

Interviewees: Kavadi, Sharad & Vasudha**Interview Date: August 16, 2011**

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Sharad & Vasudha Kavadi
University of Houston Oral History Project

Interviewed by: Uzma Quraishi
Date: August 16, 2011
Transcribed by: Michelle Kokes
Location: Kavadis' Home, Sugar Land, TX

UQ: This is the oral history interview of the Kavadis and it's held at their home on August 16, 2011. The interview begins here. Alright you can begin just by telling a little bit about your background. I can start with you. You can tell me just who you are, where you raised.

SK: I was born in Baroda, India and I was raised in Puna and I studied science in Puna and I did my architectural work in Bombay and in '68 we came to United States. So then I started... when we came here it was a kind of beginning, starting—it was '66, '65, people started moving here. In '68 the system of migration was very strict. Those who have Master's and professionals, they used to get in under Third Preference so they don't have to have pre-arranged jobs. It was professionals, you get Third Preference. Petition goes by your reserving and they approved it by an interview there and so you will come. So we came under Third Preference and it was very easy for me because I worked with American companies in India. All Bombay, all American companies, four or five. So for me, resume was upgraded. So they said, "For you, the interview is not required." Then they gave me the medical [insurance] and [with] medical, the four of us we came. I first I came in August, no, July... and these people came in August, September.

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UQ: How did they come...with—?

SK: Green card, yeah.

UQ: So you already had the green card before?

SK: Oh yeah we got the Green Card and visa same time, only thing I came first.

UQ: Okay.

SK: Then my daughter was four months old. My son was 5 years old so she carried them with her. That's how and we settled in New York first. New York, at that time. 6 or 7 months I was in Toronto. I got green card in Toronto and I found out it was a complete waste of time that was a...British Canada.

VK: Decision.

SK: French Canada or British Canada, that was not... the kind of... very fair for foreigners, especially Indians. So you had to just keep changing jobs to get a living. So then I said, "Well this is a waste of time." Then I called my file from Bombay, American Consulate to Toronto and we got two weeks medical exile and we just came to New York. In New York I worked, I started with Bechtel, an international company and that's how..... The kids were in the school and then, they got... they transferred me to Houston after 10 years... after 8 years. Then Houston, I didn't like Houston so we, they transferred me to Louisville, Kentucky.

UQ: This is... they transferred you to Houston in '68?

VK: Yes.

UQ: And then you left Houston...

VK: No not '68.

SK: No '76.

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UQ: '76.

SK: Until that time I was in New York.

UQ: So '76 and then you stayed here for how long?

SK: I stayed about 6, 7 months.

UQ: Oh that's all?

SK: Then they transferred to Louisville, Kentucky. There, I was there for two years or two and a half years. Then they transferred me to San Francisco. I stayed there one year and four months. Then they transferred me back to Houston.

UQ: So by '77, '78?

VK: No.

SK: So '80.

UQ: '80.

VK: 1980 until today we are in Houston.

SK: We are in Houston. In the meantime for two years we were in Kentucky. Then I came back again.

UQ: Okay.

SK: Now I'm retired.

UQ: Now you're retired.

SK: That's all I have.

UQ: Okay. During this time you worked as an architect at all of the—?

SK: Oh, every time, everywhere I started out in architecture and then I got to retire and I started my own consulting. I worked for 3 or 4 years and then after [age] 65, I turned to retired.

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UQ: To enjoy and relax?

SK: Yeah.

UQ: Okay. Alright, what about you?

VK: Yeah I am from Mumbai and I studied in Mumbai and Puna and after my marriage...

SK: She's B.A. She studied—

VK: I got my Bachelor in Puna University and after marriage—I got married in 1961 and we—I had my two children and then we came here in 1968 as he says. We came first to Toronto and then we moved to New York. Wherever he used to get a job my whole family will move here and there, like that.

SK: Same job but transfers.

VK: Now we are in Houston and we like Houston.

UQ: Okay.

VK: Because we have a big community here. Our children grew here and weather-wise and everything is so good here. So we don't want to go again east coast or anywhere because it is so cold over there. So we didn't want to...

SK: Another thing, fourth largest city in the country, most reasonable price-wise, tax-wise, housing, and everything. The climate, for Indians we don't mind climate.

UQ: Yeah.

SK: Air [in the] office, air [in the] house, everything, [in] shopping everywhere, [in] cars— air conditioning. So cost of living, cost of housing and that is a very main factor.

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VK: And especially when you live in one place you don't want to move at this age and make new friends. So we thought that we would stay here. We have so many friends. We have so many cultural activities going on. Musical programs...

SK: The thing is I'm fond of people. We are beginners. We established community activities. Maharastrian *mundal*, _____, Indian community, and so a lot of organizations we were [the] founder. So naturally when you are a founder, you talk to people and you have a lot of friends and you have certain likings. So classical music, so Indian artists they come. They perform here and then you organize their tours all over the country. And then you are known and people... you like more people. That's how. And that is life. If you leave from here and go somewhere else to establish again at this age, it's not an easy thing. But that's why [the] main thing is you concentrate on one place and create friends, circles, and we enjoy more.

UQ: When you came to Houston for that short time, the first time, you said you didn't like it. What didn't you like about it then?

SK: The thing is, New York is a cosmopolitan city and...

VK: We were Bombay people. We liked New York.

SK: Again, anybody comes to this country if he comes first to New York he will... because New York life is for everybody, it's cosmopolitan. Anybody can get a job and if you have a desire to work, you get a job. Then if you have two dollars in the pocket, still you survive. If you have twenty dollars, if you have a hundred dollars, if you have two thousand dollars, people there have their own style of life. You never... but here, big city, other cities, and especially, you have to have car. Mobility is not easy and finding a job... to get a car is an expensive thing. Then to get the job, then get central stuff.

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VK: Not the question of [whether] we like it or not. He got transferred to Louisville, Kentucky because over there, his project was going on there, not here. So naturally they sent him there.

SK: No, the other thing, this is not a political interview. We are all foreigners. When we are in New York they're very cosmopolitan. They accept. Their attitude is to accept. And our office in New York transferred me to Houston. So in '68... '76 and '77 Houstonians, Texas, they're very rough.

VK: Rigid.

SK: They cannot accept outsiders. Even [regarding] New Yorkers they [Texans] say, "You goddamn Yankees!" Like that, that expression. They were rough, very rough. So once you stay in New York eight years to come to Houston in '77, I didn't like it.

UQ: So did you experience this at work? Did you experience that roughness in the work place?

SK: At work these people are really rough. No kind of manners or anything and they would talk and treat you like something different.

VK: Maybe *he* found that in his office, not everywhere.

SK: Everywhere! Everywhere!

VK: Because for me I was not working at that time.

SK: Right but ladies, they are not exposed to outside. Gents, they face this and to live this every time, you know this is very difficult. So I say 'well Houston is not a place for me.' Then they say, 'Okay.' Then they transferred me to Louisville, Kentucky.

UQ: So even though you had the [work] experience, even though you had a degree, with all that, it didn't—

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SK: I was with Bechtel 8 years. I was senior in this here but the thing is to accept outsiders, they never liked that. Then afterwards, '80s we came back again. It all changed.

UQ: Really?

VK: Whole picture was changed.

UQ: In such a short time?

SK: Yeah in New York, all the big corporation offices, they moved to Houston. That transition was only kind of a very small... they don't have any industry or they don't have any special thing that Indian companies have established well. Only Brown and Root was there but it's from the North, Boston and New York. Oil companies moved their headquarters here and Texas technologies were inferior companies to New York. They were kicked aside because they are to run business, big Indian companies. Then things changed professionally and everything. They learned the lesson that this is not the way to live so they also changed like that.

UQ: So, you would say when you came back in 1980 did you immediately feel there was some change?

SK: Yeah, yeah, a noticeable change.

VK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SK: A noticeable change.

UQ: And you were with the same company, Bechtel, still?

SK: Yes same company!

VK: Yes same company.

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SK: Same people I work [with] in '77, '76, same people I worked with in '80, they were there in '80 and I felt change.

UQ: Were there more foreigners by 1980 in your company maybe?

