

A TEI Project

Interview of Jayashree Madhusudhan

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1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 (June 26, 2010)

Hampapur

This is Veena Hampapur. It's June 26, 2010. I'm here today with Jayashree Madhusudhan. Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this interview.

Madhusudhan

No problem.

Hampapur

I'd like to start off with your childhood in India. Can you tell me where you were born?

Madhusudhan

Actually, I was born in Mysore. It's a city in southern India. But I literally grew up in New Delhi, which is northern India.

Hampapur

Okay. How soon did you move from Mysore to New Delhi?

Madhusudhan

I must have been a couple of months old, so, practically, I grew up in New Delhi for all practical purposes.

Hampapur

And why did your family decide to move to New Delhi?

Madhusudhan

It's my father's job. That's what took him to New Delhi.

Hampapur

Was your family originally from Mysore?

Madhusudhan

Yes. Both my parents are from Mysore, Bangalore. Yes, that's the southern part of the country.

Hampapur

What did your father do for a living?

Madhusudhan

He was the regional manager for Polydor. I don't know if you've heard of that. It's one of the--way back, they used to have records, so he was the northern regional manager for the company.

Hampapur

Okay. And he was transferred to--

Madhusudhan

He was transferred from Madras to New Delhi. That's why I grew up in New Delhi.

Hampapur

Were you in Madras at all before you went?

Madhusudhan

Just for a couple of months, maybe, when I was born, but I don't even--obviously.

Hampapur

Okay. Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Madhusudhan

I have three younger brothers. I'm the oldest in the family of four siblings.

Hampapur

That must have been exciting for your parents, then, when you were born.

Madhusudhan

Yes. Yes. I have three brothers. They're all settled in this country now.

Hampapur

And when you moved to New Delhi, did your family have any other extended relatives there?

Madhusudhan

No. Actually, come to think of it, there wasn't anybody, so I guess my mom was pretty lonely there, because I don't know if you know, South India is very different from North India. I'm talking way back, what, thirty or forty years back, and it was quite a cultural shock for my mom to move from South to there. Not only the language, the food, culture, everything was very different, but as time went by, she got adjusted.

Hampapur

Were there many South Indians living in New Delhi at that time?

Madhusudhan

Just a few, mostly all Tamil-speaking people, so that's how I learned to speak Tamil, because my parents knew Tamil, even though Tamil is not our mother tongue. So that's how I got to learn Tamil. Yes, there were a few South Indians, so they got along with them.

Hampapur

Okay. So after your parents moved, their circle of friends--they met other Tamil people?

Madhusudhan

Yes, South Indian people, yes.

Hampapur

Can you tell me about the neighborhood you grew up in?

Madhusudhan

I grew up in--basically, when I was very little I don't remember those places. But mainly I grew up in a place called Karol Bagh in New Delhi, and Karol Bagh is quite famous for a lot of South Indian people there. But apart from that, like I grew up in Karol Bagh, and it's one of the popular places in New Delhi.

Hampapur

And what is it popular for?

Madhusudhan

Shopping, mostly shopping, yes. A lot of people go there for shopping.

Hampapur

Is it a busy part of the city, or is it more suburb-like?

Madhusudhan

It's a busy part of the city.

Hampapur

And were you close to any of your siblings when you were growing up?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, all. I mean, yes, I was close to all of them. We were very close. There was more fighting amongst my brothers, because I was the oldest, and yes, they used to fight more amongst themselves, but it was good growing up with them.

Hampapur

Were you familiar with your neighbors where you were living?

Madhusudhan

Yes. It was a big house. Like the house must have been from here till the next house, and then there was a partition, and we had another family who used to live right next door, a very good family. We were very close. They were Bengalis. I don't know if you know what Bengali is. It's another language, another part of the country. But they also settled in New Delhi. We became very close with them.

Hampapur

So would you see each other often?

Madhusudhan

Now?

Hampapur

Oh, no, back then.

Madhusudhan

Back then, oh, yes, yes. Literally, the back veranda, it was a common veranda, so it was like living in one house. We never used to lock our houses on the back side of the house, so, yes, we used to see quite a bit.

Hampapur

Okay. So like your family, they also came.

Madhusudhan

Yes.

Hampapur

What did you like to do for fun when you were a child?

Madhusudhan

When I was young? Oh, my god. It was so different from kids growing up in this country. We used to do a lot. We used to play badminton. We used to play I spy, and we used to play--I don't know, there are so many things. Like we used roller skate. As I said, our house was so big, we used to literally roller skate up and down inside the house; not inside the house, but within the compound of the house. Yes, a lot of things.

Hampapur

And was this you and your brothers, or the neighbors too?

Madhusudhan

Everybody, the neighborhood kids, kids from the neighborhood.

Hampapur

Okay. So the kids used to all come together?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes. Evenings, no one would be inside the house. We'd all be outside the house, between like, let's say, six to seven-thirty or eight during summertime, after school.

Hampapur

Did your parents and all the adults interact as much with each other?

Madhusudhan

Adults, not much, not much. They had their own life.

Hampapur

So it was more the kids in the neighborhood.

Madhusudhan

Kids, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. Were most of the other children South Indian as well in that area?

Madhusudhan

No, no. Actually, no, no. They were all North Indians, mostly.

Hampapur

North Indians, okay. Like your neighbors, they had come from different areas?

Madhusudhan

Yes, different areas. Like my immediate neighbor, they were Bengalis, and people living upstairs were Punjabis, so yes, it was all a mixture.

Hampapur

Do you think you picked up any, like, customs or language, or did you feel like you learned anything from--

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, definitely. I learned a lot of languages. Like I can still understand Bengali, and I can still understand Punjabi. I can't speak fluently, but, yes, and then, of course, Hindi. Growing up, Hindi was very--I was very fluent in Hindi. Tamil, I had a few friends, Tamil friends, so I picked up on Tamil, and Kannada, of course, we spoke Kannada at home and English in school, so I grew up speaking four languages fluently.

Hampapur

Wow. Did people, for the most part, get along, from all these different communities?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes, definitely.

