

UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON

ORAL HISTORY OF HOUSTON PROJECT

Interview with: Alia Hayat Kazi

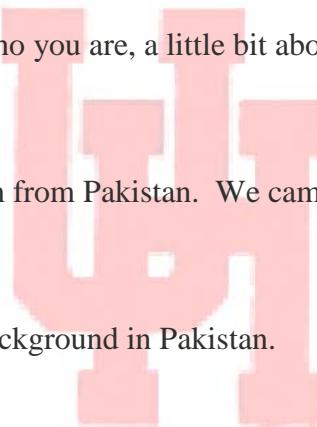
Interviewed by: Uzma Quraishi

Date: July 17, 2007

Transcribed by: Suzanne Mascola

UQ: Oral history interview of Alia Hayat, July 17, 2007, Houston, Texas. Interview conducted by Uzma Quraishi of the University of Houston.

O.K., you can begin by telling who you are, a little bit about your background.



AHK: My name is Alia and I am from Pakistan. We came in 1970 to the United States.

UQ: Tell about your family background in Pakistan.

AHK: I am coming from an above average family. My father was a businessman. I had gone and I had my education there from college, from university. I did my master's. Then, I got a job there as a research assistant and then research officer in Defense Society of Pakistan.

UQ: What was your master's in?

AHK: I did my masters in plant biology.

UQ: What year?

AHK: 1965.

UQ: How would you describe your childhood?

AHK: I think I was very lucky. We had a good . . . my father was a very . . . my father was not a very conservative person. We always had freedom since school and I had some experience of other friends. When I was at the school, colleges, you know, we had to go somewhere for outings, for picnics, things like that - they had difficulty getting permission. We never had any difficulties. Our parents trusted us and I am proud of that, that I never betrayed that trust.

UQ: You said you came to America in 1975?

AHK: In 1970.

UQ: For what reason did you come to America?

AHK: My husband had done his master's and he had planned to stay here but he didn't want it to get late in his settled life so he went back to get married. So, he got married,

we had a child, and then he came back. Then, he applied for me and when my papers came and everything, then I followed him after about 8 months after his arrival.

UQ: What year did you get married in?

AHK: I got married in 1968.

UQ: Prior to becoming engaged to your husband, did you think about leaving Pakistan and going to Europe or America, anywhere else?

AHK: Not really. I never thought of that, that I will get married and go somewhere else but as an average, normal person, everybody had dreams to go and see different countries and visit foreign countries. So, I also had definite desire.

UQ: Did you ever have the opportunity to travel outside of Pakistan?

AHK: No, not before I got married, I didn't.

UQ: So, you never really thought you would permanently leave your country?

AHK: Yes.

UQ: Did you have friends who had left Pakistan and settled somewhere else?

AHK: I had one or two friends, when they got married, they wanted to go for further education so they went to Canada, to England and somebody went to America also.

UQ: Are you still in touch with any of them?

AHK: Yes, one friend, she did her Ph.D. in England and then I had one other friend who was married to her class fellow and then I met them also.

UQ: O.K. So, you came here because of your husband, because you got married. How did you feel about the idea of leaving after you got married?

AHK: When I got married, I found out from my husband that he had planned to complete his education and he would leave, so after I got married was about 1-1/2 years, a little bit more. So, mentally, I was ready and prepared. I was excited also.

UQ: You weren't afraid?

AHK: No, not really.

UQ: When the time came for you to leave, how did your family feel about it?

AHK: Oh, we were all emotional. We were crying a lot and especially one thing was probably most of the people when they come from those countries, they do that. At that time, it was not very advanced system of communication so we did not have any email or computer, naturally, so we used to write letters and we used to wait each day, minutes and hours - like, you used to count - if I write a letter, then I will wait for the answer and then I will count the days and how many days have gone or passed by. And then, when I would receive a letter, it used to make me very emotional and I used to cry. They would also write the same kind of thing. That is how it used to be. So, we missed our family a lot but still, we knew for sure that when we got married, we were to be with our husbands.

UQ: O.K. Did you feel like there was a situation in Pakistan, a political situation or financial situation that made it seem in your mind a better idea to move?

AHK: At that time, situations were very good. We didn't have any problem. I still, after coming here when I visited once or twice, I felt that I wished I would have been in Pakistan because the lifestyle over there was very comfortable, very luxury life, you can say. We did have maids; people came to the house, washed your clothes and do drying. Everything here, coming back here to America, we have to do a lot of manual labor work which we never did in our country. We never cleaned our bathrooms. We never mowed the lawns or anything like that. But here, that was the lifestyle. We adopted it. But we missed our luxury and the comfortable and convenient lifestyle there.

UQ: What would you say about the safety and security of Pakistan at the time that you left?

AHK: It was sound and strong. I don't think we had any problems at that time.

UQ: And the crime issue?

AHK: Nothing. We used to go even in the evening and nights . . . we used to come out of our house, walk on the street with sisters or visit our families and if they used to live in walking distance, we used to go there and never felt uncomfortable or unsafe.

UQ: What did you know about life in America as far as the same issues - safety, security?

AHK: I did not know much about America. Only one thing is that when I was going to the university I was studying, we had our teachers, instructors and they had studied abroad and that is what happened: that they (USA) are good technically, they are advanced education-wise. There are better facilities in America. That is all I found about. I was not too excited about their lifestyle or anything because we had everything where I was living so I never missed it. I did not wish for anything extra.

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UQ: Regarding your family, specifically, your mother and your father - were there some things they allowed your brother to do that they didn't allow all the sisters to do?

AHK: No, it was not like that in my family. My father always encouraged more to girls than boys. Unluckily, I had only one brother and he was not that much interested in going to school and college. My father was very wishful for that, that his children should go for further education and then go for medicine or for this and that. All of our sisters, they had gone to college and they attended universities also. They had master's degree, medical doctor, this and that. My brother just didn't do the things the educational way in the institutes like master's degree and things like this but he had his technical training and then he was a pilot of the airlines in Pakistan.

UQ: There are many families who, when they come from Pakistan or when they are raised in Pakistan, they don't allow the woman in the family to seek an education, higher education or a career. Why do you think it was different in your family?

AHK: My father was always very encouraging to us and he always used to tell us that, "You have to do something better than what an average lady or girl does." Even like most of the girls kind of had dreams or style like they preferred living with fashion or makeup or this and that. We had a very simple, modest life. Same kind of environment I got in my school when I was going through my school education, we had a very good system in school. We used to follow very simple attire and very simple dresses. No

jewelry. Not much jewelry or anything like that. I had higher goals. I had focused on something better than just a normal, common lady's desire and wish.

UQ: So, you mean something other than the fashion and the jewelry?

AHK: Yes. We had to have focus for a goal and that was for higher education. At least financially, we were very well off. My father didn't want me to work or something like that but he said, "You should have that strong background and standing so that if some kind of hardship comes or something like that, you can face it and you can stand up and have your own life."

UQ: How common was this kind of thinking?

AHK: At that time, it was kind of routine over there. Most of those who had a good education, I think 70% to 80% of people that were younger age, they were going to school and college and they all had this kind of feeling. But depending upon the situation of family, sometimes they hardly finished school or college and then they had to do some side jobs to help their family. Luckily, I didn't have any problem. It was just if I wanted to work, I could work. If I didn't want to, there was no compulsion to me.

UQ: What about your mother's side of the family? What was their opinion of women being educated?

AHK: All of us who had maybe uncles and aunties, all children, they were going to school, but my father was more . . . I should say that he was more towards this, that his children should have a higher education, and good place, and respect in the community also.

UQ: Did he have brothers and sisters in Pakistan?

AHK: He didn't have anything. His brother in Pakistan was in East Pakistan. At that time, Pakistan was divided into two Pakistans. And then, the other East Pakistan became Bangladesh later on. And some of his sisters were there in India. They didn't migrate to Pakistan.

UQ: O.K., and were they educated at all, your father's sisters?

AHK: At that time, education was not that common. My father had finished high school. After that, he started working. But he was very broad-minded. He was interested in reading extra books or things like . . . at that time, not many families or the children used to go further in higher education . . . only a few of those. His parents were not educated at all. He got whatever society he was moving and he was doing very well off so he never thought. But my mother, when she got married, she had finished only primary school or something. So, my father took his time . . . out of his time, he was

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helping and teaching my mother and my mother had learned some English and some math and all that and she was the one, when we were growing up and we were children, she taught us English and math, some things like that.