SK: Oh yeah, yeah. Big management also. They also moved from New York so they had to see...

VK: His... actually his big boss was Indian.

UQ: In 1980, not before that?

SK: No, he was there too.

VK: Before he was in New York also he was his manager.

SK: The thing is when big companies move, their big shots also they move here and they find out the right people in the company. Texans, if they are smart they are introduced to recognition but if they are just kind of discriminating and trouble-making, those people [Texans] they looked at Bechtel and they went out. But Bechtel is a big corporation, they are from San Francisco, New York so then you didn't suffer much.

VK: Now, however your project is, whatever you want to ask us, just ask us we will answer.

UQ: Okay you've been doing fine. This is precisely what I want to know. One quick question what's the name of the... you said you had a supervisor who was from India, what was his name?

SK: Kalsenia

VK: Kalsenia

SK: Mahinder Kalsenia

UQ: Okay.

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VK: He was Indian.

SK: His wife was American.

VK: British.

SK: British. But he came in his childhood. He studied here in '55.

VK: He was a very great guy. He died now.

SK: He is expired. But he was a very smart executive officer, I remember. Company.

UQ: So before you came to Houston did you already have some ideas when you were in New York did you have some idea about what Houston would be like? Had you heard any stories?

SK: No, no we didn't. We didn't have choice. They transferred you. Actually Bechtel New York office was closed. So they moved everything here.

UQ: So did you know what to expect?

SK: No not at all. Because they said, "We are transferring you because our New York office closed" so we didn't have any idea. We said, "Well okay, let us see."

VK: And when we came here we knew that in Houston there are nice schools and colleges so I was not worried about my children's education because that was main thing for us, that children should get nice education.

SK: As I told you, Houston's the fourth largest city in the country so there is no point or problem for education.

UQ: Oh that's now but when you came in '76, '77.

VK: It was Rice University was just like...

SK: Schools were good. Everything was good.

VK: ...just like Stanford in the South.

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UQ: Yeah.

SK: Schools were well.

VK: And fortunately my both children... I don't want to boast myself but they are National Merit Scholars so I was thinking that they will get nice further study. Then they will shine like anything, you know.

SK: They will accept.

VK: And they proved it so I am really happy and proud of them.

SK: They were accepted in the school also.

VK: Academics and sports and everything. Because they are happy with all of our friends because we have so many cultural activities going on so they take part with that. Not only American education or anything like that but they learned how to speak Hindi. They learned... actually they speak our Marathi language at home.

SK: Everywhere.

VK: So whenever we go back to India they didn't have any problem to communicate with all of the other people because you know not all other people speak English.

UQ: Yeah.

VK: Though we learn English in school and colleges but not my parents, his parents they cannot speak that fluently in English.

SK: In India we...

VK: So when children learned to talk to their language they were really happy.

SK: In India they travel on their own. They move on the bus and everything. They speak Hindi well. They speak Marathi well.

VK: They like our food.

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SK: English well.

VK: So we are vegetarian.

SK: So they are raised like Indians.

VK: So that way I don't think we missed anything bringing them here. I don't think so.

UQ: Okay, so you already mentioned that if you compare New York to Houston you said New York, it was a big city, very cosmopolitan, very accepting. Houston you didn't feel that at first.

VK: Yeah.

UQ: So Houston—you were here a few months and then you went to Louisville, Kentucky—how was that comparison between Houston and Louisville, Kentucky?

VK: Louisville was a very small town.

SK: But far better. Climate-wise and everything. It was snow there but not too much and the people were friendly. It's very nice.

VK: But only one client [at his] office so that office didn't have that much jobs so they transferred him to San Francisco. That's why we moved to San Francisco and we stayed there one and a half years.

SK: Engineering companies always go upside down. Engineering business is not the kind of the solid products. It's consulting. So when the projects aren't there, they keep transferring you. So the Louisville office was low in projects, they moved to San Francisco, then they transferred me to San Francisco, like that.

UQ: So in Kentucky did you find the people to be rigid at your work place?

SK: No it's very good.

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VK: No, very, very good there.

UQ: Why do you think there was a difference between the people in Houston and their roughness and the people in Kentucky?

VK: Houston is big city. Louisville was a very small town. Now it is expanding like anything but at that time in 1976 there were not that many people there.

SK: The thing is every place has special qualities. Boston they speak different accents and these things and economically, New York is also a big place, a lot of other people, they come and stay there. At that time Texas was the only place, they say Texas is the only place in the world. They are [in a] hard shell. They never came out. Outsiders, they come to big cities, they come, they have to accept them and they have to live together. So they [Texans] were rigid.

UQ: So you feel like it was sort of insulated from the rest of the country?

SK: They were. Texan, what do they call it? Yankees, uh no, not Yankees, rodeo...

UQ: Cowboys.

SK: Cowboys... they will come in the office with gum shoes...

VK: You know something, everywhere you go there are some people like that so you cannot blame any city.

UQ: No, no.

SK: We don't say that Houston is bad.

SK: But Texans were remarkably like that.

UQ: Yeah you're not the only one who experienced that, you know many people feel the same way.

SK: They will come in the office with a tie, with some kind of a...

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VK: Bowtie.

SK: No shoe lace and then shell.

UQ: Right, a bolo tie...

VK: Well that was in 1976, not anymore!

SK: Now, but it shows they were not ready to accept the modern world. Texans were...

VK: Maybe they didn't have that much culture at that time. I don't know.

UQ: Do you think Texas was similar to maybe any other place in America in the southern United States?

SK: No.

VK: We don't know.

SK: We didn't move any other place in southern...

VK: We don't know.

UQ: So you're not sure.

SK: Texas was the main thing. If you live in Texas, even most of the Texans, so you have some idea how they live. But Texas is a big place in South and we experienced this roughness.

VK: In Texas we stayed only in Houston not anywhere.

UQ: Right, right.

SK: '76, '77 it was a little behind the modern thing. Now it's changed.

UQ: A lot, it has. When you first came in '76, which neighborhood did you live in?

SK: We lived in...

VK: Spring Branch.

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SK: Spring Branch.

UQ: Okay.

SK: Spring Bring.

VK: That Memorial- Spring Branch area.

SK: Memorial.

VK: We had apartment over there.

SK: We had apartment there.

UQ: Was that close to your work place? Why did you choose there?

VK: Yeah.

SK: It's not that close but it was 5, 7 miles.

VK: And we have some, 2, 3 friends over there. They used to live nearby so [for] our children that was good and that apartment was really cozy and really nice.

SK: Memorial area, Memorial area is supposed to be rich and special. At that time we didn't know that when we went to our apartment. It was very nice, quiet.

VK: Especially there was a big difference because in New York, apartments were really, really bad and Texas apartment was really good and when I saw that apartment 2 bedroom, 2 bath, and dishwasher I said, "Wow this is heaven." It was so good! It was so good!

SK: Carpet same thing and central air conditioning.

VK: But in New York we didn't have carpet. We didn't have air conditioning. We didn't have dishwasher and I saw that. I said, "Oh, well this is good."

SK: Apartment is all these things.

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VK: Apartment is really good. But it is changing, like changing everywhere. Not in Houston, everywhere.

UQ: The friends you had who were in Spring Branch, you knew them from before you came to Houston?

SK: No when we moved there, our friends moved there. So we didn't know them...

UQ: You came there first?

SK: Yeah.

UQ: So how did you choose Spring Branch above the other neighborhoods?

VK: Because see his office was just 5 miles away from that area and we... when the office sent him here he was searching the apartments and everything.

SK: At that time I was on the expense account. So one month, one and a half months I was staying at hotel in that area so I used to know that area. And from hotel to office they are located between that hotel which is closer by.

VK: And another thing at that time my son was in 6th grade so Memorial school was good that's why I heard it. So I said "We better stay here so he can go there." In Spring Branch schools were really good at that time, I don't know about now because after that we moved here and my son was in Rice and my daughter was in Elsie High School so Elsie High School is very good too at that time. I don't know now. Then when we came in 1980 we used to live in Kirkwood area.

SK: Stafford.

