

# South Asian Heritage Month 2023

**Reflections from Reed Smith international arbitration and litigation partner, India Business Team chair, and Executive Committee member, Gautam Bhattacharyya**

## **Why is SAHM so meaningful to me?**

SAHM is being celebrated this year in the UK from 18 July to 17 August, and it again deserves special recognition.

It encompasses the history, the present, and the future of all those of South Asian heritage who, like me, are deeply proud to call the UK home.

SAHM also embodies the many impactful and important ways that the South Asian heritage community has contributed to this country.

History, it has often been said, is more than the path left by the past; it influences the present and can shape the future. The gratitude which those of us of South Asian heritage rightly have for those who came before us, who sacrificed, gave us opportunities and paved the path for us, can never be underestimated.

## **Gratitude is the hardest debt to ever repay.**

It was not easy for those of South Asian heritage who came before us. Those generations experienced racism, prejudice, inequality, scepticism, hostility, the casting of stereotypes, and a lot more. Those same generations worked very hard to change those experiences for others, like me, that followed them.

I am 54, and growing up in North West London in the 1970s and 1980s definitely had its fair share of negative, unpleasant and challenging experiences. Being an ethnic minority was often difficult. There will be many just like me who had the same or similar experiences growing up in the UK. None of it was acceptable or justifiable, but never did my parents ever let my sister and me think that the UK was not our home or that we would not be able to thrive here. They set an example which we were blessed to have.

Several generations of South Asian heritage have contributed hugely and positively to all walks of life in the UK. Future generations will continue that tradition, drive positive change and further enrich the multi-faceted diversity of the UK which makes our country so great.

The debt of gratitude which we owe to those who came before us cannot be repaid, but those of us of South Asian heritage can honour them by what we do and what we stand for.

SAHM is an essential yearly reminder, but its underlying message is an uplifting daily one.

**Gautam Bhattacharyya**

Partner

+44 (0) 20 3116 2838

gbhattacharyya@reedsmith.com



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