UQ: O.K., so it sounds like your father invested a lot of his attention to your education and he had this expectation for you. How did he feel when his daughter was leaving Pakistan and going to America?

AHK: I mean, missing a person, if that is something normal, but he didn't mind. He said it's good because when I got married, I was excited about that. He said, "I want this person to be your husband because he had high goals in his life and he wants to do something more and he is interested in finishing his studies and I like that." So, he never minded that, that I should not go or something.

UQ: Can you tell about the transition from your life there to adjusting to life here? What was that like, those first . . . I would say, the first few months? What was it like when you first arrived, maybe even the first even days if you can remember when you came to America?

AHK: When first I came here, that was a good experience. I was excited to see my husband. I had my son with me. He was not even 1 year old. And the family who had hosted him [my husband], he came along with them because at that time, he didn't even

have a car. And then, they came with us and they welcomed us very well. I was living in an apartment complex and the owner of that apartment complex was also living in one of the apartments. That lady welcomed me and my child and then she brought some gifts that I still remember. I really appreciated so much at that time. I didn't even know that they used to have the ready-made diapers or things which you can use for the children and she gave me a set of 6 diapers and some baby food and that is the way she introduced me to the things - that you can use this and this for your baby that will be helpful. Also, when I came here, I didn't know how to clean the bathrooms and things, so once, she took me to her apartment and she told me how you are supposed to clean this and do that and all that. It seemed like the people at that time were very friendly. They were nice.

One lady used to live next door to us and she started talking to me. She was talking Spanish, I was talking a little bit of English and then she told me that there was a church over here and they offered a good program once a week, "Would you like to go?" I said, "Sure, I will." And then, I joined that and then I enjoyed that also because people from different countries, they used to come there. We used to sit there and do some kind of different hobbies, plus we used to take our food with us - different international food - and we used to enjoy that. I really enjoyed that for about 8, 9 months. Then after that, because my husband was planning to go to school, I was supposed to help him financially also. So, I looked for a job and then I found a job in a hospital.

UQ: O.K., so you said that you spoke a little bit of English? Did you learn more English after you came here?

AHK: Actually, we knew English. It is not like that we didn't know. But the thing is that we never used to talk or used this language as our communication. But in the beginning . . . she didn't even know . . . I was talking but to other people . . . it took a little time to think what you had to say and then you had to make your sentences. But the more you got to practice, you got fluent, no problem. And that is the way we spoke. And then when I started working, there also I didn't have any problem. They had some problem of understanding my accent because some time if I would say something . . . it was very funny . . . one time, I said some word and she couldn't understand. Then, I copied the way she used to say it and then she said, "Oh, that is what you mean." I said, "Yes, that is what I mean," because our accent was a little different than what American was. Sometimes, it used to give them kind of really a hard time. They didn't understand the same word we were telling but then we had to repeat the same word for 3, 4 times and then we had to spell it sometimes. And then they said, "Oh, that is what you mean. O.K. O.K."

UQ: So, this church you went to, do you remember anything about the church, which one it was or where it was located?

AHK: It was a Baptist church close to Sears in downtown because I used to live very close to that area.

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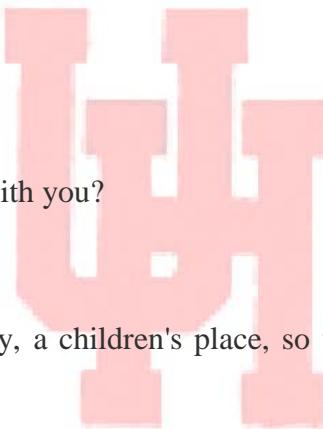
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UQ: And how did you go to the church, transportation-wise?

AHK: That was very good. They used to provide school buses they hired and those buses used to pick up different ladies from their houses or apartment and they used to take them to the church.

UQ: So, these were like the big yellow school buses?

AHK: Yellow school bus, yes.



UQ: And you took your son with you?

AHK: Yes. They had a nursery, a children's place, so we used to put them there and they used to enjoy that.

UQ: So, ladies from where? Where were these people from?

AHK: The ladies were from Mexico, from India, Pakistan, China and American ladies.

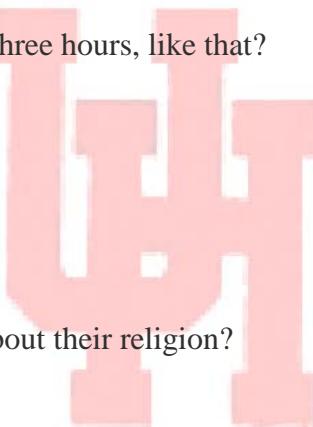
UQ: O.K., so it sounds like you met a lot of people through that.

AHK: Yes, and I learned a lot also because people were coming from different places and I had a chance to learn their recipes, their cooking and we would share our cooking and recipes, too.

UQ: So, you met once a week with them?

AHK: Once a week.

UQ: How many hours? Two, three hours, like that?



AHK: It was a 2 to 3 hour thing.

UQ: Did they also teach you about their religion?

AHK: No, we didn't talk about religion or anything. We just used to do some kind of handicrafts and something like that. That is all, but no religious activities. It was in the church and sometimes during the time when we would eat, when we used to discuss, somebody would ask something and then whatever, if they were interested for them to know, we shared.

UQ: Did they also teach English classes there?

AHK: I did not attend that. Maybe they used to. I really don't know.

UQ: But you didn't need to?

AHK: No, I didn't need to.

UQ: O.K., so that is how you spent your first few months then after you arrived here?

AHK: Yes. My husband used to go early in the morning. I used to be with my child all the time so then, you know, I was really bored also. But at that time, a new experience was that I used to sit in front of the TV and this way, I was occupying my son's attention also. But when he used to take a nap, then I turned it off and I didn't know what to do. It was so boring. And cooking - it didn't take much time. I used to cook only . . . we used to eat usually at night one dinner. At lunch time, for the first I started the habit of eating sandwiches in the afternoon. I didn't know what this mayonnaise was. I enjoyed relish and things. It tasted good to me. It didn't take much time. My husband was there and he had lived before also so he had adopted those American habits. And slowly, I also got into that same thing.

UQ: So, you spent your time during the day . . . did you read?

AHK: Not much reading. We didn't have much to read because at that time, I didn't take many books with me and magazines. I was not used to anything that much. I never bought newspapers. TV was more than enough entertainment for me.

UQ: Did you also meet with your neighbors?

AHK: I met my neighbors. I used to go see people and sometimes, I used to talk. And in my own building, there were a few families that had small kids - sometimes we would get together with the children and let them play.

UQ: The people who are at home during the day in your building, they were middle-aged women? Young women?

AHK: No, I was very young. I was in my early 20s. The same with other ladies. But one thing which was a very good experience - the owner sold the house and somebody else bought that whole complex. The new owner wanted a manager. And so, what he did, he asked my husband if he can manage it. So, he said he was more than happy and glad to do this because he was going to school and I was going to school and we both were making . . . I was going through the training of medical technology, the same with my husband, and we were making only \$199 each. So that meant altogether, what we had was \$399 for both of us for one month. And we didn't have enough. And we had a child and a lot of grocery expenses. And then, when the owner of that house offered us to

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be . . . he said, "I will reduce your rent. Can you help me?" He said, "Fine." We had a little something to add up because my husband had always supported his family. He used to send money back home. And with that little money which we were making, it was very hard to manage ourselves and the family back there. But then, when he had a little help [as a manager], we were really excited and happy.

I had one more experience I'll always remember. One time, a husband and wife (that's what we thought), they came. They started living in that apartment and they were very nice. After 6 or 7 months, they came to us and they told us that now, they were getting married and that was so surprising to us. We said, "how come?" We thought they were husband and wife. They were not. They said, "Oh, no, we were living under the same roof." "What is that?" At that time, I slowly learned something - their habits and what they do. It was kind of strange and not comfortable for us but that is the way it was. So, new practices. Slowly we got acquainted with those things we were not aware of.

UQ: Was the owner of this apartment complex white American?

AHK: White American.

UQ: And he felt that he could trust your husband enough to give you this responsibility?

AHK: Yes, he did. I mean, it was not much. He was out of state and whatever we needed, he would discuss with him and then, whatever had to be done, repairs and all that, he would do.