Hampapur

Okay. You mentioned earlier that your childhood was very different from kids growing up in the U.S. Can you tell me some of the differences that you see?

Madhusudhan

Oh, one major difference is kids don't go out by themselves when they're in school, of course. So wherever they'd go, I used to accompany them, be it to a park or a friend's house, unlike when we were growing up. Like we'd be out of the house, and like times were different, places were different, so like that's what it is.

Hampapur

It sounds like it was more safe, much more safe.

Madhusudhan

Yes, definitely much safer.

Hampapur

Did your family ever go on any outings or any special things you did with your family?

Madhusudhan

Family, yes. We'd go picnic. That was the main thing. And mostly in New Delhi, summers are very, very hot, summer days, so usually picnics are always in winter. So when it's nice and cool but the sun is out, so that would be a good combination for picnic, so we'd go out for picnics and we'd go for movies as family together. And then, yes, that was basically it. And vacations, during summer vacation we'd go down south. That's where our grandparents were and our cousins and all, so that was the main outing.

Hampapur

Okay. So you grew up still seeing your family that was in Mysore?

Madhusudhan

Bangalore, Mysore, yes.

Hampapur

Did you enjoy those trips?

Madhusudhan

Yes. It used to be always fun, because from my mom's side, on my mother's side there were thirteen brothers-sisters.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Madhusudhan

So can you imagine the number of cousins I had from my mom's side? And from my dad's side, there were five, so we had a lot of cousins growing up.

Hampapur

What types of things would you do when you went and visited your family in the South?

Madhusudhan

Basically just the same thing. We'd go out, visit places, go for movies.

Hampapur

What kind of movies did you enjoy then?

Madhusudhan

Hindi movies. Hindi movies, the English movies too.

Hampapur

Were there any actors that were particularly popular then?

Madhusudhan

When I was growing up, yes, there were a few actors. Like Rajesh Khanna was very popular. Dev Anand was my mom's favorite, and Shashi Kapoor, a few of them, yes.

Hampapur

Did your family listen to the radio at all?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. We used to listen to the radio a lot. This is way back before TV was popular, so just like you have soap operas on TVs now, so there used to be soap operas on radios, so we'd all be glued to radios. Another thing we used to love when we were young was cricket matches, so that was a big thing too, listening to cricket commentary on radio. And then along came TV. In fact, you won't believe, Veena, we used to get TV programs for half an hour, twice a week.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Madhusudhan

Yes, or maybe an hour twice a week, Saturday one hour and Sunday one hour. That used to be, literally, the whole TV thing. And when they'd show movies--I think once a month there used to be movies--they would show half on Saturday and half on Sunday.

Hampapur

Oh. Wow.

Madhusudhan

So that's how TV started in India, and it was all black and white in those days.

Hampapur

So what happened if you turned your TV on on a different day of the week?

Madhusudhan

You'd get that static thing, you know?

Hampapur

Oh, okay. So there was just nothing there.

Madhusudhan

Nothing there.

Hampapur

Was there more than one channel?

Madhusudhan

Oh, no, just one channel, just one channel. I don't think we even had a channel number. It was TV, period. [laughter]

Hampapur

Were movies usually played, or what usually came on?

Madhusudhan

In the beginning, there used to be some programs. I don't even remember now, but maybe some cooking ones. There'd be cooking, and one weekend there'd be little skits, like not really full soap-opera kind of thing, but little comedy shows, sitcoms. Oh, my, god, that was so long back. And I remember the days we didn't have a TV at home. Some of our neighbors did, so we would go and watch in their house, and then, of course, one by one everybody started getting TVs at home.

Hampapur

And the programming was all in Hindi?

Madhusudhan

Hindi and I think some news would be in English too. Yes, that's later on, when they started increasing the number of hours.

Hampapur

Do you remember the first time you saw television?

Madhusudhan

No, I don't.

Hampapur

Okay. Did you have any chores or responsibilities at home while you were growing up?

Madhusudhan

At home? Not really, no, no. I was kind of pampered. [Hampapur laughs] You know one good thing about Indian living is you get a lot of help, so we had somebody who'd come and clean the house, somebody who would do the dishes, and somebody who'd wash clothes, so we had people, yes, who'd come and do those things. I think my mom, the only thing she wouldn't let people do, her cooking. She had to do her own cooking, so that was the only thing she would do. So there wasn't much work for us to do when we were growing up, no.

Hampapur

Sounds nice.

Madhusudhan

Yes. And trash was collected every day by someone who'd come and collect trash. Not even like, you know how kids go out and put trash out here? Nothing. There wasn't anything to do.

Hampapur

So did you get to spend a lot of time with your mother?

Madhusudhan

Yes, my mom. My dad was always busy working, but my mom was a full-time mom, so we'd spend time with her.

Hampapur

And what would you do?

Madhusudhan

Just chat, yes, watch TV together, basically.

Hampapur

Okay. Did your parents have to learn Hindi or anything when they came to New Delhi?

Madhusudhan

When they moved, I'm sure, yes, they had to learn, because I don't think either one of them knew how to speak English; I mean, sorry, not English, Hindi. So yes, I'm sure they had to learn Hindi too.

Hampapur

Were there any popular perceptions of South Indians in New Delhi at that time?

Madhusudhan

Everyone was called a Madrasi, like someone from Madras, like even if you're from Bangalore or Karnataka or Kerala. Any part of South, you were a Madrasi to them. That was it. They thought south meant Madras, so they didn't know anything. In those days, traveling is not as much as it is now, so people weren't

very knowledgeable. They didn't know what cities existed in South [India] and what languages were spoken.

Hampapur

Wow.

Madhusudhan

Just like my grandfather. He used to think everybody from North [India] is a Muslim.

Hampapur

Oh, really?

Madhusudhan

Yes. [laughter] He used to think, oh, that's a Muslim part of the country, so he would think everybody from South is Muslim.

Hampapur

Oh, that's so interesting. Oh, wow.

Madhusudhan

Yes. Things were very different in those days.