VK: Kirkwood. Do you have any idea about that area?

UQ: Oh yeah.

VK: Yeah we used to live there we stayed there 20 years and then we moved here.

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SK: Last 10 years.

VK: Last 10 years. 2000 we moved here.

UQ: To New Territory?

VK: Yeah this house.

SK: In '80 to 2000 we were in Kirkwood.

VK: That area.

UQ: So when you came back to Houston to settle for good that's when you moved to the Kirkwood area.

VK: Yeah.

UQ: So how did you choose that neighborhood, what made you decide?

SK: At that time the school district was good.

VK: The school district was good.

SK: Stafford was a good school district.

VK: His job was not that far away and my son was in Rice University.

UQ: Already in 1980, he already—

VK: Yeah, yeah. He graduated from school in 1980 when we were in California. We moved here when he graduated.

SK: '80 to '84, he was in Rice.

VK: Then he was in Rice so we thought that by going and coming because he... it was just communication, not communication.... He [Sharad] used to go Friday to [bring] him [our son] home and

SK: He was in school and he was not driving. So I used to drop him, bring him home, and put him back again.

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UQ: Every day?

SK: No, Friday.

VK: No, Friday to Saturday.

SK: Weekends.

UQ: Oh the weekends. Oh I see yeah, yeah.

VK: Weekend, he used to come.

UQ: Otherwise he lived on campus?

VK: Yeah, Lovett.

UQ: Okay.

SK: So both my daughter and son they lived in Lovett.

VK: Lovett Dormitory.

UQ: Okay, so when you say the school was good, the Stafford school district was good what do you mean by “good” explain?

VK: Education wise he... my daughter got all AP classes. History because she is very much interested in history. Then AP math, AP English, AP science, all those advanced courses she got it and she likes to learn _____ and something like that and they have those classes also. So that's why...

SK: Another thing, we are foreigners and look to Texans like outsiders so that area's supposed to be apartment rent-wise, that was a little bit high. We didn't know but we rented that. So outside there were poor people. I didn't say black or anything. Mexican or anyway they are really poor, they can't afford to live in there.

UQ: Live in the Kirkwood area?

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SK: In that Kirkwood and that area. So naturally population was middle class population. Children there from good families so they have good training and they are raised good. So school population was also good. Then good students come there and that's why the schools are good.

UQ: So your daughter went to which high school?

VK: Elsie.

UQ: She also went to Elsie both of them?

VK: No my son he was not in the school in Houston.

UQ: Oh yeah, he was in California.

VK: California.

UQ: Okay, okay.

VK: But my daughter was in Elsie High School and then she went to Rice.

UQ: Okay so I see you are saying that middle class families lived there.

SK: Right.

UQ: Were there Indian families?

VK: Yeah a lot of them.

SK: A lot of Indian families.

UQ: Even in the high school, Elsie?

SK: Right. And family concept was different, kids was different.

VK: So many—

SK: They concentrated on studies. They were not drop outs or anything. So these were the factors.

VK: There were so many Indian students in the class room.

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SK: Otherwise, there is no way to know good/bad. Okay once you see that all kids from good family, they are coming to school, their habits, and everything so that's how you say it's a good school.

UQ: So in the other schools in the schools that did not have a good reputation. What were the kind of problems that they were facing?

VK: At that time there was not that many problems just like today. Now we can hear so many about drugs...

SK: Now those schools are _____.

VK: ...and drinking problems, drug problems at that time there was not that many but my son and daughter now tells us that there was a little bit but they were far away from those people because that group [my children's friends] was really good group.

SK: And family atmosphere.

VK: So they knew of...

SK: Husbands and wives they will change okay, and they are rough. They are uneducated. They drink. They have character problems but the main thing is fights.

VK: Naturally that affects the children, no?

SK: They also drop out at the age of 14, 15... they leave the house and they move in the gangs, so that's the thing. So that happens in lower income group. Middle class are better involved. They stay in a good place, kids are good, the schools are good. That's the way I take...

UQ: So mostly in your daughter's high school was it mostly white students with some—

SK: Majority was.

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VK: Majority was white.

UQ: But also some Indian and maybe—

VK: Indian, Chinese...

SK: Hispanics, Asians, Chinese. Chinese and Indians, we have same numbers when they are...

VK: Americans.

VK: Mixed students.

SK: Top layer academically. So our students, outsiders, Indians and Chinese they are continuing first, top. The Hispanic and other people, they are considered average.

UQ: Have you heard about how Elsie has changed over the years?

VK: Now I don't know because our children, they are grown so we don't know about that.

SK: But Asians especially they are doing better. So Mexicans and Hispanics and those things, we don't know. It's what you read in the paper. They used to have some kind of percentage. That's how you know. So that's why we just say that this is the way.

UQ: Okay when you first came to Houston who were your closest friends?

SK: In Houston?

UQ: In Houston yeah.

SK: Oh there are a number of people. At least 50, 60 people.

UQ: Not the whole list.

VK: You want list?

UQ: Just maybe...

VK: Kanchan

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VK: Kanchan Ganbir, Rajguru, Badachape...

VK: Ayache

SK: Ayache, Sathe...

VK: Marathe...

SK: Marathe, Mayun.

UQ: These were people who were already here when you arrived or they came?

VK: Actually we came...

SK: Same time.

VK: Same time.

UQ: Okay same time meaning '76 or '80?

VK: '80.

SK: '80.

UQ: Okay in '76 when you came what about then did you find some Indian families?

VK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SK: At that time, we established Indian community associations and those things.

UQ: Oh really?

SK: We are founders. Then I had to leave, then in the four years somebody else took over.

VK: We still are very close friends.

SK: Yeah really close.

VK: In '76 we are very close friends.

SK: They know us very well.

UQ: So who were some of the people who were here in 1976?

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SK: Badachape, Rajguru...

VK: Padmakar...

SK: Padmakar Kulkarni.

UQ: Uma Rajguru?

VK: Uma Rajguru.

SK: Uma Rajguru. You know Uma?

UQ: Yeah, yeah she's my... when she came to Houston in the beginning, she was my mother-in-law's best friend. So they were best friends for many years.

VK: What is your mother-in-law's name?

UQ: Alia Kazi.

VK: Who?

UQ: Alia Kazi.

VK: Alia, oh!

UQ: You know her?

VK: Yeah, I heard your mother-in-law's name from Uma.

UQ: Yeah yeah, they are very close friends.

VK: We've known them for a long time. Uma is my best friend. Yesterday only I was talking to her.

SK: Two times, on every alternative day, we meet. They come. And talk on the phone.

VK: She lives in New Territory.

UQ: Yeah I interviewed her about one, two months ago.

VK: Oh, did you interview her?

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UQ: Yeah.

VK: Oh okay.

UQ: She's one of the first people on my list because I already knew her. She was already here and I knew her.

VK: And who else you interview?

UQ: Oh goodness. You mentioned the Badachaapes, I interviewed both of them together.

VK: Okay. Yeah, because their children are also from Rice.

UQ: Yeah and he worked at Rice when he first came here. I interviewed him. I interviewed over here, Rathna and Anil Kumar.

VK: Oh yeah.

UQ: I interviewed them. And Prabha Bala.

SK: We know them.

UQ: See, you know all the old people here.

VK: Yeah we know them.

UQ: Krishna Vavilala.

VK: Yeah.

SK: So did Uma Rajguru mention our name?

UQ: Did Uma mention? No, Uma's going to give me a list of some of her friends but she was busy with a wedding. She said there was a big wedding in the Maharashtrian community so she is very busy with that.

VK: Yeah two months back.

SK: That was the wedding—

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VK: No, no two months back.

SK: She was involved.

UQ: She's involved with everything, it looks like.

VK: Yeah, yeah. She is very busy. She likes to do everything.

UQ: So she was going to give me the list she didn't give it to me yet. But she will give me some more names.

VK: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

UQ: So did you have an opportunity to interact with the neighbors where ever you moved in where your house was?

VK: Yeah.

SK: Oh yeah.

UQ: Were they... where were they from your neighbors mostly?

VK: They were from America only.

SK: America somewhere.

VK: Especially.

