

RAMLAL'S STORY

RESILIENCE THROUGH FAITH AND MUSIC



The territorial boundaries of modern nation-states have become powerful determinants of an individual's identity. For many, these borders dictate not just nationality but also their freedom to express deeper aspects of who they are, be it their religion, caste, race, or culture. Suppression of any one of these identity markers is tantamount to a denial of their very existence. This is the feeling that drove Ramlal to flee Pakistan. He chose resilience over restriction, pursuing his faith and passion despite the challenges imposed upon him.

“I felt suffocated there,” Ramlal recalls of his life in Pakistan. Back then, his home had electricity, water, and stability but his spirit longed for something more: the freedom to worship without fear. Humorously, he compares himself to PK, the fictional alien who simply wants to meet God. He immersed himself in ‘dharmic shiksha’ (religious learning), studying the Vedas, Puranas, Geeta, and Shastras in a place that had no space for such pursuits. In singing the god’s praises, he also found his true calling in music.

“I’ve found peace in my god and in my harmonium; my religion and my music are the same to me.”

Unfortunately, his birthplace became the suppressor of his religious identity, creating a deep-seated restlessness. For more than a decade, he had been trying to move to India with his wife and two sons. “We sold our wheat to get passports, but our visas were denied,” his wife recounts. The journey demanded persistence. In 2024, they renewed their passports and reapplied for visas. This time, they were granted entry. They sold their utensils and furniture to make their way to the border.

Crossing into India was an emotional moment. “I cried for the first time in years; I couldn’t stop, even as the soldiers asked me questions. I could finally breathe.”

Now living in the Signature Bridge Refugee Camp, Ramlal is not just rebuilding his life, he is chasing his dreams at the age of 42. Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Humanitarian Aid International (HAI) is supporting his sons in pursuing their education, while Ramlal himself has been enrolled in a music institute to formally train in the art. His wife, determined to support the family, has taken up stitching work.

But, Ramlal’s vision extends beyond his own aspirations. He has found camaraderie with a fellow community member who also dreams of becoming a playback singer. Together, they are inspiring others in the refugee community to pursue their passions. Their efforts have already sparked interest and two young girls have recently begun training in classical music. Through the generous support of donors and well-wishers, Humanitarian Aid International has taken the responsibility of ensuring coverage of the majority of their fees, determined in the knowledge that financial constraints will not become obstacles to achieving their goals.





This is the power of collective action. The smallest contribution can make a huge difference, giving wings to dreams and empowering individuals to shape their own futures.

Ramlal's goal is to use his music to reconnect the refugee community with their faith and sense of belonging. His journey is a pursuit of a life where he can live, learn, and inspire others through his devotion and art and HAI is there to support him and many others like him who dare to dream despite their circumstances.

HAI's approach centres around the needs and well-being of the communities we serve. Whether through education, healthcare, skill development, or legal and developmental assistance, HAI, with the support of its donors, is committed to building a world where no one is left behind.

***PSEUDO NAMES HAVE BEEN USED TO PROTECT THE IDENTITY OF THE COMMUNITY MEMBERS.**