UQ: And how did the other tenants feel, the other people who lived in the apartments?

How did they feel about having to go to your husband for issues?

AHK: I don't think anybody felt that because we were living there before and then, whatever change came because of this way and then if there was an apartment empty or something, then we had to tell the new tenant that was coming. So, nobody minded. It was only an 8 apartment complex building, so it was a very small thing.

UQ: And where was the location of this apartment building?

AHK: It was in between Richmond and Shepherd, the crossing of that. I still remember - 1909 Colquitt Street.

UQ: So, how long were you in this apartment?

AHK: I think we lived here until 1974, so it was about 3, 4 years. Then, both of us actually we finished our one year training. Then, we started working in the hospital.

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Then, my husband's brother, he came and he joined us. That was, at that time, that one original apartment became small, so we moved to a two bedroom apartment which was close to Stella Link and Braeswood. Then, we stayed there one year. By that time, we both had started working in the hospital. We were making good enough money so then we decided that we should buy a house. And then, we bought a house which was in Maplewood area. We bought that house in 1974 and since then, we had this house and we still live in the same house.

UQ: O.K., let's put some dates on this. You came in 1970. About what month?

AHK: April.

UQ: April, 1970. By the next year, by 1971, you were . . .

AHK: In school.

UQ: You returned to school?

AHK: I started going to training school.

UQ: What kind of training?

AHK: It was medical technology.

UQ: O.K. So, you got your training. That lasted one whole year?

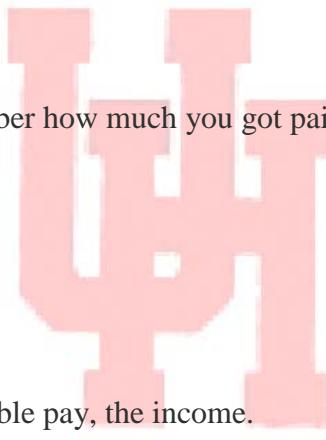
AHK: One year.

UQ: So then, by 1972, you started . . .

AHK: In 1971, I worked. First, I went 1-1/2 years as a medical . . . they did not actually . . . I had my masters when I came over here. They didn't offer me a good job at first. They were giving this kind of excuse that "You are overqualified, so we cannot hire you." And then finally, I said, "O.K., I just need to have a job." They gave me some medical technician job where I was not making enough money. It was less than \$300 or something. So then, I decided that I should go to training school and get at least something from this company so that at least I should be paid according to whatever my qualification is. Then, I joined in August or September of 1972 and then I finished in 1973. And then, they gave me a medical technologist position. And then, I started working in a microbiology department there at Ben Taub Hospital. I had been working in the same hospital. I had gone to the student training in the same hospital. And other hospitals . . . Texas Children's, they offered me a job. Methodist also. But I said, no, I am so used to this environment. I liked Ben Taub. So, I stayed at Ben Taub Hospital. And I worked until 1980 as a medical technologist.

UQ: O.K., were you applying for these other jobs - Methodist and the other hospitals?

AHK: No, actually, when you go through this internship training, you have to work in different hospitals. So, those people like me . . . they said, "You should apply. You should start working as . . ." but I didn't like to work . . . Texas Children's Hospital, I really liked, but I used to feel so bad pricking the small heels of the babies and all that, it used to make me so sad and I never liked the blood drawing stuff, so I never felt like going there.



UQ: O.K., and do you remember how much you got paid after your training?

AHK: It was \$650.

UQ: So, it was worth it? Double pay, the income.

AHK: Yes, \$399 I was making as a medical technician. And then, slowly we got a raise, you know. That was a different thing. But then, I should make a lot of overtime also.

UQ: And your husband worked in the same place as you also?

AHK: No, he always worked at a different hospital. He was at Hermann Hospital. Then, he was at M.D. Anderson Hospital. Then, he got his training at the VA Hospital.

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The problem of his was that because his dream was not to do the MT ASCP and this and that, because he wanted to finish his master's and his Ph.D. So, he started going to the University [of Houston] and that is why he started taking . . . he used to work during the daytime and take classes in the evening. Then, one year, his final years, he had to be there during the daytime. So then, he completely started working at night. So, a night job he used to do at M.D. Anderson and then he got a good job at Hermann Hospital also and so there he was working full-time.

UQ: How would you describe the treatment of your coworkers and your superiors towards you?

AHK: I think that if you are good, that other people are also good with you. At first in the beginning, I worked in a special chemistry lab. The supervisor always liked me. Whatever she asked me to do, I used to do. I had a little problem with dizziness. I used to work with some alcohol solvents and I told her this was a problem, I could not work with this, this experiment. She never gave me that and she always said, "Alia, you do something else." So, they were very cooperative. Then, I went in a student training thing. There also, because I was known there and they knew, there were very few foreign ladies or girls, so actually, we knew each other. And I was going to the same labs. So, everybody was nice and everybody was very friendly.

UQ: Where were the foreign women from? Which countries?

AHK: India and China and Taiwan or something.

UQ: So, they were Asian?

AHK: Yes.

UQ: There weren't any South American type . . .

AHK: There were very few Mexicans, I guess. At that time, we didn't have many _____ . The Chinese race was there and the Indian . . .

UQ: So, during this time, you had a pretty good income, it sounds like, for months - not bad - and for that time period.

AHK: I guess you can say that we Asians are very conservative. We don't spend money just on anything like if you feel like it, you have to have it. If we need it, then we used to buy it. Like with children, if something was on sale, let's go and buy it. Then, after that, you realize that it is just not a wise thing to do. If you go there to buy, you end up spending more money. And then, you hardly use it. So, then we changed our attitudes and we became more practical, I should say that. But if we needed it, we bought it. Otherwise, not. And then, we never had this kind of enjoying life like going to cinemas.

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We have different kind of . . . we used to have social, home, and family gatherings. So, this way, we have saved some money and that was good that my husband was going to school. Tuition fees also at that time were not that much and we could easily help our family back home.

UQ: The first question: Do you think that Americans have the same kind of spending habits that you did?

AHK: I don't think so. I will tell you one thing which is very strange. We started working and after within one year, I guess, we planned to buy a house. A girl who used to work with me, when she heard from me that we were buying a house, she was Afro-American, she got so surprised. It was something she didn't like. She said, "How come you all come here and then you just can afford to buy a house?" I said, "So what?" The same thing happened . . . when my mother died, I had to go see her there. She was in England. I had to travel. She said, "You can spend that much money? Where did you get the money?" Whatever they [Americans] earn, they spend here and there and when the time comes, they have to borrow or take a loan. And we never had to spread our hand in front of anybody. We just were very careful in spending our money. And whenever we need something, we had enough with us that we can spend and we don't have to borrow and we don't have to take loans. Even that house, when we bought a house here, we had to save first that initial apartment which we had to do, and then when we had enough, we got the house. So, people, they used to feel kind of uncomfortable or

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sometimes I should say jealous or something . . . "How come you have come from countries like those third world countries?" and this and that, "and then here, you can just afford to have a good life, cars?" and this and that, "and still, you don't have any loan on yourself?" and this and that. I don't know, that's the way they were. Some of them, they gave us these kind of remarks. But it didn't bother us. We still are that way.

My husband - I feel much better about this - that my husband has the thinking that . . . some time should come when you should not work for money but money should work for you. After he got his doctorate, he got a job in a Middle East country; we went there, stayed there about 11 years. When we came back, he was, I should say, outdated . . . or negative experience they counted for him [his Middle East work experience]. He did not get his job but wisely, whatever he had saved, his money, he bought some property with that money and now, the way he says that there should be sometime, that money should work for you and that is what is happening today. And both of us, we are living a retired life and we still don't have to take any loan from someone or we don't need anything, we don't desire anything which we cannot afford. Whatever we wish and desire, it is within our limits and goals.

UQ: When he was working at the same time you were working back in 1973, 1974 to 1980, was he making almost the same amount you were making? More? Less?

AHK: As a medical technologist, he and I both worked and were making almost the same amount. But then, he started working at night, his money was a little more. But I

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used to work a lot of overtime on holidays and weekends, so my paycheck used to be heavier than his.

UQ: Where was your son during this time?

AHK: That is something that was the only choice which we had here in American style, that they had to go to the nurseries and he went there. But in the beginning, we sent him to private care and when we were going to school and he got finally excited, he said, "Everybody goes to school. I should go to school," because his private care had only 4 or 5 kids. And the lady was very nice.