Hampapur

Was it a bad thing to be called a Madrasi? Or just people didn't know?

Madhusudhan

No, it's just a thing, like just a distinguishing thing.

Hampapur

Okay. So would you [unclear] that? Was it just equivalent of saying South Indian?

Madhusudhan

South Indian, yes.

Hampapur

I see. I see.

Madhusudhan

It's just how we were identified.

Hampapur

Okay. But it sounds like most of your parents' friends were from the South?

Madhusudhan

Yes. The ones they would socialize were from South, but like we had other friends, like neighbors and all were all North Indians.

Hampapur

Did you do any cultural or religious activities when you were growing up?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. My father was very active in a thing called Madhva Sangha. We are Madhvas, I don't know if you know that, like Kannada is Madhva. It's just like you have Iyengars and Iyers; we are Madhvas. Iyengars are to Tamil people as like Madhvas are for Kannada people.

Hampapur

Okay, so it's like a caste.

Madhusudhan

Yes, it's like a sub-caste.

Hampapur

Okay.

Madhusudhan

So he was very involved and active in the Madhva Sangha.

Hampapur

So what did that entail?

Madhusudhan

It's like--how do I put it--they do their own prayers. Just like you have Iyengars, like they go to a certain temple or things like that. It's just like that. It's nothing different than that.

Hampapur

Okay. So what kind of temple did your family visit?

Madhusudhan

Like Raghavendra Swami Mutta, like most of it was Raghavendra Swami Mutta.

Hampapur

Did your family usually go to the temple, or did you do poojas and things at home as well?

Madhusudhan

We did pooja at home also, but we would go to temple once in a while, like maybe once or twice a month.

Madhusudhan

Okay. Did you do any cultural activities, like music or dance or anything?

Madhusudhan

No, no.

Hampapur

So I wonder if I could hear a little bit about your school days. Can you tell me about the grade school you went to?

Madhusudhan

Yes. Grade school is, what, elementary school, right?

Hampapur

First grade to fifth grade, yes, elementary school.

Madhusudhan

Elementary school, I went to a school called Frank Anthony Public School. Everything, of course, is in New Delhi. Well, this was in a place in the southern part of the city, and most of my schooling was done there. Then when my parents, when we moved--I think when I was in high school, they moved to

Karol Bagh, so I had to change schools, so which was closer, so my high school was in a school called DTS School. It was a coeducation school; is that what you call it? In India you have boys school, girls school, and then, of course, the school where both boys and girls go together.

Hampapur

And yours was coed?

Madhusudhan

Yes, coed.

Hampapur

Was it a public school or a private school?

Madhusudhan

Public school. You know what? Actually, it's called public school, but it's equivalent to private school here. It's not government-run, but the school itself is called public school, Frank Anthony Public School. But it's a private school.

Hampapur

What was the language medium?

Madhusudhan

English.

Hampapur

English, everything was in English?

Madhusudhan

Everything was in English. English is the basic business language in India.

Hampapur

I see.

Madhusudhan

So I would say about 80 percent of the schools are all English-based.

Hampapur

Did your neighbors' children, would they attend the same school as well?

Madhusudhan

No, not really. No, come to think of it now.

Hampapur

So how did people decide what schools to send their children to?

Madhusudhan

It's your choice. It's not like this country, where you have to go to the school where you live in the area. It's not that. So you get to pick and choose whatever school you want to go to.

Hampapur

Okay. Did you enjoy school?

Madhusudhan

Yes, oh, yes. [laughs]

Hampapur

Sorry, go ahead.

Madhusudhan

I was about to say I wasn't the greatest student, but I did enjoy school.

Hampapur

Did your parents encourage you to do well in school?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes. Everything was based on education back home, so not going to college was not an option, and obviously, completing high school, college, was a must, so we all did.

Hampapur

Was that something your teachers encouraged as well?

Madhusudhan

Yes. Yes.

Hampapur

Do you have any memories of anything from elementary or high school and those days?

Madhusudhan

No, nothing that stands out. But I remember our elementary school, Frank Anthony Public School, used to be a very strict school. At almost every school in India, we had to wear a uniform, so, literally, there would be a couple of senior students who would stand by the gate every morning to make sure that everybody's like uniform is--they would even check our nails. No long nails, no dirty nails; that way they were very strict.

Hampapur

Sounds very disciplined.

Madhusudhan

Yes, very disciplined.

Hampapur

What happens if you didn't pass that test?

Madhusudhan

I think they send letters home and then after a couple of times, if it still continues, they send you back home too.

Hampapur

Oh, wow. So it's pretty serious.

Madhusudhan

Yes.

Hampapur

Was there a lot of focus on exams, on--

Madhusudhan

Tests, you mean? Yes. With grade school I don't remember that much, but, yes, as we grew older, yes, everything was very--and unlike tests here, all our tests

were all essay types. We had to write pages after pages. Teachers were very strict. I remember teachers, like if they're not happy, they would hit you with scale, rulers, so I've seen that, unlike this country. [laughter]

Hampapur

Yes, it's a big difference.

Madhusudhan

Yes, and it's mostly boys who get spanked.

Hampapur

Were there any competitions or extracurricular activities you had outside of school?

Madhusudhan

No, other than a little bit of sports. We'd play a lot of--it's called P.E., right?

Yes, so that was that. But other than that, a few dramas here or there, like nothing major, mostly studies.

Hampapur

Did you participate in the dramas?

Madhusudhan

A couple of times, nothing serious, but, yes, a couple of times we did.

Hampapur

Can you tell me a little bit more about that?

Madhusudhan

I remember one, it was a comedy thing where I was a kid with--I don't know, I don't remember much now. It was just small skits, nothing major.

Hampapur

Would you guys make up--would all the children make up the plays, or would you perform something?

Madhusudhan

No, no. I think the teachers would direct. They would do the direction. It was so long time back, I don't remember too much of it.

Hampapur

Do you remember who you performed for?

Madhusudhan

I think other school kids, yes.

Hampapur

So something you did at school.