SK: Some were from Europe, some they talk to you to find out where...

VK: We had one neighbor, he was from Karachi and he moved. He used to... he was a professor and he...

SK: At community college.

VK: He worked in community college.

SK: His name was Siddiqui.

VK: Siddiqui. And he moved now. He...

SK: But a really good guy.

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VK: A very good guy.

SK: When you come out...

VK: He was interested in music and everything.

SK: Classical music. He used to...

VK: He used to live here and then another two ladies were living next to us. They moved also.

UQ: Okay.

SK: They are American and now we have some Spanish neighbors.

VK: Very good people, very good people. Very family ones, they have 2, 3 children and everything.

SK: It starts that you go to their house and they come to your house, [but] no it's not like that. But the small kids they come to holiday and you give them candies.

VK: Yeah whenever we see them outside and then they talk to you.

UQ: Outside? You don't like, get together for dinner or... nothing like that?

VK: No, no.

SK: No.

UQ: What about when you came in '76 during this time when you sensed at work that the people were rigid. What about your neighbors then when you lived in Spring Branch were they friendly?

VK: In apartment we have only one, I think 2, 3 Indian people were staying in that apartment building. So we...

SK: We never used to mix with these people. They used to see you they would make their hands held.

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VK: In 1976 my children were not that old so I used to take care of them. And sending them school and getting them from school.

SK: We are involved in Indian Maharastrian groups. We never look far. Those people they don't have this kind of activity. They are by themselves and they go and then they get invited by themselves. It is not the case with us. We are very busy in our own Indian people.

UQ: So from the beginning...

SK: From the beginning.

UQ: ... you always had friends mostly in the Indian community?

SK: My interests also were also Indian music, classical music.

VK: We are not against or anything like that.

SK: We don't find we need it.

VK: Yeah because we have...our community is so big so we don't need them. Like that. We see them, we say, "Hi, hello" like that. We don't fight with them.

SK: We do not fight or anything but [we have] such an organized group, subdivided group and those things so we never was tempted to go.

UQ: Okay. You have much more in common—

SK: Right.

UQ: ...with the Indians. Your children, when they grew up, now they are grown, they are adults, did they marry within the Indian community?

SK: Yeah.

VK: Yeah my son married. He has three children. His wife is from India.

UQ: She's from Bombay also or?

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VK: Kolhapur.

SK: Kolhapur. My daughter is not married.

VK: She is a lawyer and she's in Washington D.C.

UQ: So for your son did you help him find someone or did he do it on his own?

VK: No, no... Yeah, we introduced in India and he was looking some girls and then he found this girl and he got married.

UQ: So he met a few of them.

SK: Yeah.

UQ: Okay. When you were looking for someone for him what kind of qualities were you looking for in a girl for him?

VK: Actually he's a doctor and he was not interested in having a partner [who] should be a doctor. That was his first category. Then he said that he will get married and then if he will find suitable girl here then he can marry. But he didn't find it. So we went to India...

SK: The thing is Indian girls, if you want to have from India a girl from India, she wants to come, okay. And if she doesn't like she will say, "I want to go back." So that is a problem. So our condition was a girl from [India, who's committed to] staying in America. Okay then when they stay in America, they find their husband also is established here. So that was the main criteria.

VK: He was not going back, that's for sure.

SK: Sure.

VK: Because his profession is here and so he said, "I'm not going back. I will visit India within 16 years (because he's married now 17 years) so he went to India at least 12,

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13 times with his wife and everything. He likes to go to India. He likes Indian food. He likes Indian people. He likes to go here and there and everywhere but he definitely he's not going to stay in India forever. So that was our first criteria that the girl should be staying here. She cannot say that, "I do not like it here, I will go back." No. Because that was our first criteria. Another one was he says he does not want to get married [to a girl] who is a doctor. That was his thinking.

UQ: My brother said the same thing, no doctor.

VK: He said no I don't want two doctors in one house. No. No.

UQ: It's too much. So she has some level of education how much schooling has she completed?

VK: She's a graduate. She's a graduate.

UQ: Did you say when you were looking for girls did you say you wanted somebody who has at least maybe a Bachelor's or Master's?

VK: Bachelor's degree, yeah.

SK: At the same time...

UQ: You wouldn't consider less than that, if she is just high school?

VK: No.

SK: Because the thing is...

VK: Because it is not good for girl also. If one is a doctor and she is not educated.

SK: No, that's no the case. Another thing when you are graduated, medical graduate, it's high achieving and you look for a girl, partner, naturally those people are graduated, educated, they will try to talk to you. Those school drop outs they don't have an education much and they are only looking for people for staying in America. That is a

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big thing. If you are looking for your daughter, for somebody in America, so your daughter must be educated. It's a basic thing. Natural. So that's...

VK: And there should be some communication between them. If she is very illiterate how they can talk to each other?

UQ: True.

VK: You know what I mean.

UQ: Yeah, yeah of course.

SK: _____ naturally it comes because you are educated.

VK: Usually in India all girls are at least Bachelor's degree.

SK: Yeah.

VK: They are maybe in your area also.

UQ: Yeah, it's normal.

SK: Same thing.

VK: Nowadays everybody likes to study.

SK: Compared to America, India and all these places, education ratio is very high.

Every Indian family, especially staying in big cities, they all have 4 or 5 graduates. Most of them are Master's also. So education is a very common, easy, and that is a must. So economically, job wise, it's a supply and demand, so you try to find better things, better life.

UQ: Education is a very high value for us. My mother has a Master's degree and my aunt is a doctor so these things, even back then...

VK: Yeah that's true.

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SK: Those things, common people, middle class people they are not drop outs in the beginning. So they study and they get graduated and they are naturally totally... exchange in the marriage system, they get educated girls also.

UQ: Sure. So education was important; that was one thing you found. She had to be willing to move here and not, you know, cry to go back to India.

SK: Right.

VK: No.

UQ: Were you also looking for someone who is Maharashtrian or no?

VK: No, no not like that.

UQ: No? It didn't matter?

VK: No.

SK: It happened. It happened that she was Maharashtrian.

VK: It was preferable, but it happened because she is a Maharashtrian.

UQ: Okay. What about... did you look for someone who is more secular, more religious?

VK: No. Religious...

SK: The thing is, our son he is raised in our family. We are religious people, see? He knows what are the basic things. So naturally he said, "Do you like this? Do you like this?" "Yeah, yeah," and they have more things in common. That makes it easy. So it is that way. But he wasn't insisting, "You must do this, you must do that," no.

UQ: So you had relatives in India who were...

VK: Yeah.

UQ: ...already looking for some girls for you before you came to visit?

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VK: Yeah. There was a newspaper and...

SK: Advertisement.

VK: So we put his name in that magazine and then her parents they called that magazine then they found out our son's all those profile and everything. So they called us and then we went there and we saw at least 6, 7 girls, all very, very educated. Everybody was Bachelors or Master's degree. Some were architect, some were Master's and everything.

SK: You get more choice okay, when you advertise.

VK: He selected her and then he got married.

SK: All the people...

UQ: It must have been a hard choice, 6 or 7 girls, all of them educated, good families?

VK: Yeah, it was a hard time but what happened was, I went first. I saw some girl and then I'd chosen some 6, 7 girls because he was coming only for 10 days.

UQ: So you met even more than that and then you narrowed the list to 6 or 7.

VK: Yeah, I did that too. I did. Because the time was very limited...

UQ: Yeah, yeah.

VK: ...and I told him that if you don't like anybody we will go back and we will come back again.

SK: Otherwise you can select from here [U.S].

VK: Because there's so much to do you know.

SK: If you want, you can select from here. Not necessary to go to India. It was not a criteria. It just so happened. It happened. Better what he likes.

VK: We didn't have to go back to India but he didn't find...

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SK: ... anybody here.

VK: ...any suitable girl for him. That's why he said, "Okay we will go there. We will try over there." Then I went there before him and then I saw some girls and then I...

UQ: How did you select the 6 or 7 out of the big group?

SK: Education.

VK: I went to everybody's house, all girl's house I was talking to their parents I was talking to the girl...

SK: And family.