UQ: In someone's home?

AHK: Somebody's home. We also felt comfortable with that. But then, he was the one who started bugging us, "No, I have to go to a big school, big nursery." At that time, he was not even 5 so I couldn't send him to school or anything. So, he went to a larger nursery. I used to work in the Medical Center. As soon as I got my job there, I transferred him to a Medical Center nursery and there, he had a good time and he really liked it.

UQ: The woman who you used to leave him with in the private care, what was her ethnicity?

AHK: She was Caucasian American. She was an old lady but she was very nice and kind. She was living in the same neighborhood, just hardly one block from our apartment. So, we didn't have a car at that time, we used to walk, leave him there and just take a bus to the work.

UQ: How did you find her?

AHK: When we first came, we used to walk with the child in the neighborhood and from one street to another, in this way we found that this was private care. And there was a nursery in front of that, a big nursery, but we preferred that [private care] so we went there.

UQ: And the children who were with him, you said that there were 3 or 4 children . . .

AHK: They were all white. At that time in our neighborhood, no black people or Spanish. One Spanish - she was from Columbia, South America. And she lived there.

UQ: Were you friendly with people of all the different nationalities, the different ethnicities?

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AHK: It was nice because we used to walk almost every evening and then I used to wear my [Pakistani] country dresses, you know, that were sometimes flowery and all good so they used to look at me and then sometimes, they said, "How pretty." They liked the color. Sometimes, they would come to my son and they would say, "Oh, his eyes are so precious. He is so gorgeous," things like that. They always gave good comments to us. And we used to thank them. And then, we asked a few questions of them too.

UQ: You mentioned your clothes. You used to wear your own Pakistani-style dress?

Did you wear that everywhere? Did you also wear American style clothing?

AHK: Whenever I was at home and whenever I visited somebody or would go outside, I would wear my Pakistani dresses. But when I became a medical technologist or when I was going to a student training thing, I started wearing a uniform, white uniform, which we are supposed to be in. So, at work, I did wear a uniform but as soon as I finished my training and I started working as a medical technologist, I enjoyed wearing my own shalwar qamiz dress. So, I used to sew a little bit. I made this white-colored, 3 or 4 suits like the form of my style with long shirt and pants and that is what I would wear. I would wear both things. I wore pant suits also as well as my Pakistani style, especially Fridays; I always would wear my complete Pakistani dress, 3 piece dress with that top material which we call a scarf. It is a very fine material and ladies always admire and like it and say, "it's so good and so pretty." And I just feel good, that is why I used to dress like that. Nobody stopped us. On the dresses, I always wore a lab coat, so it didn't matter

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what you were wearing. They never forced us or said that you had to have a white uniform. So, that is why it was not hard for me to wear my own clothing.

UQ: Did you ever go shopping for American clothing here or did you just sew the American style clothes?

AHK: I bought some if I could find comfortable things, like especially pants. During my maternity time, I had to wear something from them - I didn't make anything. And then, pants. But usually, I wore my own clothes from Pakistan.

UQ: In general, would you say that you being a foreigner or an immigrant had any influence on the way people treated you? At work? Outside? Going for walks? Anywhere?

AHK: I didn't understand that. Say it again.

UQ: Do you think that you being an immigrant or a foreigner influenced the way people treated you?

AHK: No. At that time, they were very friendly people and they used to get excited and they used to come close to us. I used to ask questions also.

UQ: What kind of questions?

AHK: About anything from where you are, where did you come, where do you live, we like this, we like that, oh it is good - something like that. That is what I told you before - they always had very good, positive remarks. We hardly had people from . . . I mean, like in our neighborhood, I guess we didn't have anybody who was from Pakistan or India. Even my son, he was such a small kid but when he saw someone, they would say, "Oh, look at him! He's an Urdu man going to the bank (Urdu, which we speak in our country). He used to call [him by] that language, "oh, that Urdu man is going." So, we hardly see here and there at that time. We were the first immigrant family when we came in this Pakistani community. Before that, there were a few people there but they were only student visas or working something, or they were on a business visa. As far as I know, we were the first immigrant family who moved here.

UQ: So, there were no other Pakistani women when you first came here?

AHK: There were a few which their husbands were going to school or there were a few that were doing some kind of business - they had a carpet business person there, they were there.

UQ: Did you meet them and get to know them?

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AHK: Students at the University of Houston, they used to arrange some programs and gatherings and they had India and Pakistan - two different nations - but their activities are kind of similar. So, they used to arrange some programs and functions or movies and then, with religious festivity there, Arab people would also come, so on these occasions especially in the University, people are very . . . they knew who was from Pakistan and who was from India, who was from Egypt. And then, we had one circle also, a religious circle, we used to have our meetings once a week in somebody's house. Then slowly we bought a building and we used it as an Islamic center. And we were involved there with activities. Then, whoever used to come, they would look and find out where the Pakistani or Muslim people lived and then this way, people started getting together and then when we had our own circle, we didn't have time even to go out or look out because with the job, with weekend activities, with family invitations, we were quite happy and busy and engaged.

UQ: O.K., backing up just a little bit, a question from before that I had: You said that your husband sent home some money to his family in Pakistan. What percentage of his income went to send home? Just estimate.

AHK: The currency rate is different. One dollar is worth more in Pakistan. So, whatever he was supposed to send them, according to them, it was not much really though. It was \$100 or less than \$200, he could support them and they could live a comfortable life.

UQ: Did they have another income there?

AHK: Yes, they had some brothers who were also working so it was a joint thing. But my husband always was particular that he wanted to do his share.

UQ: Did they help pay for his education at all?

AHK: No. At that time, they used to have some scholarship system, something like that, so my husband had come to the United States with one of those scholarships. He had availed that. That was the reason, that within 3 years - it was for 3 years and he said he could have stayed here and could have gone for further education but he said, "No, I made a promise to my people I would go back and serve them again and then I'll come back [to the US] again. And so that money, plus he also had some kind of part-time job, odd job because at that time also, he used to send money to his parents.

UQ: O.K., so they didn't pay for his living expenses either? (end of tape #1)

UQ: You said that the University of Houston students arranged a gathering where the different people would come - Indians and Pakistanis and Arabs and you would get together. Who arranged this on the campus?

AHK: The student association they had from India Pakistan. Those people I'm talking about, not the University of Houston student gathering, but different nationalities and different people on their own.

UQ: International students?

AHK: Pakistani federation like thing or India - they both were, I guess, under the same head. I don't exactly remember [REDACTED] but whenever there would be some kind of gathering which was Pakistan and Indian based, we used to go. But not usually to the movies.

UQ: O.K., so you would meet like once a month?

AHK: And the cultural things we used to have. And the poetic things we used to have India, Pakistani - very similar. And so, when we'll arrange some kind of program, my husband was very actively involved in different activities. He had also organized his own group of Urdu language, poetry, and reading at citings. So, we used to have this program once in 2 months - something like that, so that people from India and Pakistani origin, they will come and we will have a very good gathering. At that time, University of Houston was also very . . . they used to offer their free facilities to us. We used to get their halls and they arranged big programs. And everybody enjoyed these kinds of evenings.

UQ: I didn't know you spent so much time on campus.

AHK: We did. We were not that far - a 15-minute drive. So, always we . . . and even some time in the beginning, we used to have our religious festivity, Eid prayers also there.

UQ: On the campus?



AHK: On the campus.

UQ: How many women came to the Eid prayer?

AHK: We didn't have any concept of the ladies, I mean. We never used to go to the prayers in Pakistan. But after coming to America, whatever activities were going on, we used to participate as a family. And then, this was the only chance. If you did not go, you would miss meeting people. So, we would look forward to see and go to these programs and then used to go and enjoy and meet and make friends. And then, if somebody had newly arrived, we welcomed them. Then, they would become part of our group and that is how it happened.

UQ: Do you remember your first Eid here?

AHK: Yes, it was at University of Houston. My husband was the one who was the *imam* and we had very few people. And then, after that, we had another gathering of this Eid and we had only 30 people in that. We had photographs that whenever I see them, I remember that that is what was happening. But it was in Godwin Park which I think is in the Meyerland area.

UQ: O.K., so first you went to the University campus and you had the prayer?

AHK: Yes.



UQ: And there were about how many people would you say?

