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KEWAL DULAI, CHAIRMAN,
SURYA FOODS

THE BIG INTERVIEW

AMERICAN INVENTOR AND BUSINESSMAN THOMAS EDISON ONCE FAMOUSLY SAID: 'MANY OF LIFE'S FAILURES ARE PEOPLE WHO DID NOT REALISE HOW CLOSE THEY WERE TO SUCCESS WHEN THEY GAVE UP.' FEWER QUOTES MORE PERFECTLY CAPTURE THE IMPORTANCE OF DRIVE, GRIT AND DETERMINATION IN THE WORLD OF BUSINESS. SUCH TENACITY AND HARD WORK IS AT THE HEART OF FLYING TRADE GROUP'S OWN GLOBAL SUCCESS- A STORY OF THREE EXCEPTIONALLY TALENTED ENTREPRENEURS FOR WHICH FAILURE WAS NOT AN OPTION.

From being refused insurance on his very first business van to not making a single penny on his inaugural market stall, so many doors were closed in the faces of Kewal Dulai and his son's Suki & Harry as they set about building the hugely successful business empire they oversee today. The setbacks came along one after the other, however, there is one thing they never did - and that's Give Up! To understand the very foundations of the Dulai family's entrepreneurial spirit and mindset we start our journey with a look back at the early years...

'£3 IN MY POCKET': THE JOURNEY BEGINS

From losing his mother when he was just a month old to surviving the bloody and brutal Partition of British India, Kewal Dulai certainly faced a challenging start to his young life. But his optimism and positive outlook belie such early tragedies. A young student, who arrived in the UK with just £3 in his pocket, Kewal was among the pioneering migrants invited to the UK from India in the 50s and 60s to help regenerate post-war Britain. Like many successful businessmen, Kewal's strength of character and determination are rooted in his childhood.

Born in India in 1944, Kewal's mother died when he was just 40 days old - his recollection of the exact number of days indicative of what a defining and tragic moment it was in his young life. His father, a farm owner producing harvests of wheat, corn and sugar cane, never remarried and Kewal was brought up by his Grandmother. At the tender age of just four years old Kewal then lived through one of the most brutal stages of India's history - Partition. Partition saw British India divided into two

independent dominions in 1947 - India and Pakistan. The north-eastern and north-western flanks of the country became Pakistan and home to the nation's Muslim majorities, while the rest of the country, predominantly Hindu together with some other large religious minorities, became India.

Up to 15 million people left their homes to begin a new life in India or Pakistan, depending on their religion, with the formal exchange of population across the Punjab borderlines sealed by Government policy in September 1947.

It is estimated that between 1 to 2 million people lost their lives as a result of the partition of British India as violent clashes broke out across the country amid the chaos - some refusing to leave their homes being forcibly expelled.

Kewal, who follows the Sikh faith, was born in India, but a part of India that became Pakistan during Partition, so he was among the millions of Hindu and Sikh people relocated.

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He recalls: "While I normally lived with my grandmother my father was the one who came to accompany me on the journey - because he knew the dangers that lie ahead. As a child I remember ducking and hiding at the sound of gun fire as we made the journey from Pakistan to India by bull carriage. I remember how it felt to have no water to drink and seeing blood everywhere.

"I just remember this feeling of absolute chaos. We had to leave everything behind, possessions, our land and it took years for the papers to come through, so it was chaos on the other side, with everyone taking what they could. You had to fight for every scrap."

Eventually when the papers were processed and Kewal's family were awarded the equivalent land that they had left behind the family were able to build once again.

Despite, what are clearly deep scars running through his childhood, Kewal describes his early life in India as mostly happy and said: "Eventually we settled in a peaceful town and I enjoyed a very blessed life surrounded by a loving family. Life was very comfortable for me in India, we had a staff who helped with the cleaning and cooking and I was allowed to concentrate fully on my studies. I had never really done a day's work in my life until I arrived in the UK. When I came to the UK it wasn't because I was poor and wanted to make my fortune, or because life in India was hard, it was because I wanted an adventure.