Madhusudhan

Just for the school, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. You mentioned that college was a definite must. Was there any particular subjects that you were encouraged to pursue?

Madhusudhan

No. For some reason I liked science, so I just went into chemistry and zoology major, so there wasn't any--we weren't very career-oriented. I think back then it wasn't much like that you have to go or make money. It was more for general knowledge and education.

Hampapur

Do you think the expectations were different for girls and for boys at that time?

Madhusudhan

I'm sure, yes, because, literally, boys were supposed to be the bread winners, so, yes, I'm sure they were expected to go to school, definitely. But even girls were like--I'm sure my parents wanted me to go finish off college.

Hampapur

Right. Were there any differences maybe between you and your brothers and the expectations your family had?

Madhusudhan

In my family, no, there wasn't. There wasn't any, because I don't know whether because I grew up with three boys or something, there wasn't any discrimination, to put it that way. So they expected the same from us.

Hampapur

So what college did you end up going to?

Madhusudhan

It was called Daulat Ram College, which is part of Delhi University. So I went to college there. And in those days--I don't know, even now--it's a three-year college for your B.S. degree. So we used to commute all the way from home, go attend classes, come back home, [unclear] finished.

Hampapur

Was that pretty time consuming?

Madhusudhan

Yes. It was almost one hour going, coming back one hour, so there was two hours just to commute.

Hampapur

Oh, wow. [laughter]

Madhusudhan

No cell phones, no computer.

Hampapur

Right. How did you do the commute?

Madhusudhan

Bus; public transportation.

Hampapur

And what did you say you studied in college?

Madhusudhan

Chemistry and zoology.

Hampapur

How did you come to choose that?

Madhusudhan

How did I come to choose that? I think I liked chemistry; that's how I chose it. I had no intention, like I never thought I would go into that line of work. It was just something I liked, so I guess that's how I chose it.

Hampapur

Right, how you were saying earlier about getting general knowledge.

Madhusudhan

Right, exactly, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. So what did you think your life would be like after college, then?

Madhusudhan

I never thought about it at that time. Basically, everybody in India at that time, after college they would get married.

Hampapur

What did you end up doing after you graduated?

Madhusudhan

After graduation, I was working for a few years before I got married, and I was working for a big chain called ITC Company. I was in the hotel section of ITC. ITC is Indian Tobacco Company, so that big company had different branches, and they had big hotels too, and I used to work for one of the hotel chains, hotels, so I was in their personnel department on administration side. A title was confidential assistant to the personnel manager. So I worked for almost three years, I think, two, three years after college before I got married.

Hampapur

What were your responsibilities there?

Madhusudhan

Oh, hiring and firing. That was basically it. Everything a personnel manager would do, I used to assist him with that.

Hampapur

Did you enjoy that job?

Madhusudhan

Yes, I really liked it. It was a good company.

Hampapur

How did you end up in that line of work?

Madhusudhan

How did I do that? I don't know. When I was looking for a job, I think I just stumbled into it, or I have no idea. Maybe one of my friends recommended me. So I was there as a part-time worker and then, of course, I liked the place and they liked my work, and that's how I got to start with them.

Hampapur

Okay. Would you take the bus from home as well to--

Madhusudhan

No. By that time I was driving.

Hampapur

Oh, okay.

Madhusudhan

By that time I was driving. But then I wouldn't take the car every day, no. So, yes, sometimes bus and sometimes I would drive.

Hampapur

Was it common for people to have cars in that time?

Madhusudhan

No, not at all, not at all. It just happened that in our house we had two cars, so I could take the car.

Hampapur

Who taught you to drive?

Madhusudhan

My dad. My father. It's very funny. I have three younger brothers. My dad would always tell me to learn how to drive, and like before you know how to drive, you're always scared about the whole thing. And then one fine day I see my younger brother driving. I go, hey, what's happening here? So that's what kind of made me start to drive, and, yes, he taught me how to drive, my dad.

Hampapur

Did many women know how to drive in that time?

Madhusudhan

No, not too many, not too many, very few.

Hampapur

I see. Okay. What did you like to do aside from going to work?

Madhusudhan

Oh, in those days I used to love reading. When I was working--I loved my student life also, but while I was working, that was good, because there was no work at home to come like even a responsibility at home, so, yes, I used to love reading, so I would read a lot. And what else? Go to movies. I had a lot of friends, so invariably in India, like after dinner everybody comes out of the house. We go for walks around the block, a lot of walking.

Hampapur

Sounds like you had a very strong sense of community, the way you grew up.

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes, yes, always. Like we always had good friends. In fact, one time when I was growing up, I had one friend who used to live right behind my house and one friend right next to me, two friends. Like on the same street we were about

five girls, we were all good friends. We all got married in 1980. [laughs] It was so funny; one by one. There's one friend who now lives in New Jersey. She got married in January 1980, and then like one by one everybody was getting married, and they were all saying, "Jayashree, you're the only one left. You're the only one left." And December 1980 I got married, so it was really fun when I think about it later. What a coincidence. All five of us got married the same year.

Hampapur

That must have been an exciting year.

Madhusudhan

Starting January to December, yes, it was fun.

Hampapur

You mentioned with your reading, what types of things did you like to read then?

Madhusudhan

Oops. Oh, my god, so many books. What was I reading? James Hadley Chase, have you heard of James Hadley Chase?

Hampapur

I've heard of him.

Madhusudhan

Yes, James Hadley Chase and I forget. There were a lot of books, like I forget what books I used to read.

Hampapur

Were they mostly in English, or was it a mix?

Madhusudhan

All in English. That's the only language I can read, write fluently. I mean, Hindi I can. I can read and write Hindi, but Kannada and Tamil I can't read and write. So English was everything in business.

Hampapur

I see. So you'd go to work, you'd either drive or take the bus to work, and you'd come home and--

Madhusudhan

Yes, come home, then I would be ready. That was a fun time, no work, unlike here now, you've got to do everything.

Hampapur

So why did you decide to get married when you did, aside from all your friends getting married?