AHK: There were not that many. I don't exactly remember but the students . . . mostly, there were students and very few ladies because there was campus and mostly were Indian and Pakistani.

UQ: But you weren't the only woman? There were some others?

AHK: No, there were a few others. When I came, there were ladies from Pakistan and India but I told you that we were the first immigrant family. The other ladies were there

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and some people were not part of the University but when we started having Eid program, then we used to invite them and everybody used to join.

UQ: Was this the only Eid prayer in Houston at that time?

AHK: At that time, yes. We were not divided into different groups. Slowly, as times went by, then people started coming from different backgrounds. Then, they started making their own groups and this way. But still I don't think until I was here until 1980, we used to have one big gathering. Not Pakistani separate, not this and that group. Under the umbrella of Islamic Society of Greater Houston.

UQ: O.K. Was there interaction with Arabs?

AHK: Muslim group means no matter from where they are coming, from Arab background or India or Pakistan or Indonesia or Malaysia, Bangladesh - everybody was joining there.

UQ: So, during those first couple of Eids, 1971, 1972 . . .

AHK: I think until almost 1980, we were not divided into different things. After 1980, it happened.

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UQ: The separation. So, those very early ones, even that first Eid, do you remember if there were people from other countries? Not India or Pakistan but other countries?

AHK: I told you that we used to have a religious gathering once a week, so people who came from Turkey, from Iraq, from Egypt - all those were attending those gatherings and naturally, they were a part of that prayer group.

UQ: Can you remember about when those weekly gatherings started?

AHK: When I came here, my husband was already part of that group and he was going there. It was in somebody's house. But after that, they got a building which was a little old kind of building and they bought that. And then, we moved our activities to that place.

UQ: O.K., so you also must have made some friends with different Arab women.

AHK: Arab, plus a lot of people also started coming into the fold of Islam - Afro-Americans, white - and they were also part of that group.

UQ: How were they finding out about Islam?

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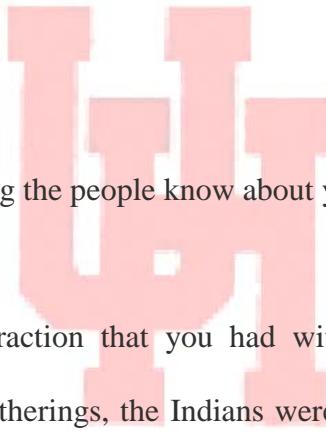
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AHK: I think activities were going on. I don't know what was the thing but at that time, I was not that active. Probably the men they were inviting and they were doing their *dawa* work.

UQ: O.K., *dawa* work meaning?

AHK: Inviting . . .

UQ: Inviting people?



AHK: Inviting people and letting the people know about your religion.

UQ: Back to the social interaction that you had with the Indians and Pakistanis. During these meetings, these gatherings, the Indians were Muslim and they were Hindu and Jain - whatever religions they had?

AHK: Yes. Only the background was the place. That is India and Pakistan have the same kind of cultural things and for that, we had all that togetherness without thinking about which religion you follow or what is your practice. We were all speaking that language which was Urdu and that had made us one group.

UQ: O.K., so when you got together, what did you do?

AHK: We used to talk and then have these recital things for poetry and sometimes musical things, sometimes just we invited each other and sometimes we visited each other. It used to look like a very congenial group because people who come from Indian Pakistan, their culture and practices are so similar and the dress is also kind of much similar. So, we never felt kind of strange to each other.

UQ: And when you say "cultural practices," what do you mean?



AHK: Dresses, food. This is the main thing.

UQ: Language?

AHK: And language, yes.

UQ: So, early on, there was much more interaction between Indians and Pakistanis? Did you find later on that this was maintained? The interaction between Indians, Pakistanis, Muslims and Hindus, was it continued?

AHK: When we started getting more of our Muslim grouping and then the study of religious activities, naturally we divided ourselves into two kinds of activities: one was religious, the other was social. And the social group slowly also started cutting down

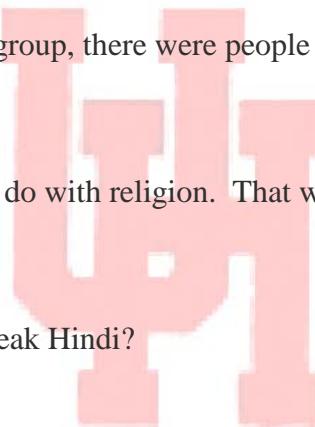
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because then, those people also, everybody started their own background group and this way, we started slowly, slowly. But still, whenever we have something very big, they will invite each other and they will come and attend the program.

UQ: So, when you say "very big," you mean the Urdu language, poetry?

AHK: Yes.

UQ: O.K., in the Urdu poetry group, there were people of different religions as well?



AHK: Yes. That had nothing to do with religion. That was just a language-based thing.

UQ: But Hindus, they don't speak Hindi?

AHK: They speak Hindi but this literature part of the poetry I am talking about, some of those and then the songs, musical things, they all enjoyed the same thing. They are changing slowly. That time, the language was kind of very similar but slowly they started adding up more difficult words from different languages of India and this way, now you can see a good difference of this Urdu language - the one which is spoken in Pakistan and the one which is spoken in India which is called Hindi. It has less words of Urdu than Sanskrit and something else from India.

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UQ: But back then, there wasn't so much of a difference?

AHK: There was not because those who were interested in literature and Urdu poetry, they were speaking the same language.

UQ: A question about India: When your family which migrated from India to Pakistan . . . if you can remember or if you know, when they were in India, did they say they spoke Hindi or did they say they spoke Urdu?

AHK: At that time, my mother told me that they were speaking Urdu. And Hindi, very slowly they started adding up to movies and then their songs. And then, they got a little bias. And they said, "No, this is our language. This is not our language. This is the Muslim language." So, I think this is something of a political thing. But before that . . . and still, we have a lot of poets from India, they know Urdu as the Urdu language and they enjoy it and they still practice and they write their poems in Urdu language.

UQ: That is something I will have to look into. I would be interested in finding out at what point the language that we now call Hindi used to be called Urdu.

AHK: They had the Hindi language. The script was Hindi but the spoken language, they never used that many and especially those Indians in the northern part like UP, their Hindi was more like Urdu than Hindi.

UQ: O.K. From that time you originally came, how has your view of America changed compared to now?

AHK: I think when I came here first, everything was new to me and I used to be amazed with a lot of things. But slowly, when I got into that system and then I started the part of that group - like I was working, I was meeting people, I was going here and there, then the same thing as that - I still go out. The people were more humane, I should say or more cultured then slowly the things . . . it is not here, it is in all the world I think, things are changed. So, that's the way – people don't care now. They are rushing and hustling and bustling. They don't care who is working, who is doing this and that. The carefree, careless-like feeling comes to me that they don't mind . . . they don't have any specific focus on things. They are just passing their time. They don't have a purpose of life. It seems like that nowadays. I don't know what is . . . I don't go to work. I used to work and I used to meet people - there were different kinds of people. But now, I meet people on the street, sometimes in the stores, grocery store. But it seems like people are becoming more materialistic than they have some manners and some social preferences or something like that.

UQ: Can you tell about your parents' view of religion? How did they feel about religion, practicing their religion in their lives?

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AHK: I guess when you live in your own country, most of the people follow the same thing, so you don't have to worry too much about practicing. I mean, everybody is practicing almost the same. Somebody a little higher level, some a little lower. But they all respect and they all follow the same thing. But when you leave that particular environment and you go to a different environment, then there you feel like saving your heritage, your values, your things. And then, you become more sensitive about it and then you practice more not to be away from your own things. So, my parents, they were practicing but it seemed like we didn't have any kind of danger that we will not be what we are. So, we had kind of freedom. But now, we are raising our kids here and we are living here and then we see our surroundings. Then we think that we have to be more strict to whatever our practice is, otherwise, we will also be lost like the other people here in this world.

UQ: O.K., would you say that your family was a religious family or no?

AHK: We were average. We were not that strict in the sense that we were following the 5 pillars of Islam but some people are more religious - means they observe more practices which we were a little liberal on that.

UQ: And do you think that coming here changed that in some way?