VK: I could see that she is not suitable for my son, her thinking, her background.

Some girls who are like that they just, they *want* to come to America! They are like that!

And I don't want that. They wish that they want to come, that's okay, but they should think that will not be the only criteria.

SK: But first thing is the family.

VK: And if he says, "Oh my God" that person will say, "Oh he's a doctor so I should go." We don't want that.

UQ: Of course so what about the criteria of looks as well, do you want them to look a certain way?

VK: For him she should be suitable for him for height, body and everything and...

SK: And –

VK: And talk to her and then I thought, I think my son will like her. When we went there at that time, he was here because he was working so he couldn't take vacation.

SK: Another thing, not only that she likes him. That what we have to know [is] what he likes.

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UQ: Of course.

VK: He likes. Another thing, not the question of boy's side, that girl's side should like my son also.

UQ: Of course.

VK: So it goes both ways, no?

UQ: Okay.

VK: So it was a little hard but we found her and he got married.

SK: Another thing she must be prepared to live in America. Not all girls they want...

VK: But my daughter-in-law she, she said, "I want to go to America. I want to stay there." It doesn't matter that he's staying here, there. I like him but I want to come there and I will stay there." I told her that see, my son likes India. It doesn't matter that you think that you are coming from ... parents' house—

SK: He will not live in India.

VK: ...but he definitely, he's not going to stay there permanently. That was definitely [what] I used to tell that to all girls' parents.

UQ: Yeah. So did he, when he was meeting some of the girls there... I guess I'm asking about the whole marriage process, you know, because nowadays many people date over here. They find their own person, that's it. Your son, he wasn't interested in just dating you know in the American way?

SK: No.

VK: No.

SK: _____ with this girl.

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VK: No, no she's asking about dating. He saw some girls here but he didn't like them so that's why he...

UQ: Indian girls?

VK: Yeah.

UQ: He never considered?

VK: Then we went there, he saw this girl first and they just went outside, they talked to each other for a while, one, two, three, hours and they exchanged their views and everything.

SK: But they are not dating here. No American girls, nothing.

UQ: No?

VK: When we went there it was just the engagement and then we come back and then after 8 months he got married because the visa was... she didn't have a visa or anything. So he is an American citizen so then we got visa and then we went there and then they got married.

UQ: It took some time.

VK: Yeah.

UQ: So...

VK: Literally, she came with green card.

UQ: I see. I see. So when he was here and the time for marriage came up, was he interested, did he say, "Mom I want to get married." Or did you say, "*Beta*, it's time to get married."

VK: No, both of us, it was mutual. He said, "I want to get married." We said—

UQ: It's time.

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VK: "Now it is time."

SK: He was 27, 28.

UQ: Okay so he wasn't very, very young he wasn't like his early 20's, he was...

SK: No because he got to finish his residency.

UQ: Right.

VK: He's a doctor, you know how long it takes.

UQ: Yeah, my brother just got married, he's 30.

VK: Yeah, it doesn't matter.

UQ: Exactly, yeah. So he never said he was interested in marrying an American girl?

SK: No.

VK: No, no, no.

SK: Because the atmosphere of our house was something...

VK: He never said about American girl.

UQ: No?

SK: They never dated anybody. I think in college they may have friends. They must be busy in the...

VK: But you know something at that time in Rice also, there were lots of Indian students. So the group, they used to come to our house. The group was all Indian group.

UQ: I see.

VK: So I thought maybe he will get married from some of these, one girl. You know what I mean to say?

UQ: Yeah, yeah.

VK: But he didn't date or anything with any American girl.

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UQ: I see. So when the time for marriage, the serious time he knew he only wanted to marry and Indian girl.

SK: Right.

VK: Indian girl.

UQ: Okay. You didn't have a matchmaker when you were here like some at least in Pakistani community there are some women who like to match, you know, people up, anything like that?

SK: No.

VK: There was one lady she was in New York. She is still my friend. She is in New York. She used to take me this girl's name, that girl's name and then we used to talk to them but we didn't find [anyone] suitable. And then after that we went to India.

SK: They were in the North, not within Houston area.

VK: It was really difficult. If somebody stays in same city then you can meet each other, you can consider it, but that way, that is really the problem. Wedding is really a problem in this country. Not like India, that's what we think.

SK: Because girl's side they give you their phone numbers and then some side he gives you your phone so to get the phone it just take 3, 4 months.

UQ: It takes a long time yeah.

VK: Long time!

UQ: It does.

VK: And I don't know... still, I don't know about your community, still there are some boy's parents they think we are upper. So they don't answer quickly to the girl's side.

Even I ask will ask them, "Hey come on, tell me your name and everything, just give me

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all that, a phone number and everything.” “Okay I will send it, I will send it,” and then it takes at least 2, 3 weeks and then they will send a picture and it takes at least 3, 4 months. So actual time when they talk to each other, it’s 6 months. So it is a really, really long process.

UQ: Slow process.

SK: Again it’s kind of that marriage is luck. Okay, whether you believe it or not but somebody, you talk to them and they show their interest and then that’s how things build up. They say, “Yeah, okay we’ll meet.” See it’s kind of luck. Some people they see a number of girls, but it’s not necessary. But they happen to go through that process, nothing they like. Because marriage is delayed. It’s not easy. Some people they just see 2, 3 girls and say, “I like this.” It’s an individual experience and luck.

UQ: Yeah, you know I find, I’ve seen one problem with this type of marriage here in America (not so much there) but here because there are fewer people to choose from, you know, comparatively. There are fewer of South Asians. So what I find is for the girls (the ones who are a little bit darker) the ones who aren’t [considered] as attractive, nobody wants to marry them and when it’s in this kind of arranged marriage, the mother’s of the boys, they won’t even consider.

VK: I know.

UQ: So these girls don’t get married.

VK: It is a very, very difficult over here.

SK: No.

VK: In India we have lots of choice.

UQ: Right.

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VK: But not here.

SK: Arranged marriage...

VK: Nowadays we get lots of that age group. But when my children were growing up at that time we didn't have that many that same age group because now lots of people are coming from India or from everywhere.

UQ: Yeah.

SK: But arranged marriages...

VK: I should give you some juice or anything?

UQ: No, because I am still fasting.

VK: You don't drink at all?

UQ: No not until the sunset so around 8:00.

SK: Oh yeah I forgot.

VK: No water even?

UQ: No.

VK: Oh my God!

SK: How do you find energy?

UQ: You get used to it, you know.

VK: How long your having this fast?

UQ: This is one month.

VK: One month? At night you will eat?

UQ: Yeah at 8:00, then we have a big dinner and everything.

SK: How many days are left now?

UQ: 15. 14, 14...

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SK: Okay so 16 days are over.

UQ: But I'm used to it. First couple of days you feel it then your body automatically adjusts, so it's okay.

VK: I know I know this is determination.

SK: It's always here.

VK: Everybody does?

UQ: Yeah, most people.

VK: In your house?

UQ: Yeah, yeah in my house, my parents.

VK: The children also?

UQ: Yeah even the children. Not when they were young but now you know he's 13, 14 he wants to do it himself. So he's at home. It's summertime. It's okay. But when he's in school I don't. The younger one I don't allow him. So you have to make some adjustments and compromises... it's okay.

VK: Because now school will start no?

UQ: Yeah and then it becomes harder. Right now they sleep all day. They wake up 2:00, 3:00 it's only a few hours of fasting then they have to eat that's it!

SK: Young age of life is different.

UQ: Yeah. Let's see I wanted to ask you a little bit about your experience with other minority groups in Houston when you first came or even in 1980. '76 or '80 either. So for example...

VK: Will you excuse me? I will get some water.

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UQ: Sure. Do you want me to pause for a little while? Do you want me to stop for a little while?

SK: Okay, okay.

UQ: Okay so I was asking, yeah, about the minority groups when you first came here or even in 1980 what was your impression of the different groups like African Americans in Houston?

VK: We don't have any.

SK: We don't have any particular experience.

VK: No.

UQ: No, not much interaction?

SK: But they were not, kind of, rough to you even though...

VK: They were not bad to us. As I said we are in our group only all the time.