Madhusudhan

Oh, it's an actual thing. It so happened--why did I get married? Because everybody was getting married, it was time to get married. So my parents were

looking for a guy for me for a long time. Then it so happened that we met. The rest is history.

Hampapur

Was Ankul also from Delhi too?

Madhusudhan

No, he's from Bangalore. He was from Bangalore. So basically being a South Indian, so my parents were looking for prospective grooms from South.

Hampapur

Of course.

Madhusudhan

Yes. So my dad's cousin's daughter was his family's neighbor, so that's how we got to meet.

Hampapur

Made the connection, okay. And did you go to Bangalore to--

Madhusudhan

To meet him, yes.

Hampapur

Does the girl's side--

Madhusudhan

Yes. We went to Bangalore.

Hampapur

Okay. And for you and your friends all getting married, how did it feel? Was it an exciting time, nervous time, or?

Madhusudhan

What, when--before--

Hampapur

Yes, the process of--

Madhusudhan

Meeting?

Hampapur

Yes, getting married.

Madhusudhan

Yes. Because I met so many before [unclear], I met so many other--it wasn't any nervous or anything, but it was just--

Hampapur

The natural thing to--

Madhusudhan

Yes, natural thing.

Hampapur

So where did you get married?

Madhusudhan

Got married in Bangalore. Yes, got married in Bangalore, because other than our family in Delhi, all my cousins, everybody's in South. Even now, they're all in South, and Ankul's family is also in South, so, yes, that's why we decided to get married in Bangalore.

Hampapur

And did you get married at a temple or hotel?

Madhusudhan

No, it's a special hall. We rent the whole place for three days, and that's where we got married. So, literally, we stayed there for three days, especially the bride's side. The bride's side is supposed to be the hosts, so we stayed there for three days, two nights, three days, and get married.

Hampapur

Okay. Oh, so there are places to sleep and stay?

Madhusudhan

Yes, oh, yes. It's a big building in itself, so that's where we got married.

Hampapur

And it was a three-day wedding?

Madhusudhan

It's a three-day wedding, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. So it sounds like the wedding was much longer than what you see today?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes, certainly. It was three days. The first day, like the bride's family goes there, gets settled, and that evening, the first evening, the groom's family, they arrive. So evening they have an engagement kind of party, and the following day is the main day when the marriage takes place, and then the second day is the main day and evening is the reception after the wedding, and then the following day there's another function. That's when we vacate the place and go.

Hampapur

Okay, a long process.

Madhusudhan

It is. It is.

Hampapur

Lots of saris.

Madhusudhan

Yes, a lot of saris, a lot of functions, unlike--have you been to weddings here in this country?

Hampapur

A little bit, yes.

Madhusudhan

It's very--how do you say that--everything is done in very short form here. It's more elaborate in India, at least in those days. But I've heard even now, nowadays it's all one-day wedding. It's not a three-day wedding anymore. It's expensive.

Hampapur

Right.

Madhusudhan

It's not only expensive, I don't think kids have the patience these days to go through three-day weddings. It's fun.

Hampapur

So three days, that was the standard at that time?

Madhusudhan

In those days, yes, three-day weddings.

Hampapur

I see. Then after marriage, did you move to Bangalore?

Madhusudhan

No. I was still--because Ankul was there for about two, three weeks after the wedding, and then he came here because he was working, so he had to come back here to go back to work. And then I had to wait for almost four months to get my visa, so in between I was going back and forth. I was still working in New Delhi, so I had not quit. Yes, and then I would visit his family for a few days.

Hampapur

So Ankul was already living in the U.S.?

Madhusudhan

Yes. Right.

Hampapur

Okay. And why did he come to the U.S.?

Madhusudhan

I think he came here as a student. He did his master's and his doctorate degree here. He came here as a student and then decided to stay here.

Hampapur

And was that in the seventies?

Madhusudhan

Probably, early seventies.

Hampapur

Was it common at that time for people from India to come to the U.S.?

Madhusudhan

No, not too many people came. In fact, I think he was the first and the only at that time.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Madhusudhan

He was one of the first to come here, and the same in my case. Yes, I was the first one of all the cousins and all to come here and settle down here. A few of them had come and visited, my uncles and all, but nobody settled in this country.

Hampapur

I see.

Madhusudhan

So I was one of the first ones of my generation. But now I have a few cousins here.

Hampapur

Right, right. Did you have any friends who were coming to the U.S. at the time?

Madhusudhan

No. No, nobody.

Hampapur

Wow. You're a pioneer.

Madhusudhan

I was earlier. In fact, I didn't like it when I first came. Everything was so different compared to India.

Hampapur

Did you know anything about the U.S.? Or what had you heard about the U.S. before moving here?

Madhusudhan

Yes, about the U.S. I kind of knew, like because New Delhi is more cosmopolitan and more modern compared to South in those days. Of course, now things have changed. And then having worked in ITC, I had a lot of interactions with Americans and British people, so it wasn't a shock for me to come to this country.

Hampapur

Okay. So when you were working at ITC, did you meet Americans and British?

Madhusudhan

Yes, I met quite a few; a lot of British people. In fact, I worked with British people too, so they used to work there too.

Hampapur

Oh, so they were in India working as well.

Madhusudhan

In India, yes.

Hampapur

I see. Okay.

Madhusudhan

So to me it wasn't a shock here, coming here.

Hampapur

So what kind of things had you heard about the U.S.?

Madhusudhan

Nothing. Nothing different, just exactly what it is here, because Delhi in those days was almost like this country. Like everything was there, pizza and like veggie burgers. Everything was there. And, in fact, I remember when I first came here, Ankul used to be very excited. "Okay, let me go, let me show you what pizza is all about." I'd go, "Seen that, done that, been there," kind of thing. [laughter] But every time he'd take me somewhere, like Chinese was very popular in Delhi in those days.

Hampapur

Really.

Madhusudhan

Yes. So like here nothing was new to me, so he was kind of disappointed, like nothing's exciting this girl. The only thing I didn't know about was Mexican food, so enchilada was totally new to me. I didn't know what enchilada was. Tacos, I'd never heard of tacos. So he goes, "Oh, thank god. At least there's something you didn't know." [laughs] So that's how it went.