AHK: Coming here? Things are changing. That is what I just told you - that living in a foreign place, not your own, basics and your foundations, you know, when you change something. Then you are more particular about and that is why you become . . . it is not with me. I think when I see other families also, the think that whatever they taught to their children or whatever they are doing, they think it was enough. But now, in this period of time when people are following different kinds of faiths, different kinds of things, it becomes very important for one to realize that to be whatever you believe in, if you want to stick to that thing, you have to be more strict and more practicing and more conservative.

UQ: Do you think you had that outlook when you first came here? How long did it take before you started thinking this way?

AHK: When I first came here, I did not actually . . . changing my habits and style and like clothing and things like that, that actually made me a little upset in the beginning. And then, I realized later on that it is O.K. because I am following [my beliefs] and still, I believe the same thing. But later on, I realized that changing whatever you follow, your cultural things, your dresses, your language - that also makes a lot of difference if you do not continue the same thing what you had brought with you, then you slowly will be melted in this society. And I wanted to keep my individuality so I thought this kind of thing, I will practice myself and I will teach my children also.

UQ: So, when you say you were upset changing your clothing, do you mean that you didn't want to?

AHK: Actually, we used different kinds of clothes which covered most of our things [bodies] and are loose and then when I started wearing something [American], it seemed like I am a little bit naked. I don't know - I never wore that way. So, that is the way I felt and this was an uncomfortable feeling. But once you started putting on those things, you get used to it. And slowly, I realize that yes, it is better for me to go back to my old style rather than to this and so I quit.

UQ: You quit?



AHK: Wearing western style.

UQ: O.K., about when did that happen that you decided to . . .

AHK: Within 10 years. After 10 years, I just didn't go back to the same thing.

UQ: O.K., how did you maintain a connection to Pakistan?

AHK: We used to send letters all the time through the postal system but then later on, it became a little advanced that you can call them because it used to be expensive for us to

make long distance calls. But when we visited, visitation also was not that easy because a lot of money was required to go back and forth. So, we kept in touch that somebody comes from there or once in a while, we feel, yes, we will go and visit and see our families. And if somebody comes, then they [our families in Pakistan] send along with them some pictures, some things for us and we had connection with different . . . presents or items, we get from them [our families in Pakistan] or saying somebody [from Houston] is going back, so we send something to them. So, that is the way we were in touch.

UQ: O.K. Clothing and things like that. The same thing, you had someone bring it?

AHK: Yes, but now people started business and so everything is available now. But it is still when your loved ones send you something and you want to send them something, you have to send your own. So, from that . . . you do buy it from the store but if somebody - your sister, your brother or your parents send something - you feel more happy with that and it gives you more . . . feeling of pleasure comes. When you receive something from your loved ones, it is more than buying from the store.

UQ: And how often did you visit Pakistan?

AHK: When I was first here, after 5 years, I went the first time. Then second time also after 5 years. But then, we moved to another place [Middle East] and [from] there, I was

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visiting almost every other year or next year or every other year, like that. So, I had visited a lot. But we came back [to Houston] again. From 1992, I had been the same way and 1, 2, 3 years we just visited. It is not like . . . my husband doesn't work, I don't work, we both stay home. So, whenever we feel that we should visit, we just go and visit.

UQ: Did you have any other relatives come after you arrived here in the U.S.?

AHK: Yes. My sister was living in England. She as by herself there and I was here but the rest of us . . . the kids were in Pakistan. So, I asked my sister to move here and this way, we both will be together in one country, and she moved. We are still two here [in Houston] but the rest are here and there.

UQ: And your husband also had family members come?

AHK: My husband was the oldest in his family and he was the supporter of his family and he always looked after for his family. So, when he thought he was a little settled, he started calling his brother. Then, his two brothers followed. Then, his sister came. Then, his mother came. And the rest of the family. All the members. So, almost all members of his family, they are here except one sister who is in Pakistan.

UQ: Why do you think that so many of them came here and didn't choose to remain in Pakistan?

AHK: Everybody thinks there is a good future, better future, easy life, comfort of life - all that. So, this way, when somebody is already here and they can have them to settle and because we are easy and just fulfill their desires to be in America because it is a dream for most of the third country nation people. This is a thing that is good and best to live in a free country like America.

UQ: When you go back to Pakistan to visit, do you still hear from your relatives that any of them want to come to America?

AHK: Some people are very happy, satisfied. They said, "No, we don't want to be bothered with anything. We are happy here." For some people, especially with children having it a little hard time and the youngsters over there for education because the system is getting really . . . there is so much unlawness or corruption. And then, some political disability. whatever you can call it. Education is disturbed so that is why some of the families prefer that the children go and they can have some good education so they can live a better life.

UQ: Speaking of education, what was your early education? Your primary, middle, high school - what was that like? What kinds of schools did you attend?

AHK: I went to a good school. We had two kinds of schools - the government school and private school. I always went to a private school and it was one of the best schools. We had a lot of activities going on. Sports. Good sports record there. It was nice. The same with college. I attended one of the best colleges. We had only one university and I just had only one place to go.

UQ: What was the name of your primary school?



AHK: That was New Town School.

UQ: And you stayed there until what grade?

AHK: Until high school.

UQ: Oh, you went to the same school from the beginning to the end? And was it a girls school?

AHK: Girls school. We didn't have any coeducation schools there. Only English medium schools, they used to be coed. And then college, we had coeducation.

UQ: And you said English medium. So, your school, New Town was not . . .

AHK: . . . English medium school; it was Urdu medium school but English, they were teaching us with higher level.

UQ: O.K., so it was all girls and was it, by any chance, a religious school?

AHK: No, religious school, I should not say but we didn't even have—

UQ: Maybe not religious - a parochial school which means like sometimes they have here Catholic private schools.

AHK: No, nothing like that. It was nothing like that. It was just regular school.

UQ: O.K., so it was run by Muslims, Pakistanis?

AHK: Pakistani people, that is all. Like I told you before, the principal of the school, she was very talented and very broad-minded. In that school, we used to have visitors from different countries coming, even from America, from Italy, from France, from this and that, and she had her links with so many people. They used to come. We used to have assemblies in the morning and in the afternoon sometimes, they would come and then we would have a special gathering with them and they would say something to us. Then, we would present some program to them. So, that is the way we had connection

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with all different countries, you know? And she had given us so many . . . she always liked it . . . she said, "you should be aware of the things that are happening in the world." So, in the morning, we used to have an assembly session - we would have a religious prayer and then somebody would read some news, local news, as well as something from the foreign country, so we would just have some kind of knowledge of what is going on around us, about the affairs of the world also.

UQ: You said that you had visitors from other countries. They were people of different ethnicities or Pakistanis who had traveled?

AHK: No, not Pakistani. Americans. Americans and Italians, like this. They were not Muslim or anything like that.

UQ: And what did they talk about?

AHK: They used to come and see our school and visit . . . yes, we like this, and we had this thing like this . . . just little bit small thing. But, I mean, she would ask them to come and they were also attracted to know how things were going there, so it was a mutual kind of thing. Maybe it was they belonged to . . . my mind was so small at that time, I don't know what their backgrounds were but they used to come and then they used to talk and then say something about this. And then, she would also say that this is happening in

this school and they are doing this, so we will have this kind of program, we will have this activity.

UQ: You had said that your socioeconomic background was above average. Would that be kind of like above middle-class?

AHK: Yes.

UQ: The girls in your school, were they of the same background?

AHK: Yes, because the private school, you had to pay a lot for tuition fee. So, whenever somebody could afford to pay, that meant they had the income, otherwise, they would go to a government school.

UQ: O.K., and do you think that in your school, they encouraged the girls to go for university education as well?

AHK: Yes. She used to ask, "What is your dream? What do you want to be?" these kinds of things from the very beginning and she would always . . . even when I finished my school, sometimes if there was something happening, she had made us an 'Old Girls Association' - seniors who had already graduated from the school, they used to come and whatever they were going through, their experiences, they would share with them and

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they would tell them what we were doing and then, she would appreciate and then she would . . . if somebody had earned something in school and college, my principal used to invite them in front of the school and she would say, "See, this is my student. She has done" this and this, "and now, she has accomplished this," or "she has achieved a medal," you know, something - it is to encourage all the girls that you should always be doing something, try to be brilliant and the top list, like that.

UQ: O.K., so the encouragement was to seek higher education. Was it also to seek a good career?

AHK: Naturally, if somebody has taken some field which is something very admiring, then she would ask her to come and give a speech in front of the students. So, this way, she had been doing that all the time. So, when we finished, if we did something, she would call. We always were in touch also with her.

