Lohanas in British politics.

We have top lawyers like Sunil Gadhia and medical specialists like Bhikhu Kotecha. In the accounting profession, we have seniors like Anuj Chande. Among bankers, we have Tushar Morjaria and Jitesh Gadhia.

In sports, we still need to make good progress. I believe our next generation will positively change that.

One of our proudest moments is that we have devoted a lot of our resources over last 30-40 years to give the best education to our children. These children are now rising in the higher echelons of their respective business or professional sectors. In time to come, we shall see these young Lohanas taking up notable positions. Further, we can witness these young people embracing spirituality and yoga. I am confident that we shall see better quality of Lohanas in time to come.

Hasu Manek and I have engaged Professor Oonk, a history scholar from Netherlands University, to do more detailed research on Lohanas. We hope to find more historical background in due course.

I am damn proud of what we have achieved and more importantly very excited about our progress for the time to come.

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## Who is Gijsbert Oonk?

Gijsbert Oonk (1966) is a global historian whose research and teaching activities are in the field of Global History, especially related to the Indian Diaspora. He teaches at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Oonk is especially interested in the role of South Asian (Indian) migrants and settlers in East Africa. He finalized his research project with a monograph: Settled Strangers: Asian Business Elites in East Africa 1800-2000 (Sage Publication 2013). He also published a widely acclaimed biography of the South Asian business family Karimjee Jivanjee. The Karimjee Jivanjee Family: Merchant Princes of East Africa, 1800-2000, Amsterdam: Pallas publications



Gijsbert Oonk

2009). In addition he edited the book Global Indian Diasporas: Exploring Trajectories of Migration and Theory (Amsterdam University Press, 2007). In this volume the contributors critically review the concept of diaspora. This volume is available as an open access publication.

His motto is: If you don't know the past, you get lost in the future.

## The "No Brown in Town" rule

It is a sin as old as the City of London, drilled into every prospective gentleman banker from a young age. Brown shoes might be acceptable in a country estate, but not if you go to town and wear them to work. Therefore, at job interviews in the City hiring potential financiers, the "no brown in town" is still applied to root out the wrong type of person.

The government's social mobility watchdog



warned in a report unsponsored dress codes like this hamper efforts to break down class barriers. The Social Mobility Commission's report states "Opaque codes of conduct extend to dress. For men, the wearing of brown shoes with a business suit is generally considered unacceptable by and for British bankers."

City institutions were still recruiting from a small number of elite universities, the report found. Furthermore, findings show, the industry also discriminates on schooling, university education, accent and "polish".

The chairman of the commission, Alan Milburn said, "bright working-class kids are being systematically locked out of top jobs because they didn't attend a small handful of elite universities understand arcane cultures."

### How to Dress professionally

#### Men

- Don't wear a white shirt
- It shows you are too safe and lack confidence.
- Colour match your belt and shoe.
- Don't wear a shirt with a pocket - you might be mistaken for a janitor.

#### Women

- Watch you heels - some height is good, too much gives a wrong impression
- No short skirt - Here school rules apply. Nothing above the knees.
- Earrings are fine but tattoos, piercing, and anklets are not professional

## Ministers say 'British Trade Must be a Success'

In the first formal meeting since the Brexit vote, the cabinet sat down to discuss the way forward. They argued that Britain would have to rediscover the buccaneering spirit and recapture the energy from the Victorian Era to trade successfully outside the European Union.

The International Trade Secretary Liam Fox optimistically suggested the government to rethink the way it targets new markets. However, a sceptical Philip Hammond warned Britain to "live within its means". The Chancellor said the country would have to address the productivity gap which has not helped with economic growth for



Liam Fox

the country.

Held in the Prime Minister's country residence, Chequers, the cabinet meeting was the first full briefing the PM requested for before the summer recess. The various departments of government were asked to conduct an internal review to see what



Priti Patel

could be done post the Brexit vote.

Whitehall sources said departments who are less impacted by the vote had done little over the recess to prepare the official position papers as many departments assumed the 'heavy lifting' would be done by the Brexit department. Another department reported they

had not started any formal work on Brexit.

However, other departments like the Home Office have developed a formal position. They are eager to push part of the security measures which benefit Britain and the EU. During her tenure as Home Secretary, Theresa May supported the European Arrest Warrant. She has also backed the Passenger Name Record which gives police information about criminals travelling between European nations.

Priti Patel, the international development secretary got a 5 of 5 in Brexit rank of cabinet members, meaning she was "hard as nails" Brexit.

## Radical preacher Anjem Choudary jailed

The radical preacher Anjem Choudary, 47, has been jailed for five-and-a-half years for supporting the so-called Islamic State group. He was convicted along with his



Anjem Choudary and Mohammed Mizanur Rahman

co-defendant Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, 33. The two men were also sentenced to a notification order lasting 15 years, which requires them to tell police if details such as their address change. Passing sentence, the judge, Mr Justice Holroyde, said the pair had "crossed the line between the

legitimate expression of your own views and a criminal act". Kalsoom Bashir from counter-extremism organisation Inspire, said she was relieved the law had caught up with Choudary describing him as "the gateway to terror".