"As such, when I arrived, I faced a very steep learning curve when it came to the UK work ethic. I had to be reminded many times to not be seen sitting down on the job when the boss walked through." he smiles.

Adding: "I certainly learned the concept of hard work within days of being here."

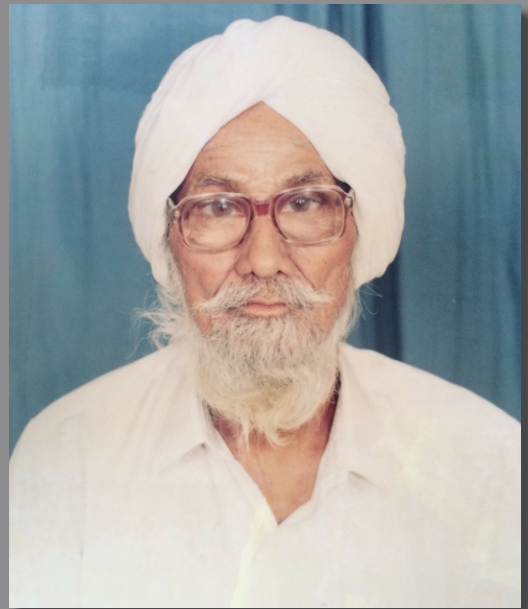
Arriving at London Heathrow in December 1965, having been married three months earlier, Kewal recalls: "I had just £3 in my pocket - the maximum I was allowed to bring into the UK."

His uncle had accompanied him on the trip and they used the money to take a cab to Charring Cross

Station and a train on to Newcastle Upon Tyne, where his uncle had connections, having already spent time in England.

Kewal said: "We actually couldn't cover the cost of the train fare to Newcastle so my uncle had to arrange to pay the fare the next day."

Kewal joined his uncle in his work for a few days, selling items door to door, and credits the brief experience as inspiring his later business ventures. However Kewal's brother soon collected him so he could start work at a factory in Basingstoke. Like many thousands before him, Kewal's passage to the UK was permitted so he could work in Britain's factories and foundries at a time when the country was in desperate need of workers from its former colonies to help regenerate its economy post-war. Most arrived with a maximum of £3 in their pocket - a limit set by the Indian authorities - and many did the shifts that the native population did not want to do, namely unsociable shifts and hard labour.



KEWAL'S LATE FATHER NARANJAN, AFTER WHICH HIS INDIA RICE BUSINESS IS NAMED



KEWAL'S FIRST CAR WHICH HE BOUGHT IN 1966, A FORD VAN

Kewal's first job was mixing chemicals to create rubber for tyres at Blue Peter Factory in Basingstoke - a specialist in tyre re-moulding.

Kewal said: "The owners of the garage were looking for workers, like my brother, who had moved to the UK in 1963, which is why they sponsored me to come here. I worked the job for five years. It was dirty work for £18 a week (the equivalent to around £15k a year in today's money). Shift work paid £3 more per week than daytime hours, but all the time I was there I knew I wanted to start my own thing."

He added: "During my early years in the UK I was terribly homesick and being an immigrant had its own set of challenges. They were very different times. I did think about returning home on many occasions, but I always believed I could build a good life here for my family."

Kewal arrived in the UK pre-1968, a time when it was actually still legal to deny employment or housing based on race, nationality or ethnicity. Kewal's wife joined him in 1966, after the arrival of first son Suki who was born in India. She also

took up work in a UK laundry to help with finances. Needing employment to cover day to day living costs, Kewal set about building a business around his working week.

Kewal's very first independent business venture was in groceries. He set out to London and purchased some supplies from TRS who were, and still are, one of the largest suppliers of Asian foods in the UK. (Who would have guessed, some 50 years later, this entrepreneurial young man would be the Chairman of a company that is, today, the largest supplier of rice and other Asian groceries to TRS).