UQ: What was her name?

AHK: Her name was Safiyya Khan.

UQ: Do you know what her educational background may have been?

AHK: She has BABT.

UQ: Which is?

AHK: Bachelor of Arts and teacher's training thing, from India at that time, for Pakistan.

UQ: About how many girls do you think were in your school approximately?

AHK: If each class had 40 for two sections _____, it is about 400, I think, or more than that.



UQ: A big school. A very big school. Did this New Town School, they only had a location in Karachi or in other cities as well?

AHK: No, it was a private school, the only one. But later after that, the Pakistani government had changed things and they had finished all the private setups and everything. They had nationalized schools and they became under the government.

UQ: So then, this school no longer exists?

AHK: It is there but it is a different way, under the government rules they are running these schools.

UQ: Was the principal also the owner of the school?

AHK: She was not the owner.

UQ: Which college did you go to?

AHK: I went to a college, it was D.J. College. It was a coeducation one. I was good in my education career. I had good marks, I should say. I was accepted at a girls' college which was one of the good colleges but my father told me to go to another college because my sister was going there. Because he said that it was better that both sisters should go to one college. And I was kind of shy there and I didn't like to go back to the coeducation thing. But we used to listen to our parents, whatever they wanted us to . . . and then I started there. Four years I just went to the same college and I finished the Bachelor of Arts there.

UQ: That was the first time you were in coeducation, right?

AHK: Yes. I was kind of quiet. I was not involved in a lot of activities and then, my studies were also affected but there was nothing I could do. Then, when I finished it, when I came to university, there, we had a good group of friends and there was more freedom in the college environment. I enjoyed two years of university more than the college.

UQ: And your father didn't have any hesitation sending you to coed?

AHK: No. I had admission at girls' college and he said, "No, just go to that." So, he had trusted us. I mean, he was confident in us.

UQ: The sister who was with you in the college, was she like you - shy to be around the coed situation? Was she also shy?

AHK: No, she actually went to that school because her whole group from the school, they were trying to take an adventure - that they wanted to go to a coeducation school. And that is why the whole group - there were 6, 7 friends in the school and they decided to go there and that is why they went over there.

UQ: And that is why she went there?

AHK: Yes, because the whole group had decided that you had to go to coeducation at this college. She was good in school and she would have gotten admission in one of the best colleges of girls but they all decided, no, we will go there. And she went. It was a good college but I didn't want to be in coeducation, I didn't enjoy it.

UQ: Did you say anything to your father or your mother maybe that you didn't want to go there, don't make me?

AHK: No, I didn't say anything. One or two of my friends also went to this college, so it was O.K. with me. But then, you end up making friends anyway.

UQ: And this older sister who was there, she also went to the same primary school – New Town?

AHK: Yes.



UQ: And the sister that was after you, did she also go to D.J. College?

AHK: No, she didn't go to D.J. College. She didn't take science as a major so naturally, she went to that girls' college.

UQ: We are going to fast forward to America. Would you recommend to friends and family members now to come to America? You are here. You have been here a long time. How do you feel about encouraging people to come now?

AHK: No, I would not encourage them. I think their basics should be more strong, their foundation should be very good and learn your own ethnic background as well as your

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religious . . . it is better for you to be in your own settled place and your own country.

Unless you are looking for something that you don't have in your country, then take the advantage and benefit of that education or training and then come to different place.

UQ: Did you have any concerns about raising your son here?

AHK: My sons are grown up now. At the time that they were growing, we were concerned and we were very careful about the way we had been living and the friends or circle we had. My husband was very careful about it. I still remember one thing: my son finished fifth grade and he was supposed to go to another school for sixth grade. He asked me, "Mom, where should I go? Should I go to this school? They have a drug problem. Or should I go to this school? The kids are not good there." And I looked at his face and I didn't know what he was talking about. I didn't know what kind of thing was going on. The schools have drugs? At that time . . . I am talking about 1979 or 1980. At that time in 1980 . . . I said, "Whatever you think is good. I don't know which one is a good school," because we both were working and no idea about drugs or this and that. The school which was closer to our house, we sent him there but he went only for one month.

Then, we transferred to Saudi Arabia and then we didn't have any problems, we didn't have any worries on how to raise them because my husband was very concerned from the very beginning that we were going to teach our values and our practices to our

children. So, we were mostly moving around the people from our country as well as our religious background and he was so concerned that during the day time, we both were at work but when we used to come back from work, we were always with the family. We never went any place, visited any place, not movies or anything, without children. So, wherever we went, the children always were with us. So, we always visited family and if there was somewhere where they [the children] were not welcome, we said, fine, we will not go and visit. So, we were really concerned about this and whatever we could have done, we did it and we felt better about this. My husband was going to school and when he finished, he said, "Now, my [redacted] kids are growing and I want to have a little better environment for them where we can be more relaxed," because here, we had to be very careful and tense. And luckily, he found a good job at the university in Saudi Arabia, so we moved there and there, we were able to give them the environment which we were concerned and were looking for.

UQ: You had your first child in Pakistan and then you came here when he was less than one year old and your second child, you had here in Houston?

AHK: Yes.

UQ: How was that experience without the support of your family?

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AHK: I will say that when I had the first child, I didn't have much information or knowledge about raising children or having children, things like that. So, there the family was always there. But when I was expecting the second child, when I visited the doctor, the information was given to me. I said, oh, that is so easy. Why didn't our parents ever tell us how to do this and how to do that? So, I mean, when you get your booklets and some help and some advice from the doctor, it is not bad. I had a good experience of having a child. It was nice, the hospital experience which I had. It was good. It seemed like the nurses around me, they were like so caring and loving, that I thought it was like my mother or sister. I mean, I didn't miss anything.

UQ: O.K., so after you came back home from the hospital stay, you had some time away from work?

AHK: I had already taken . . . my hospital lab never used to give us maternity days. They said whatever you take, it will be without pay. So, I had decided that it was hard to continue the job with a small child and I felt very uncomfortable leaving him in the nursery. So, we had already decided that when the child was in a young stage, instead of sending them to the nursery, somebody from the home will take care of it and since I couldn't arrange anybody to come here, I took my children there. And I left my child, the young one . . .

UQ: Where is there?

AHK: In Pakistan. When the baby was 1 month old, I went to Pakistan, I stayed there for 2 months and I left the baby with the older son when he was 3 months old for about 1 year and then after 1 year, then I could arrange and I got both my children back. So, I didn't want to have that hard time of wrapping my child in a blanket and taking him to the nursery and let strange ladies take care of him. I was uncomfortable with that. So, it was not a wise choice, I knew, and it was hard on me, too, but that was the only solution at that time that we thought of and then we did it.

UQ: And who did they stay with while they were in Pakistan?

AHK: My children lived with my husband's family. His mother, she took care of them.

UQ: And your husband was O.K. with this idea obviously since . . .

AHK: Yes, because at job, you have a lot of problems. I had started it . . . we wanted to have money also. I couldn't quit the job and stay at home. We had to pay for the house, for this and that. So, keeping that all in our mind, we thought that was the logical solution, so we did it.

UQ: Did you know how long the children would be in Pakistan when you first took them?

AHK: I had already taken a promise from my husband that I would not leave them more than 1-1/2 years there. They would stay there at the most 1 year or something and I wanted my younger child to be here when he was 1-1/2 years. And he did come at that time.

UQ: Was this your husband's idea?

AHK: It was both of our ideas because actually when I brought my older son, we had a lot of problem. When he started going to the nursery, he started to get sick all the time, up and down. And then, we had to take off from the job. It was very hard. And we decided to let his immunity build there sitting at one home in private care and then when he was a little older, it will be easier for him and it will be comfortable and convenient for us also that we will not be worrying about sickness and then thinking about kids. Naturally, you know, when you are busy with a child, you have extra work and all that. And then, your work is also affected. Your own health is also affected. And we didn't want to take any kind of chances also.

UQ: Did you go there and visit during that year?

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AHK: No, I left them and then after, I told you, we were arranging after 1 year who could bring them back. Then, my mother-in-law, we asked her to come and she brought them back.

UQ: How did you keep in touch with your children, your older son anyway, who was 5, 6 years old at that time? Did you get to talk to him on the phone?