SK: Well, the accommodation where we stay, neighbors there were Spanish and black but they were family people. So once you get in the car and drive and they say, "Hi" that's all.

VK: We didn't have bad experience at all with anybody. No fighting or anything.

SK: They will not talk to you roughly or anything. They are polite, very nice.

UQ: Okay.

VK: They talk to our children. Our children will mingle with their children.

SK: They will come in the back yard, here and there but not in our house so we will just...

UQ: The kids played together outside?

VK: Yeah, yeah.

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UQ: Okay. Did you, you said that when you came you sensed a certain kind of roughness. Do you think there are other groups in America that are discriminated against?

SK: Yeah maybe most—all. All. Means that those who were not Houston, Texans, they treat us the same, not only Indians. They...

UQ: What about now, are there groups discriminated against now?

VK: We don't know because he's not working anymore now so we don't know.

SK: I don't hear anything. People are very friendly and professional. Still, we come don't across uneducated and unprofessional you come across only professional people.

UQ: Yeah.

SK: Okay so we don't know lower profession or they are just kind of physical workers, labor. We don't have any contact with them.

UQ: So maybe like the working class?

SK: Yeah.

UQ: They may experience something different but in the sort of middle class, professional classes it's more open minded?

SK: Yeah. But when...suppose you are just a common person. You have a place, then you hire some help okay? That help, you will find rough people. They won't talk to you nice. You are... somebody's doing air conditioning work, somebody's doing roofing work, when you call them and you talk to them, some professionals, they are real American worker but they are rough. But all non-American workers labors, they are always nice, they are polite. So, that times, we experienced as Indian against non Indians. So professionally, labor class—

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VK: But it is not all the time. Sometimes you get that kind of people.

SK: Not sometimes. You will do some work they will come to you and they will have this and this and this and you estimate the quality of the work. You tell them, "No it's not good, I don't want [it], you do it right." So that time you find out how rough they are, how polite they are.

UQ: Yeah.

SK: So otherwise, day to day basis living here and there.

UQ: Okay. Did you ever have any kind of rough experience outside of the work experience maybe in the grocery store or...

SK: No.

VK: No.

UQ: ...schools?

VK: No.

UQ: Okay. Everything was fine in the schools. What about...

SK: The main thing as a person, me. If somebody asked me my name and you tell them, you explain them, one, two, three, four times, with spelling, and when it comes to pronouncing it and they make kind of funny pronunciation then I consider it an insult. And I talk to you when I call your name perfectly, at least do the effort. If you just say "Shad Kavaydi," read the spelling!

UQ: Yeah make the effort.

SK: You try.

UQ: Sure.

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SK: You don't just... it's an insult. So that time I used to argue. _____ I don't get upset. When we try... we're spelling, pronounce it the proper way. Why don't you pronounce... Kavadi, K-a-v-a-d-i. Nothing difficult. But they don't want to. That's what I found out. Business, stores, anywhere. When they come here to do something, "What's your name?" S-H-A-R. "Shearad?" I said, "Sharad, pronounce it right." So that was my requirement. He said, "Why you bother me?" "No! Bother means that if you are spelling it, that is your language that I am speaking better and you don't try to do any first." So that is the special thing in me. That time I argue. Otherwise I'm plain.

UQ: Do you still insist on the correct pronunciation?

SK: Not insist, try!

UQ: Yeah you encourage them. They should.

SK: Don't be rough. Don't be careless. Be careful. So that's... otherwise in the shops or anywhere we don't have any problem.

UQ: Okay alright. So regarding the groups in India there are many groups in India language groups and different caste groups so many different things right? So do you think there are any groups that face discrimination there, historically?

VK: Yeah some south people and north people, they have discrimination. In the south they don't speak our language. They don't speak Hindi at all.

UQ: Right.

VK: And Hindi is the national language and in north they are a little bit lenient. They speak Hindi, they speak English but in south they are very, very rigid people. That is a discrimination over there. Otherwise, because I live in Mumbai, I never live anywhere else.

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SK: But still, but still personally, I've got a lot friends [who are] South Indian. I've got Gujarati friends, for instance, the Bengalis, I've got Punjabis. So there is no problem with us, we can talk to them, be mixed up with anybody. When we go to Indian people's parties there are a lot of people that come and talk to you and main thing is in English. Some people talk friendly, they are speaking Hindi. We don't have any problem.

UQ: So *you* don't have the problems so I guess what I'm asking is about other people.

VK: Yeah that's what I'm telling you.

UQ: Discrimination between the north...

VK: For me I don't have problem because I can speak Hindi. And everybody is talking in Hindi I can speak, no problem. But those people, those South Indian people they are really, really, really adamant that they don't want to speak Hindi...

SK: For example if you are standing for an elevator and in that elevator, fortunately, luckily you are there. Two or three Americans are there and four or five Gujaratis are there or South Indians are there. Normally they speak their own language and that looks funny.

UQ: Yeah I agree.

SK: The pronunciation is different, your habits are different—

VK: Not only the pronunciation. When there are some people... actually you shouldn't talk a lot of things over there, personal things.

UQ: Yeah.

VK: And when, if you want to talk, talk slowly, very low voice or talk in English only not in your language. Because other people they get offended you know?

UQ: Yeah when they don't understand they don't know what you are saying.

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VK: They think that they have something talking about then. So you shouldn't do like that.

SK: Not with Indian, it's with Chinese, it's with those, Mexicans...

VK: All those. They say...

SK: Otherwise we don't...

VK: It's your choice. We can speak any language.

SK: But you notice these kinds of things you know.

UQ: Okay, so that's one discrimination in India that you've seen.

VK: Yeah.

UQ: Between the north and the south. Any other groups?

SK: No, no.

VK: Now we are here from 1968 so at that time I was very young. Now India changing like anything so when we go there we don't see these kinds of things. We just meet our people and come back you know.

UQ: Okay. Bombay like you said, Mumbai is very cosmopolitan, many kinds of people from everywhere. Do you know... have you ever heard that there were people of African ancestry in sort of western India that region? Did you ever hear about this?

SK: No.

UQ: They are called Siddis?

VK: No.

SK: No.

UQ: You've never heard of them?

SK: No.

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UQ: What about Jews?

VK: Jews are there.

SK: Yeah we have a lot of friends Jews.

VK: Jews are there.

SK: When they are all mixed up in society.

VK: Very good people.

SK: They'll say "this is Nurgaon" but they had to tell you, "this is a Jew," otherwise we don't know by names.

UQ: Okay I see. Before you came you came in sixty...

SK: Eight.

VK: Eight.

UQ: '68 to New York... to Toronto. Before you ever came to this side of, you know the Atlantic Ocean, did you ever hear of some of the historical figures: Martin Luther King?

SK: Oh yeah because in India especially in the big cities when you see the radios and those things, so you are completely aware of American way of life, American culture.

VK: They are always comparison between Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

UQ: Even in the Indian press?

SK: Yeah.

VK: Yeah.

SK: We used to...

VK: We admired John F. Kennedy all the time.

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SK: Yeah and at that time, old presidents... so they were after... for five, six... it was two terms, three terms, so we used to know... aware of American politics so that is kind of a...

VK: Not in detail but big, big picture.

UQ: General idea.

SK: We were like...

UQ: We used to know all those big universities I used to know Berkeley, Harvard... I didn't know about Rice at that time I don't know but Stanford, Berkeley.

SK: We were in touch.

VK: We were in touch. We knew all those universities.

UQ: Okay, in the Indian press was there— you said John F. Kennedy was very respected— was Martin Luther King also very respected?

SK: Yeah.

VK: Yeah.

UQ: And they compared? So the Indian people kind of regarding him highly?

SK: Because he was very parallel with Mahatma Gandhi. So at that time these two men.

VK: We knew him.

UQ: They didn't mind... the Indian back then... I know you were younger but they didn't mind that he was African American, he was black?

SK: No, no, no....

VK: Because his talks were so noble.

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SK: And he was really advanced and free thinking you know and he used to care for poor people and he would not...

VK: In fact, when we came here at that time he died 1968...

UQ: That's right.