His next venture was to secure a peddler's license, like his uncle had done before him, and he began selling English clothing door to door. He also secured his first market plot, a small clothing stall in Alton, near Basingstoke, on a Saturday. Kewal said: "They were very different times and racial prejudice presented many challenges for me. It is pretty difficult to run a business when you can't borrow money and banks were very reluctant to lend money to immigrants."

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"I paid a hard-earned 50p for my very first ground rent at Alton Market and sold absolutely nothing that day. It was pretty disheartening. I also remember being refused insurance when I wanted to hire a van for business. I managed to get round it in the end, but, as a foreigner everything was that much tougher.

"Those early days involved a great deal of sacrifice for the whole family. My wife had to drop Suki off with childcare from an early age so she could also contribute financially and herself worked long days in cold factories to help make ends meet.

"I often wondered if all the effort was worth it but we persevered, as it is in our nature to do so." Moving on to work at the Sainsbury's factory in Basingstoke as a food packer in the early 70s, Kewal continued to build his clothing business around his day job, working many years around the clock. But the hard graft eventually paid off as he secured further market stands in Fleet, Farnborough and Blackbushe. On reaching the point where the market stalls filled three days of the working week Kewal was able to say goodbye to traditional employment and solidly focus on building his clothing empire. Quickly acquiring market days six days a week, with the addition of stalls at Wokingham, Guildford and Southall, Kewal recalls how he was often joined by his eldest son Suki at the weekends.

He said: "Suki has been helping me since he was 8 years old. When I ran the markets on a Saturday I would put him in the van at 4am, when we set off, and he would sleep on the journey. He would then work alongside me watching and taking it all in. He certainly had an early introduction to the world of business."

With business going well, in 1973 Kewal opened a retail shop in Basingstoke, called 'Flying Fashion', which his wife, Chandran, ran. With a continued desire to expand he also went into wholesale, leasing an outlet in E1, Commercial Road, Aldgate in 1975. Realising the enormous potential within the wholesale market he soon sold the shop in

Basingstoke and decided to fully focus on the E1 site, introducing a manufacturing factory on the first floor, employing around 50 staff to produce clothing, and using the ground floor as a showroom. Quickly earning a reputation in the area from his success, Kewal was often approached when properties became available and snapped up the leases on three nearby shops in Philpot Street. He used the shops as outlets for his clothing, later also introducing imported products - a new line of business he was developing including imported knitwear from Korea and Bangkok. This progressed to Kewal importing raw cotton and dye from Pakistan to produce materials. Never resting on his laurels Kewal was constantly looking at ways to evolve the business - a trait that remains within the company today.

Leases which he had picked up in E1 for very little were sold on at a significant profit some years later, which enabled Kewal to buy a substantial property in Cannon Street Road which spanned 8 floors. Expansion into the food industry came in the early 90s with the acquisition of a cash and carry in Birmingham and eventually led to a selling off of the fashion business in 1994, including the Cannon Street Road site, so Kewal and his sons, who had by then joined the business, could concentrate fully on developing the food business.

In acknowledgement of his son's tremendous achievements Kewal said: "My sons faced their own set of challenges and those early days of building a food customer-base were tough. No one ever needs another rice supplier - not in a mature market with strong, established brands like Tilda and Veetee dominating. However, they carved a place for the Laila brand and went door to door to build solid supplier and customer relations. My sons took on the major players and went on to overtake many of them. I am incredibly proud of their drive and determination."



KEWAL MAKING REPAIRS TO HIS FIRST PROPERTY IN WINCHESTER ROAD, BASINGSTOKE, CEMENTING BRICKS



A YOUNG KEWAL WEARING A TURBAN -TRADITIONAL SIKH ATTIRE



KEWAL AND HARRY AT SOUTHALL MARKET



KEWAL'S WIFE CHANDRAN JIT KAUR DULAI AT THE CANNON STREET ROAD SITE WITH HARRY

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"Be happy in your work. If you are not happy, leave. You can only work well if you are happy and if you are happy, it is not work."