Hampapur

That's so interesting. I had no idea all those things were in Delhi at that time.

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, everything, as I said.

Hampapur

So it sounds different from when things came to Bangalore, then.

Madhusudhan

I think South India was still very conservative. Like that's why, because when Ankul left South, Bangalore, he had no idea about all these things, so that's why he still had that thing, like he thought I didn't know anything about--but no, Delhi was very different.

Hampapur

That's very interesting. I didn't know that. How did you feel about the prospect of moving to the U.S., moving so far from home?

Madhusudhan

I was excited. It didn't bother me at all. And then, actually, when I first got married, his plans and his family was like--his plan was to be here for five years and move back to India, so I thought, well, it'll be a nice vacation. [laughter] So it didn't bother me at all.

Hampapur

Okay. Can you tell me about some of the preparations you had to make for the move to the U.S., just practical things you had to do?

Madhusudhan

Nothing, nothing. All I did was quit my job, pack my suitcase, and I was here. No preparation, no, nothing.

Hampapur

Was it difficult to put the paperwork through?

Madhusudhan

For the visa and all? No, not really. I remember after we got married, Ankul and I, we went to Delhi for a few days, and we went to the embassy, U.S. embassy, filed the papers, and that's it. In those days it was pretty quick. But then within a month or two, I think two months or so I already was interviewed, and I was given the--what is it called--the green card, yes, green card, I think.

Hampapur

What did they interview you about?

Madhusudhan

Just to make sure I was the right person. I don't remember what the interview was about; very simple. They just wanted to make sure that I was the right person, the person I applied for.

Hampapur

Was there anything special you packed to move to the U.S., anything that you weren't sure you could get there that you had in India?

Madhusudhan

No, nothing.

Hampapur

Okay. Where did you first arrive when you came to the States?

Madhusudhan

I landed in New York.

Hampapur

In New York?

Madhusudhan

Yes, JFK Airport. Yes. So, first landed, it was very funny. I was still wearing sari. My mom had said, "You're going the first time to see your husband after the wedding. You've got to wear a sari." So here I was, all--can you imagine--so excited, getting down, and yes, that was it. Then he used to live in New Jersey in those days, so I landed in JFK, and the first difference I saw when I landed was the street, because in India, you know how many people there. So there's no people here, nobody on the street, and the car's going so fast. That was a big difference I saw in this country.

Hampapur

And that was in New York?

Madhusudhan

It was in New York, New Jersey, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. I'm sure very few people would say New York isn't a busy street, so it must have been a big difference from India.

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. Actually, I wasn't in the city of New York. I landed in JFK, but he used to live in New Jersey.

Hampapur

Okay, so you had to take the train or--

Madhusudhan

Took a taxi, I think, the first time, yes.

Hampapur

To New Jersey, okay. And what part of New Jersey were you in?

Madhusudhan

Edison, city of Edison.

Hampapur

Were there many Indians there at that time too?

Madhusudhan

I don't know. We didn't stay too long. I think we were there only for two weeks or so, or maybe less than ten days or something like that. Then I just got enough time to see New York, so I went and saw New York, and then he was already interviewed here at TRW, so he had already made up his mind to move.

Hampapur

To California.

Madhusudhan

Yes, to California.

Hampapur

Do you remember any of your initial impressions of New York and New Jersey, aside from the streets being very empty?

Madhusudhan

Other than that, yes, no, nothing except the cars. I was very impressed by the fast-moving cars, compared to India, and that was basically it.

Hampapur

And what kinds of things did you do in New York?

Madhusudhan

New York, it was a typical tourist thing, went and saw Statue of Liberty, World Trade Center, really liked that, and the Empire State Building and things like that. It was in the month of April, so it was perfect weather.

Hampapur

Okay. Did you and Ankul come to Los Angeles at the same time?

Madhusudhan

Yes. Yes, yes. We came at the same time. About ten days or fifteen days after that, we came to Redondo Beach.

Hampapur

Redondo Beach.

Madhusudhan

Yes. We stayed in Manhattan Beach for a week or ten days before we found an apartment and stayed there.

Hampapur

And was your apartment also there, or was it in Torrance?

Madhusudhan

In Torrance.

Hampapur

Do you remember any of your initial impressions of southern California?

Madhusudhan

Nothing except, yes, I liked southern California, but I liked East Coast more, in those days. Like I thought East Coast was much greener, and I liked it, and southern California, yes, later on I started to like it, but in the beginning I thought East Coast was better. It was more America, East Coast. California is more like India. That's what I thought anyway.

Hampapur

How so?

Madhusudhan

I don't know. Not much greenery. I thought this was more--

Hampapur

So like physically how it looked, it reminded you more.

Madhusudhan

Yes, the weather and everything.

Hampapur

Okay. Were people familiar with Indians at that time, in Los Angeles?

Madhusudhan

Not as much as it is now, but, yes, they knew a little about India. But still, I don't think people were used to Indian food in those days as much as they are now. Yes, we had a few neighbors who would come over and taste Indian food in our house. They always thought it was spicy. Every time the mailman would walk by, I remember, and I'd be cooking, he'd go, "Wow, that smells good." They love Indian cooking. It's not only the mailman. Even at work, oh, my god. Every time I eat lunch, if somebody passes by they'll go, "What's that? It smells so good." And I'll always feel I wish I could complement their food too, and it's always non-vegetarian and eew.

Hampapur

So it sounds like people had a pretty positive reaction. Would people ask you questions about India?

Hampapur

Not really, no. No, not much, but, yes, basically about food, what we eat and why is it so spicy. They want to know what we put in it.

Hampapur

Were there any Indian stores or restaurants or things at that time? Was it easy to get ingredients?

Madhusudhan

There wasn't many. No, I think it was just one Indian store at that time. So we would still drive to Cerritos, and even Cerritos wasn't as big as it is now, not that many stores, but still, it was not too far away, so we would drive.

Hampapur

Where was the one Indian store, in Torrance?

