



Political Sketchbook

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Alpesh Patel

Why British Indians Should Vote on Thursday

Let me tell you the story of a British Indian grandmother. She was born in India, lived in Kenya then moved to the UK in the late 1960s. She was an unassuming lady. At a recent election, at around 2145, just before the polling booths were about to close, she asked her adult grandson if he had voted.

The grandson was curious why his grandmother, who didn't ever show much interest in politics, was asking if her grandson had voted. So he thought he would play a trick and said he had not when in fact he had.

She grew furious. She told him to vote immediately. Wow. He had never seen this side to her. 'Why should I vote?' He asked. Now she was furious. 'Because when they change the laws, don't complain. When you don't like anything they do, don't complain. When you don't like the taxes, don't complain. When you don't like the roads, don't complain. If you don't like the hospitals, don't complain. Your grandfather was in the army in the war. The Nazis ruled Kenya. You have the right to vote. Go vote.'

Wow. He had never seen his grandmother like this. And then he went to the polling booth, even though he had been once, it was better that, then till his already angry grandmother he had already voted.

My grandmother was correct, unlike me, she had never studied Politics at Oxford University, yet she made the case

for voting better than any Oxford Politics graduate.

As a British Indian it is especially important you vote. It is always minorities that need the laws to be on their side. It is British Indians who fought and died for this right.

For all those who think their vote will make little difference - let me tell you it was British Indians that swayed the last General Elections and more than ever politicians court them. If you don't show up, you don't matter.

And if you think your candidate has it already in the bank, or no chance to win, either way the size of the majority matters. Parties measure and strategise and divide up demographics and ethnicities and formulate policies based on those that turn up.

So I appeal to your public duty, your personal interest - and if not for yourselves, then for your community. Your vote affects the services your loved ones will receive. And the cost to you? 10 minutes of your time after a day of work, or looking after the kids, and the benefit? Not just all of the above, but a most incredible wonderful experience that generations of men died for, then women suffered and died for and finally, your own peoples, Indians died for in a far away land. Now you get to elect British politicians. Make it count.

Bhaktivedanta Manor granted Planning Permission for community hall

Planners unanimously gave consent for a new community development at ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Manor.

The local Hertsmere Borough Council's planning committee officially granted planning permission for a new development on the grounds of the Manor, in Aldenham north of London, last Thursday.

The temple applied to build to build a two storey community building or a Haveli, as well as relocating the existing poly tunnels, greenhouses and play-



Is your home not warm, safe or dry? Making sure your landlord is meeting their end of the bargain



Dianne Cowie

Living in a home which is warm, safe and dry is a basic requirement for most, so much so that most people take it for granted. But you or someone you know might not be in such a fortunate position.

As a result of poor housing and the landlord's failure to keep properties in an adequate state, parents have to bring up children in homes which are damp. And far too many older people suffer from cold because of a lack of heating. This affects both the health and well being of people and families and can impact on people's ability to hold on to a job if they become unwell due to their housing.

But it doesn't have to be this way. Indeed, the law is such that landlords must make sure that the property they own and rent is not in a state of disrepair.

Just as a tenant has a duty to pay their rent, so a landlord - be they a private landlord, the council or a housing association - has to meet their end of the bargain by providing a decent home in line with their legal obligations. If they do not, legal action can be an important way of ensuring you and your family have the home you are entitled to and compensation for the years you have had to suffer from your landlord failing to meet their obligations. This can include damages for inconvenience and discomfort, loss or damage to your possessions destroyed, such as clothing and furniture, and loss of earnings or increased heating costs.

Paying for legal advice and support can, of course, be tough when budgets are tight. But there is support for those with little spare money. In such circumstances legal

advice and support is free for tenants through some solicitors.

In recent years some legal support for those lower incomes has been withdrawn. However, this is not the case with some disrepair cases where the conditions at the property can be shown to be a serious risk of harm to health. Landlords will be in breach of the obligations in situations such as: blocked drains and gutters; no supply of water, gas and electricity, no sanitation conveniences (basins, toilets, baths) and no provision of heating and hot water. In addition your tenancy agreement may detail specific obligations that your landlord is not complying with. If your landlord is not meeting these quite simple obligations and you have a low income then you could be entitled to free legal advice and support to fix the problem. If you are not able to obtain free legal advice there are other forms of funding that legal advisors can offer such as fixed fees or conditional fee agreements - often known as "no-win no-fee".

The list of things landlords are obliged to supply is modest and not much to ask. But too many get away with taking the rent but not delivering the goods. It is important for individuals to make sure that these simple standards are being met. Failing to do so and failing to address these issues is likely to affect you and your family's health. And seeking advice can be the first step to making sure that you can get on with the rest of your life without knowing you will have to suffer another winter in a cold or damp property. What's more you could be entitled to compensation for the distress you have suffered.

Having a decent home is the basic minimum that you can expect when you pay your rent. If this isn't happening, it's perhaps time you got legal advice to make sure that your landlord meets their end of the deal.

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Hindu prisoners in England & Wales to be excused from work on 6 festivals

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