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With similar passion and respect Suki said: "I consider my father to be one of the greatest businessmen of his time. It is important to remember that he came from a traditional farming background. He wasn't educated in business school and given the latest tools, spreadsheets and accountancy skills to succeed, he made it work from the heart and with sheer determination. His entrepreneurial spirit is in the blood, not taught.

"I see him as a man that will turn his hand to anything, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't, but he always keeps trying and is willing to evolve. "His story is inspirational because it shows you can achieve anything you set your heart and mind on. I remember my father leaving the house early in the morning to work as a packer in one of J. Sainsbury's distribution depots taking out orders. Today FTG is one of Sainsbury's largest ethnic suppliers with our trucks going to deliver to those very depots on a regular basis.

"Similarly, my father used to buy fruit and veg from TRS. Now TRS are one of our biggest customers for authentic lines. It was his hard work and determination that set the foundations for where we are today."

Today the chairman of a UK company which owns one of the UK's Top 3 rice brands, Kewal is also behind a highly successful rice export company in India which he founded in honour of his father - Naranjan Rice Exports Ltd. After his father's death in 1995 he used his share of his father's assets as collateral to secure a bank loan to build the business. The company is today a vital part of the chain in sourcing quality rice for import into the Harwich site for polishing and packing.

Splitting his time between the UK and India, Kewal is in Punjab for every new crop, still visiting the markets and heading up the buying team responsible for controlling the quality of basmati that goes into every pack of Laila rice. His success in the country has seen friends affectionately refer to him as 'The Rice King'.

Naranjan Rice Exports buys direct from the paddy and its work promoting trade in India has seen Kewal

singled out for some of the highest honours from India's Government including an APEDA Export Award and a Rice Export Agency Pakistan (REAP) 'International Buyers Recognition' Award. In addition to supplying Surya Food's Mill in Harwich, Naranjan also exports rice to mills in Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Australia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, to name a few, with an independent annual turnover in excess of £30m. Kewal doubled Naranjan's sales turnover last year alone and is aiming to achieve a further 20% growth during 2018.



PORTRAIT OF KEWAL'S FATHER POSING WITH A PISTOL. THIS STYLE OF PORTRAIT WAS TYPICAL IN INDIA FOR MEN WHO HELD A RESPECTABLE POSITION WITHIN THEIR COMMUNITY



THIS IMAGE MARKS THE HISTORIC MOMENT IN 2015 WHEN MENTFIELD INDIA PVT, KEWAL'S LOGISTICS COMPANY, CARRIED 90 CONTAINERS OF NARANJAN RICE FROM DRY PORT IN LUDHIANA TO THE SEA PORT OF MUNDRA FOR SHIPPING TO DESTINATIONS AROUND THE WORLD.

SUKI ON HIS FATHER



"His story is inspirational because it shows you can achieve anything you set your heart and mind on. I remember my father leaving the house early in the morning to work as a packer in one of J. Sainsbury's distribution depots taking out orders. Today FTG is one of Sainsbury's largest ethnic suppliers with our trucks going to deliver to those very depots on a regular basis."



KEWAL RECEIVING HIS PRESTIGIOUS APEDA AWARD



KEWAL OVERSEEING A MEETING WITH HIS BUYING TEAM IN INDIA

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During his visits, Kewal's team in India are discouraged from calling him 'Sir' - instead he is warmly known as 'Sahib'. While it is a term historically associated with colonial India, once used by local people to respectfully address white Europeans of rank, his light hearted reclamation of the term offers a glimpse of his more rebellious streak, which is coupled with a great sense of fun that lies at the heart of everything he does.

With Buddha-like wisdom he smiles: "Be happy in your work. If you are not happy, leave. You can only work well if you are happy and if you are happy, it is not work."