Madhusudhan

There was the one on, I think, Sepulveda, not the Arvinder one. There's one on the other side, east side of Hawthorne. I think that was the oldest one, if I'm correct. Or maybe not; I take it back. There used to be one on PCH, close to PCH and Norwalk.

Hampapur

Okay. It's hard to imagine so few now, these days. Okay. Did you decide to work after moving to Los Angeles?

Madhusudhan

No, I had no specific plans of working. It so happened, yes, I did find a job. Yes. I used to work as a temporary for some time. Then I used to work for Honda, financing, and then I started working for the bank, and I've been with the bank for quite some time.

Hampapur

Okay, so you were with the bank even before Meghan [daughter] and Malini [daughter] were born?

Madhusudhan

Meghan and Malini were born, yes.

Hampapur

Oh, okay, I didn't know that.

Madhusudhan

Yes, two, three years or so I worked for the bank, yes.

Hampapur

And what position did you take on at the bank?

Madhusudhan

I was a loan processor. I was a loan processor, and then ten days before Meghan was born, I quit. I quit and I stayed home for eight years.

Hampapur

Were you trained at the bank how to do all these things? Or how did you--

Madhusudhan

Yes, I was trained at the bank.

Hampapur

Was it difficult to get a job, since that wasn't your original--

Madhusudhan

Not really, no. No, it wasn't too difficult. I just picked up what I had to do. I enjoyed working.

Hampapur

Okay. So it sounds different, a little bit different in those days.

Madhusudhan

Yes. And loan processing is not--like I wasn't in contact with the public, no customers. I used to service the branches. We used to service the branches, so, yes, ten days before Meghan was born, I quit and I stayed home for eight years. And then my [unclear] was when Malini started first grade, I wanted to work part-time. So Malini started first grade in September and I in January applied to four branches of Wells Fargo, and the first branch to call me was the Rolling Hills-Palos Verdes Branch, and I started working there part-time.

Hampapur

So you've been there since then?

Madhusudhan

Yes, I've been there ever since. Then I used to work part-time almost till Malini went to college, so I used to work twenty hours, drop the kids off, go to work, pick them up and bring them home. It's only when she started college that I started working full-time.

Hampapur

Right. Okay. When you first initially moved to the United States, were you homesick at all?

Madhusudhan

Yes, I was. Yes. I lost my parents after I moved to this country, so that made it all the more difficult. So my brothers were still young, so I used to miss them, so I was very homesick, but got used to it.

Hampapur

Did you write letters, or how did you keep in touch?

Madhusudhan

It was mostly letters, yes. In those days, telephone call was very expensive, and it wasn't as common as it is now. So, yes, it was mostly letters, and obviously no e-mails in those days.

Hampapur

Right, right. Can't imagine, no e-mails in those days.

Hampapur

Did you do any exploring of the Los Angeles area?

Madhusudhan

Yes, slowly we did, we did, because we knew this was home, so one by one we started exploring. My husband's a big fan of Disneyland, even now. Ask him to go to Disneyland, he'll be ready to go. So, yes, we went to all these places, the typical tourist places.

Hampapur

Have they changed much? Was Disneyland the same then as it is now?

Madhusudhan

Disneyland? Yes, the basic thing is the same. It's the same "It's a Small World" and Tikiland. Yes, it's always fun to go to Disneyland.

Hampapur

Were there any areas of Los Angeles that were very popular for people to visit, besides amusement parks?

Madhusudhan

The beaches, beaches, yes. We used to love--we used to go to the beaches quite often before.

Hampapur

And what did you like to do for fun, aside from when you were at work?

Mostly go to the beach?

Madhusudhan

Yes, go to the beach, go to the movies here too. Yes, I used to see more movies in those days. Not these days, I don't see any movies. Same thing, watch TV.

Hampapur

Has Torrance changed much since the first days?

Madhusudhan

Taller buildings have come up here, a lot of places. All this area where Sam's is, Costco, Sam's, all that was barren. It was empty land.

Hampapur

So you were telling me about some of the changes you've noticed in Torrance since you first came.

Madhusudhan

Yes. A lot of new buildings have come up, and it's getting more crowded now. It used to be less crowded. Other than that, it's almost the same. And then I didn't have too many friends when we first moved here, till almost--we came here in 1981, but for almost four years or so, not too many friends. Like even Indians, there weren't too many Indians around this area.

Hampapur

Oh, really?

Madhusudhan

Yes. In a grocery store or somewhere, if we see an Indian, instantly we'd exchange telephone numbers, because hardly see any Indians. And then in 1985, I think, we met your parents and all these Kannada people. We all got together, and then, of course, things changed, a lot of friends. And now there's so many Indians here.

Hampapur

So were more Indians moving into this area, like in the mid-1980s? Is that how you started meeting more people?

Madhusudhan

I think so, yes. And also in 1985, I think somebody arranged this little picnic where all these Kannada people got together, and we became friends. That's how it all started.

Hampapur

Were all these organizations around then? Like Kannada Koota, all those things, did they exist back then?

Madhusudhan

I don't know. I'm sure it did exist, but we weren't taking part in it till about almost fifteen years back or twenty years back.

Hampapur

And before more Indians moved to this area, you know how you mentioned you'd meet someone and you'd write their phone number, so was there more mixing between Indians from different parts of India?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. At that time it was just Indian, so there was nothing like South Indian or North Indian, it's just Indian. So any Indian we'd meet, we'd exchange telephone numbers and get together.

Hampapur

So what would you do together, like get togethers like today?

Madhusudhan

Yes, just socialize. Yes, just have dinner together or watch Hindi movies on TV.

Hampapur

That must have been nice after a few years of--

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes, it was fun.

Hampapur

Yes, okay. When did you start to see more development of like Indian stores, restaurants, like Cerritos expanding? Was that in the eighties, or was that later on?

Madhusudhan

I think end of eighties, beginning of nineties, started seeing a lot of Indians also, and then one by one we saw a lot of Indian stores coming up. Even within Torrance now, there must be at least about five or six Indian stores, right?