AHK: No, we did not call that many times. Very few times. But we used to send letters and then pictures and then whoever would go to Pakistan or whoever would visit from Pakistan here, we would get information about how he was doing, what he did, how he was and all that kind of thing.

UQ: Do you still have letters not just to your son but to any of the people that you wrote to - your parents? Do you still keep any of those letters?

AHK: Very few. Actually, when we moved to Saudi Arabia, we got rid of a lot of things, you know, so that is why I don't have much. But a few of the letters, I just saved and are still with me.

UQ: Do you have any other experiences or stories that you can remember that you would like to share on this tape? Any particularly memorable events or things that happened to you?

AHK: Yes, I had one or two experiences where actually we had a different kind of family background and we were very close to each other and same way, like members of the family are more concerned and caring for the other person. My husband is one of those that he really, if somebody is late for 5 minutes, he gets very worried and starts looking and coming out of the house and things like that. One time what happened, I went to work and I couldn't find the bus. I mean, the bus didn't come and I had to stay for a long time there at the bus stop. And I was late coming home by about 1 hour and something. Before I could enter my apartment, my son started telling me, "Mom, where were you? Daddy called the police. Daddy called the police." I said, "Why? Why did he call the police?" And then, when I made it [inside], the police man and the inspector saw me and then my husband said, "Where were you?" I said, "No, actually, I could not find the bus so I just walked all the way from there to here." He said, "What?" But at that time, you know, I was so ashamed of myself and I couldn't even look up to those two police inspectors, that what would they be thinking about me, that where I had gone or what I had done? That is how my husband was.

And one more time, the same thing happened. He was supposed to pick me up . . . actually; I was going to training, going to different hospitals, so he was supposed to pick me up from one hospital. I waited for him, maybe he was a little late or probably he couldn't see me. So, I waited there. He looked for me over there. When he looked for me, I was not there. I went from that hospital to another hospital. From there, when I

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didn't find him in front of that hospital, then I came back to the first hospital. And by that time, when I didn't find my husband, I took the bus and I went home. And the next day when I came to work, to my hospital, Children's Hospital, then the lady said, "Where were you gone? Your husband was looking."

And then, I felt so bad. I said, "My goodness, the few minutes' difference of time." It used to worry him so much, a lot, that he used to make a big thing out of nothing. And that kind of thing, if you put yourself in this position, it feels so awkward that people are looking at you and they are thinking that something is fishy going on there or something is wrong but it was nothing like that. It was just the concern my husband had for these kinds of things. I just felt bad and I still remember. And when I think about this, I just think 'Oh no, how could he be that way?' He's still like that. If I'm late somewhere or something he's concerned and he always thinks on the negative side: that something must have happened, somebody must have taken her away, and something is like this.

This thing, in American or western countries, I don't think people worry like that much about little stuff. Like 5 minutes or 10 minutes or 20 minutes doesn't make a big difference to them but to people from our country, they will come out of their house, they will walk around, and then they will call the police that something's happened, some crime has taken place. But I'm so lucky that nothing has happened to me since I've been

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here in this country, nothing wrong. Nobody did anything wrong to me. That was downtown, behind that is the VA hospital.

(end of tape 2)

UQ: Do you remember attending any functions or events in Houston, local events like the parades or things like that?

AHK: In the beginning we didn't have much [social] outlets because we didn't have any transport set up, so we used to take the bus and go to downtown. Downtown there we used to go sometimes on weekends and walk around the street and go into different stores and then once or twice we went to see these parades because our child was young. And we attended that function.

UQ: So was downtown where people went when they wanted to go shopping and things like that?

AHK: That's it, yes . . . Our problem was that we didn't have a car so we couldn't go to the department stores, being over here. It was easy to catch a bus and go to downtown. That's why we used to go downtown and those different places, we did a lot of our shopping there.

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UQ: What kinds of shops did they have in downtown back then?

AHK: All those big stores: Woolworth was there. Foley's was there and Sears was there. Sometimes we'd get off at one place in downtown and all [along] that street, we'd look at the store name, and then say, "this is good, let's go inside." Window shopping or just to pass the time.

UQ: Anything else you can remember, any other events that were specific to Houston?



AHK: When we first came we tried to visit all the historic places, see places.

UQ: Places like what?

AHK: San Jacinto monument and then we liked to go to the Galleria. The Galleria was good and then NASA, whatever was there. Somebody would tell us that this is a place you should go look. In the beginning we used to go a lot but then when we've seen all these places – it's been a long time now that we never go to those places. But we used to go the zoo and Hermann Park a lot.

UQ: And you would take your kids with you?

AHK: Take the kids too.

UQ: Your children, were they involved in school activities?

AHK: My older son went to school here only up to 5th grade. He had his friends who were living in the neighborhood; their father was a Scout leader. So my son had joined the Cub Scouts and then he had some activities and he spent the night also, you know, some programs. He was very young. We felt kind of bad but we wanted him to also be with his friends so we let him go.

UQ: What did you feel bad about?

AHK: Because we were teaching different kinds of things. We were careful about the [cultural/religious] practices. In the evening we would tell our children you should not stay out after the sun sets. "Before the sun sets, you should be home." So he used to tell us, "My other friends are playing so why shouldn't I play?" We said, "No, this is not a good habit. This is not accepted in our family. Before it gets dark you should be home." And the same way we tell them [our kids] to pray and when they're with other kids, naturally they will not be able to pray and practice their things. So that was the thing. We tell them you have to follow that practice, then we'll allow you to go. Otherwise you'll stay home.

UQ: Did you feel like he was more American or more Pakistani?

AHK: He was not at all Pakistani; he never was there. He was more, like I said, a good, manageable child. American, you can call him, or whatever. He was nice. We never had any problem with him, not with his behavior, not with his attitude. I can tell you one thing which was very exemplary. When I took him to Pakistan and he was hardly 5 or 6 – not even 6 probably – and then people looked at him and said he was very well-managed and well-behaved and a nice kid. We were concerned [parents]. We were around our children most of the time so the thing which we wanted to teach them, if it's not acceptable to us and we didn't like it, we would correct it right then and there.

UQ: O.K., did you teach your son to speak Urdu?

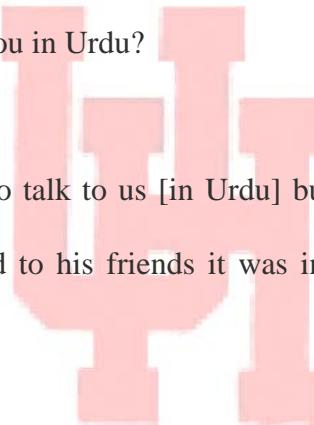
AHK: Yes, we had a special set-up at home that we had decided we would not speak to our children in English language or American language. We would speak only our language. We told them also that you should understand that: no English. You have to speak only in our language because this was the way of communication. We did not want to break that with our older generation or our parents. If they [the children] didn't know the language then whenever they had a chance to visit, naturally both parties couldn't communicate. This was one of the reasons, plus I always liked the sweetness, manners, and etiquette we have in our language. When we speak to older people we use different words. When we speak to younger people we use a different way but in English you have the same kind of nouns and pronouns and adjectives and there's no difference in

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that. To me, it's not respectful or kind of . . . a little bit . . . we feel like they are not giving the respect they are supposed to give to elders, their friends, or other people. You know there should be a certain way of talking and behaving and reacting with elders or friends or anybody. In English language or American language, when you speak to older person or younger person or just a friend you use the same words, same slang, same thing, and that sounds kind of uncomfortable to me. I didn't want my children to be that way. Plus we didn't want to break the communication with the other generation.

UQ: So he actually spoke to you in Urdu?



AHK: Yes, he spoke, he used to talk to us [in Urdu] but . . . because he was going to school he was....when he talked to his friends it was in an American accent. Nothing different.

UQ: What about reading and writing [Urdu]?

AHK: I taught him the language which we speak. He used to complain because we have all kinds of hard sounds also in our language and he was not used to it, so he used to complain that "my jaw gets tired when I pronounce these *ra ra zsa zsee* [Urdu letters of the alphabet]." But we said, "It doesn't matter; you have to just practice and whatever you can do just do the best and then don't worry about it."

UQ: I don't have any more questions. Is there anything else you wanted to share?

AHK: No I think that's enough. Thank you very much. I enjoyed talking with you.

May God give you success in your project, in what you are trying to do.

UQ: Thank you.