And it is not hard to understand why Kewal receives such warm respect from his staff. He is not only part of a company which is one of the largest basmati exporters from Punjab, he is also a well known philanthropist, funding everything from eye camps to village water towers and has even paid for the weddings of some hardworking staff who could not meet the financial cost. It is an ethic that also underpins the UK business which runs a charity division titled World Food Aid - an international, UK-based charity on a mission to tackle the hunger issue. Since its inception in 2011 World Food Aid has been helping improve the millions of lives around the world affected by hunger and has supported The Trussell Trust and British Red Cross, among others.

At 74, and with 53 years of hard work under his belt, most people's thoughts would be turning to retirement but Kewal reveals: "When I see what we have achieved it doesn't make me want to stop, it makes me want to work more. Obviously I could retire. My sons are more than capable and highly intelligent in business, but work makes me happy." He adds: "I built my business on quality, service and good prices and attracted a friendly, loyal customer base. These values remain at the heart of what we do today and that makes me very proud.

"I have always found that when people retire, they soon become sick. You have nothing to do. Work gives me strength and purpose. My wife would like

me to stop now, but I will continue doing what I love for as long as I am able."

And, judging by how well Kewal looks after himself that could well be many more years to come.

Kewal confesses: "I get up at 6am every morning to do gym before I head into work. I like to exercise and keep my body fit and healthy. I believe a healthy body makes a healthy mind and that vitality overflows into your working life.

"In life I have no regrets. I have lived a full and happy life. I believe that God helps those that help themselves, that honesty is always the best policy, and that a man of his word and a man of principle will always have people come to him from the strength of his reputation."

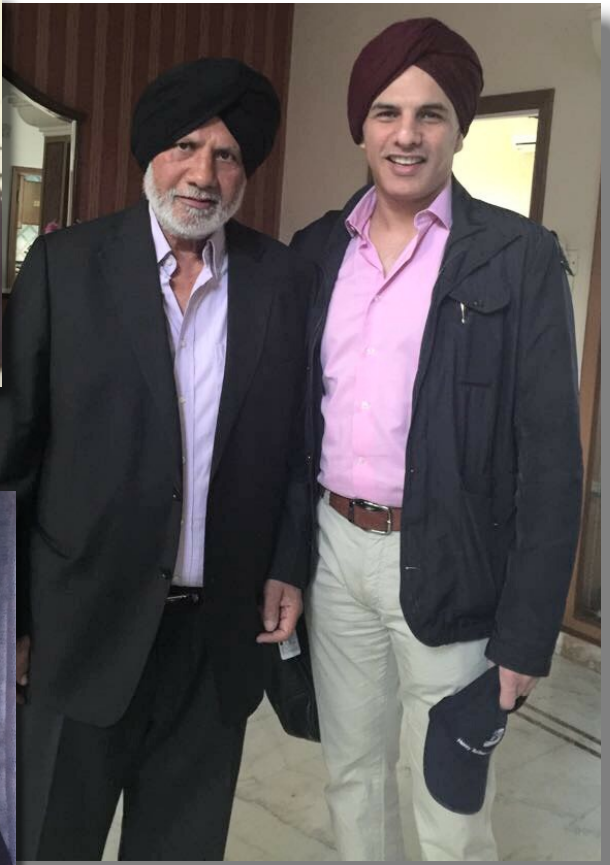
Adding: "The thing that makes me the most proud today is seeing my grandchildren coming through into the business. I believe that every manager should work from the ground up. Only when you can yourself do every job within your business can you 'manage'."

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"My sons have faced their own set of challenges and those early days of building a food customer-base were tough. No one ever needs another rice supplier - not in a mature market with strong, established brands like Tilda and Veetee dominating. However, they carved a place for the Laila brand and went door to door to build solid supplier and customer relations. My sons took on the major players and went on to overtake many of them. I am incredibly proud of their drive and determination."



RIGHT, KEWAL AND SON SUKI AND ABOVE, WIFE CHANDRAN AT CANNON ST



KEWAL & WIFE CHANDRAN



KEWAL MEETS HRH PRINCE CHARLES