VK: Bobby Kennedy, he also...

UQ: Yeah, same fate.

SK: The thing is our generation in India we are fully aware of western American style of life.

VK: American, British...

SK: British.

VK: And we studied...

SK: We studied history, geography so compared to American locals here, they don't know much about Indian, Pakistan, other countries...

VK: They don't know about the prime minister or president or anything but we knew it.

UQ: So true. I wanted to pull out... I should have a different map but I only have this one. If you had to, if you looked at a map, obviously India is divided into the states, you know, many states in India. But if you had to make kind of these big regions of India, you said north and south can you show me kind of where you would make your line? Which part do you say is south, where is that sort of? Just with your finger you can just show me so I have an idea.

SK: This is our area.

UQ: Right.

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SK: Bombay, Puna, Kolhapur. This is Maharashtra.

VK: This is north, this is south

UQ: Okay.

VK: And this is Calcutta, means east. This is west.

UQ: So do you consider yourself part of the north?

SK: No.

VK: No we are from west.

UQ: So you consider... this is west so Madhya Pradesh also?

SK: Here is center of India.

UQ: Okay.

SK: This is south India.

UQ: Yeah.

SK: North India, east India, eastern and western India.

VK: Because this is, Calcutta and everything is here so that is west.

SK: So we are here in central India.

UQ: Okay so these you would say that in western, sort of central India do they have something in common?

SK: Yeah.

VK: Yes.

UQ: More than, say, with this part of India?

VK: Yeah, yeah.

SK: See, I can say Gujarat and Maharashtra, they are very common. Language-wise.

What is this?

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UQ: Andhra Pradesh.

SK: Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, they are all—

VK: Andhra, Hyderabad, that area, that is close to south.

SK: Because many people who come for the jobs in the big cities here. Naturally they come... they work with you then you know them.

UQ: Yeah.

SK: But you don't know the place. You know the people.

VK: And they live up north.

SK: They live in north.

UQ: Oh yeah. So people from Kerala or Tamil Nadu, do they ever come here?

VK: Yeah! Oh in Mumbai we have lots of Kerala people because they are good in nursing. Over here, all nurses are from Kerala.

SK: Mumbai's the cosmopolitan place.

UQ: Are your family, your parents, your grandparents also from Bombay?

VK: Bombay, yeah.

UQ: Oh so for generations you have been Bombayites?

VK: Yeah, yeah we are Bombay people.

SK: Bombay, Puna that area.

VK: Bombay people.

UQ: Okay. What are the differences you would say between western India and south India?

SK: Major difference, first habits...

VK: Food habits, language...

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UQ: Food habits yeah, because they eat more meat.

VK: Weather also.

UQ: Weather? Okay.

VK: In south there is very hot weather ,not Maharashtra, it is not that hot.

UQ: Anything else in the people? Any difference?

VK: The way they wear clothing and everything that is also different.

SK: The thing is language.

VK: But language and food also.

SK: Communication. Hardly we don't know anything about their language. Why to blame them? They don't know obviously and you cannot communicate.

VK: But they are good people and Kerala people they are very, very hard working people. When they came to Bombay they established their business, whatever their business...They were really really good...

SK: But the thing is, the thing is north to south discrimination is there and they know you are not from south. You don't speak their language. You are out of the group.

UQ: What, where?

SK: Anywhere! You know if some people in Bombay you have some friends and 8 to 10 south Indians are there, they will just neglect you. They don't think that... You are in Maharashtra, you have to be nice and polite in mixing. Obviously it's Gujaratis, Sindhis, it's common. It's human nature.

UQ: You don't think that in kind of north India, I don't know west India there's discrimination against them as well, against the south Indians as well?

SK: Not discrimination. Only thing, you don't think bad about them but the thing is...

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VK: But it is changing. It is changing.

SK: Yeah, you don't [say] he is close to you.

VK: Because you know before that only this area only Maharashtrian people, this area only Gujaratis people. This area is only south Indian people. Not anymore because people are moving here and there because of jobs situation.

UQ: Yeah.

VK: So that way there is no discrimination or anything.

SK: India is known for a number of languages, number of tastes, number of people... population is too much.

UQ: This is true. Alright I only have a couple of other questions. Actually let's do this one activity. I wanted to put out some pictures and if you can sort of rank them according to who you think would affected the housing values. We talked about neighborhoods and good schools and I wanted to also cover housing, housing values. So I'll just put these out. You tell me who will have a positive or negative effect on the housing.

SK: Okay.

UQ: And just you can rank them and put them in the order. You can rank from highest to lowest who you think will benefit the housing to the one who will be a negative effect.

SK: I'll put this... this is my opinion 1, 2

VK: 3,

SK: 3, let me see... 4

VK: This is 5.

SK: 6 okay that's alright.

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UQ: Okay can you explain why these three are on the top?

SK: The thing is...

VK: Clothing and looking and...

SK: Facial expressions.

VK: Determination and jobs...

SK: You think they are educated they are stable and they haven't left. From pictures you can figure it out.

VK: Maybe picture is... not deceiving but...

UQ: Okay, so obviously the opposite is these folks who you think not...

VK: Yeah but sometimes you know ...

SK: I mean the people are totally different.

VK: ... poor people, they are good also.

SK: But here especially he may be good in real life okay but the clothing... this thing is leisure not serious work. If you ask him to find the house and do paperwork and just try to help us.

VK: We think we should take this house or not, like that.

UQ: Alright okay let me put it in the same order then.

SK: [Laughing] It is very difficult.

VK: Maybe we are wrong.

UQ: No it's just your opinion there's no right or wrong. Okay and then the other thing I wanted to do is I have come pictures here since we talked a little bit about marriage and about the arranged marriage type system, just to get an idea of how some parents would think about potential matches for their own children, I have pictures of some women. Oh

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I have some men in here too. Some women and same thing, just rank them according to how much you think this person would be a good match for your son. I'll just put them out and I'll take the men out. You can just move them and rank them again after you look at them.

VK: This one.

UQ: First.

SK: This one.

VK: This one, this one.

SK: This one, this one.

VK: This one. These are same.

UQ: Okay and this one is before?

VK: Yeah.

UQ: Okay so these three on top and her and her and then those. Okay well why did you choose? First I was wondering during the marriage process for your son were you more making the decisions, the first decisions or you did it together or how?

SK: Both of our likes are the same.

UQ: Okay.

SK: She knows if I say this she knows reasoning. When she says, "Its okay I also think."

VK: I select those girls and then it was up to my son. He did it not me.

UQ: Right of course it was his choice.

VK: That was his choice.

UQ: The very first step, that was mostly you or together?

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VK: Me. That was me because he was not here.

UQ: You were there?

VK: Yeah. In India he saw those pictures. But at that time he was not there. I saw her.

UQ: In person.

VK: Yeah it makes difference you know, big, big difference. This picture maybe she maybe more beautiful than this picture. Because some girls are photogenic.

SK: Again pictures are different when you are talking in person.

VK: That's what I say and you find personality if you talk 5 minutes and I am a good judge of that. I really, I can find out within 10 minutes I can find out if she is phony or not.

SK: Again you accept person first sight. You have to get the right click and when you psychologically and mentally you accept that person anything you ask, she replies. [You think] 'Yeah, good. It's right, it's right.' If you don't accept at first two minutes there's no click even though she is trying to answer you right so you will find something inside.

It is a... it's a kind of a trial and error method.

UQ: It is.

VK: Give and take.

UQ: So tell me why you chose these ones on top?

SK: What we choose ... they must be very low class than this. Okay in reality... so picture-wise we go, but in reality we don't know.

UQ: Okay.

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SK: Picture-wise we feel family tie for this one, and here it shows that they are very serious.

VK: These two school girls they look like really playful girls.

UQ: These two?

VK: These two, yeah. They are very sweet.

UQ: Ah. Okay. And these two don't look as playful?

VK: They look like traditional girls.

SK: Traditional and a little bit _____. We are Indians. That time...actually we don't know that this may be the best person in reality.

UQ: Sure.

VK: As I say sometimes picture don't do it.

UQ: We don't know. This is just to get an idea.

SK: Again look-wise, never go by.

VK: We have to see their personality.

SK: Psychologically we go because they look Indian traditional, *kumkum*, this and that. Maybe the worst!

UQ: Yeah so in the pictures just judging from what you see. Why did she come in the end?

SK: Because... she can be somewhere here also, here, here, here. Only thing, she seemed to be very nice also.

UQ: What do you think?

SK: Yeah.

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UQ: I'm asking this because during the real arranged marriage type systems if someone sends you a picture right and you have to decide. Even that is a decision, yes...

VK: Yes.

UQ: ...yes or no.

VK: Yes.

UQ: So that's why I'm trying to see.

VK: No, when you see a picture, you see our son's picture. This means you have that in mind.

UQ: Right.

VK: That...

UQ: As a good match.

VK: ... do you think she will match my son?

UQ: Yeah.

VK: Do you think figure-wise, does she look old enough or she looks very young for him that's what we think, you know. So she looks very big, old.

SK: _____.

VK: She doesn't look young girl like for marriage. That's my opinion.

SK: She's got make-up, you know.

VK: She has a nice smile and everything but she looks a little old.

UQ: Okay that's fair enough. So you are saying you can tell from these pictures that maybe they are not, that they are lower class?

VK: Actually second one looks very old.

UQ: Yeah she looks older than.

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VK: She looks very old this one. She doesn't look young girl for marriage. She looks young.

UQ: She does?

SK: That one. She's handsome she's very...

VK: You mean pretty.

SK: Pretty, handsome. Her dress and style of hair.

VK: Now she is young looking.

UQ: She is. Do you think that the third one, that she is too stylish or it's okay? You prefer more traditional?

SK: No, stylish.

UQ: He likes stylish?

VK: No, she likes... she is very good looking.

UQ: And that's okay with you?

SK: Yeah.

UQ: Stylish is fine?

VK: [nodding] She is very playful. She is very good I like her she is really good. She must be very artistic her fingers are so long.

VK: She must be very artistic.

UQ: Okay well I'll put in the right order.

VK: Actually I will give her the first number.

UQ: The one with the long fingers?

VK: Yes.

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UQ: Ah you like her? Okay that should be it let me check my list and we're done we are done! Oh, one short question. Talking about modern times in America do you think there is a race problem? Is racism a problem anymore just from what you look on the news or newspaper or you hear stories anything?

VK: Day to day basis, I don't think we have problem.

UQ: Not you but in America in general.

SK: No, no.

UQ: So there's no racism anymore?

SK: KKK, that group, it's all getting vanished.

VK: Maybe in another town but not in big city. We don't know.

SK: Major regional problem is the local KKK group, really radical groups, radical groups those things.

VK: Maybe there is a black and white problem. We don't know.

SK: But the thing is, in reality I don't see any.... People are treated fairly well unless you have some gangsters and groups and those things. The lifestyle is different, atmosphere is different, but otherwise, if you are a common man, working class, family people you don't see any bad things.

UQ: Okay and even among the Indian people you know so many people you have been here for 30 years or more, among the Indian people do they ever talk about any group any racial group like blacks or Hispanics or?

SK: No, no.

VK: No.

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UQ: Nothing? Okay what about in India is there any discrimination based on, obviously we don't have the same thing there like race. It's not the same thing. But maybe by skin color dark to light?

VK: No, no.

SK: No. Only language if you happen to be long time in south and when you come back Bombay, Mumbai you will see.

VK: Sometimes caste problem.

UQ: Yeah that was my next question.

VK: Caste problem is there.

UQ: Yeah.

VK: Brahmin, non-Brahmin...

VK: Low class people or...

SK: Old-style Maharashtrians, _____ what our old time forefathers, they treated the people and [now] they have a revenging attitude. 'Oh, you Brahmins, you treated these people and now we treat you like this.' That problem is there still.

VK: Now before that they used to have only Brahmin-Brahmin marriages, but now, no. They get [married] everywhere, anybody can marry anybody.

SK: Brahmin, non-Brahmin...

VK: Brahmin can marry Punjabi, Punjabi can marry Maharashtrian, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi, anybody.

SK: You can marry anyone.

VK: Even my house, my house is very traditional.

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UQ: Still, you don't see the Brahmin marrying the lowest caste. You still don't see that so much right?

VK: No.

UQ: It's still... it's within upper two.

VK: Even in my family I have one... my brother's daughter married with a Christian.

Another got married with a Sindhi.

UQ: Was it an arranged marriage?

SK: Love marriage.

VK: Love marriage. Another with a Bengali so we don't have that issue now anymore.

UQ: Okay.

SK: But our upbringing, it was a different thing.

VK: Yeah it was different when we were there but not anymore.

SK: This generation, they accept.

VK: Yeah.

SK: In your house, no problem.

VK: What can you do? Otherwise they say, "We elope and then we'll get married."

Otherwise just get married and be happy!

SK: And main thing...

VK: I don't know about your culture.

UQ: Same thing.

VK: Same thing, right.

SK: Main thing... financially, if you are better off, then you are happy with everybody. Financially if you are low then you become cranky. You become...

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VK: Your happiness is more important than anything else.

UQ: Yeah and that's the same anywhere, financially if you have security...

SK: You don't hate [but you do say] "Damn it, I'm working hard making so much money and this guy is doing nothing but doing gangsters." When there is some kind of equal[ity] where people work hard they get their living and they live happily that's the main thing. For some people... now... [In the] old days, education was different. Some people had good jobs, some people... in good families. But nowadays everybody's educated. They have good jobs, good earnings. That makes a difference.

UQ: I know you would think that the distribution of wealth in India is maybe not as equal as it could be?

SK: What you say?

UQ: The distribution of wealth that it's equally...

SK: Oh the disparity! And the thing is our class people, average people, they are not filthy rich. Hard working. So nowadays what happened... anybody, gangster, uneducated, he is millionaire.

VK: Not the question of gangster.

SK: Political gangster, they are all crooks. When you run the show you get elected you don't get elected with votes and the fair way. You have to do ill doings. You have to eliminate this guy you have to eliminate this guy. This gangster this bad people to take care of your protection. So those kinds of things. Then people like us, like you and me, straightforward people, we suffer a lot. And then you don't hate anybody but they try to criticize you. You are backward. They are not educated but they say you don't accept

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money, you don't bribe anybody, you are backward. So if you are honest you are thrown away.

UQ: Yeah that's true my uncle faced the same thing when he worked in the bank. He never accepted the bribes so he never moved into the high positions.

SK: No, never!

UQ: He refused so he's not a wealthy man. He never made too much money.

SK: Success of the life.

VK: We had that value.

SK: The idea of success of life is [based on] corruption, lies. Education system, judicial system. Everywhere corruption! Education: unless you paid thirty thousand, forty thousand, one *lak* of rupees, then you get admission. These are the facts. It's not an exaggeration of things.

UQ: It's true. So you don't see the same type of corruption here?

VK: No.

SK: No.

UQ: Obviously.

SK: For the common man.

UQ: Right for the common man.

VK: There is corruption but in big offices.

SK: Human beings on the earth is same. But here common man's life...

VK: But in India or anywhere else, even China, everywhere, common people they are suffering these things.

SK: Here, when you come to the States...

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VK: Here we don't suffer for that because we are very common people.

SK: Once you leave the house 7:00 you come back 7:00 in the evening. You don't have to do illegal things.

UQ: Right, just to live.

SK: Yeah. You work hard you go to the office. You don't cheat anybody. You don't disobey the law and you don't do illegal things. In India every speck...

VK: I feel bad, it is 7:00, I can give you fruits.

UQ: No, it's okay! I would take it. When I went to Uma's house I had all sorts of good food. She made me *chaat*, it was so good but that was before Ramadan. So it's okay.

SK: It's nice to meet you.

UQ: Thank you.

SK: I hope that you...

VK: Thank you so much!

SK: I hope that you were—

VK: That you were satisfied with our answer.

UQ: It was very helpful.

VK: Thank you so much.

SK: That you got what you want.

UQ: Oh, it was very helpful, thank you.

End of interview.