Hampapur

Yes.

Madhusudhan

Yes. Then we see a lot of Indian restaurants coming up.

Hampapur

And so as more Indians are moving to the area, people started to make more friends in their own regional and language group?

Madhusudhan

Yes, that could be it, because now we have so many Indians, so they do. And then even if you have--I have a lot of North Indian friends and also South Indian friends, but we still get together.

Hampapur

What about at your bank? Was it easy to make friends with non-Indians as well?

Madhusudhan

Yes. Yes. But I don't socialize with any of my colleagues. We work there and that's about it. We're just friends. Once in a while we'll go have dinner together or something, but not too much socializing, no. I like to keep professional things a little different.

Hampapur

Right. Makes sense, makes sense. So when did you and Ankul realize that you planned to stay on in the U.S. beyond those five years?

Madhusudhan

[laughs] I don't know. Like slowly we started like settling down here, and then we bought this house, and then there was no turning back really. Then the kids were born, and once the kids are born here, there's--and then actually after a few years, all our friends in India, they also started moving out. Like when I go back to India now, it's not the same. I'm a stranger there. I'm more at home in this country. So, yes, now I don't think we have any plans of going back.

Hampapur

Right. So things are changing there and they were changing here.

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. So we're more settled here now.

Hampapur

Okay.[End of interview]

1.2. Session 2 (July 16, 2010)

Hampapur

This is Veena Hampapur here again with Jayashree Madhusudhan. Thank you again for joining me for this interview.

Madhusudhan

No problem.

Hampapur

So last time we left off talking about some of your earlier experiences in the U.S., and before continuing with that, I just wanted to clarify a few things that we talked about, or hear more about. So you mentioned in your childhood that your family used to sometimes go on picnics, so I was wondering if you could describe those to me, what your family did.

Madhusudhan

Our family and extended family, mostly in winter, we would just pack lunches and go spend the whole afternoon there playing games, cards and every game you can think of on a picnic, and spend the whole time there, and that used to be a lot of fun.

Hampapur

Would your parents come as well?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes, parents, my brothers, my uncles. It was more of a family thing, yes.

Hampapur

Where would you go for the picnics?

Madhusudhan

We had some beautiful parks in Delhi. We would go to those parks, and it was a big park, not a local park but a real big park. It was good.

Hampapur

Were parks popular to visit at that time?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes. Like the Botanical Gardens we have, something like that, a lot of flowers and it was a lot of fun, a fun place.

Hampapur

You also mentioned last time that people weren't always knowledgeable about South Indians and called them Madrasis and things like that. I was wondering if there were any stereotypes of different Indians back then that people had of each other.

Hampapur

Not really. I think the North Indians, they thought everybody from South [India] was a Madrasi, like people from Madras, and they thought we all spoke one language. But as you know, there are so many languages in South. Yes, that was basically it. There weren't things like TV, and obviously there was no

Internet in those days, and the world was not as open as it is these days, so that was the main thing.

Hampapur

Do you think people in the South had more knowledge of people in the North?

Madhusudhan

Not really, no. I mean, maybe they had more knowledge about North because in North is the capital, so that a lot of things would happen in North, so they were more aware of North Indians than North Indians being aware of South Indians.

Hampapur

I see.

Madhusudhan

But if you date back to a couple of generations back, like my grandparents and all, they weren't very--they thought everybody from North was a Muslim, something to that effect.

Hampapur

And would you learn about the North or different parts of--or you were in the North; would you learn about different parts of India in school?

Madhusudhan

Yes, in school we did. And then like even in school we also learned that there were different languages. As generations, like compared to a previous couple of generations, it was all very different when we were growing up. Especially Delhi was becoming a very cosmopolitan city, so from everywhere people would come there. So was Bombay. Bombay was also very cosmopolitan, so things were changing.

Hampapur

Okay. So as time went on, more people were traveling.

Madhusudhan

Right. Like in my family, I think my parents were the first in their generation to move out of South and settle in North, so you can imagine. So that's when people were slowly moving from one region to another in the country.

Hampapur

Did your family perform any religious activities at home?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes. We used to celebrate all the poojas, all the special days and everything. Then there were a lot of festivals which were very common to both North Indians and South Indians, like Diwali, Dassara, so there were many common religious functions and days also which we would celebrate with neighbors, not only our family members. But as far as family is concerned, yes, we did. Every special day was celebrated, just like my parents used to celebrate way back when they were in South, so the culture still continued.

Hampapur

How did people celebrate Diwali at that time in Delhi?

Madhusudhan

In Delhi? There again, there was a little difference between the South Indians and the North, like the South Indians typically would get up early morning before sunrise, and they would take a shower, head shower and like even start lighting all those firecrackers, early morning, even before the sun rose. And then North Indians, it was all in the evening, so evening was more important for them, so there still was a difference, but otherwise the same functions were the same.

Hampapur

Okay. So you got to celebrate all day, morning and night.

Madhusudhan

All day, right. That's right.

Hampapur

What about for Dassara? How was that celebrated?

Madhusudhan

Dassara, okay. South Indians, the way Dassara is celebrated in South is like we have all these little toys. We bring out the toys and decorate them, like things like that. That's not really common in North. But in North they do celebrate all the ten, eleven days. They do celebrate but in a little different ways. They do fasting and then in the evening I think they eat one time, which is a little different.

Hampapur

So they don't do the toys?

Madhusudhan

No, they don't do the toys, no.

Hampapur

Do you know what the significance is behind that?

Madhusudhan

I don't know. I really don't know, to be very frank.

Hampapur

Yes. I always wondered, so. [laughter]

Madhusudhan

I think it's more for children, I guess.

Hampapur

Okay. And would you get the day off from school for the major religious holidays?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. All major holidays was the same everywhere, whether it be North or South.

Hampapur

And the religious holidays you got off, did you get any religious holidays besides for Hindus? Did they have days off for Christians or Muslims?

Madhusudhan

Yes. They had Christmas Day off. I think that was the only other religion we had, was Christmas Day was one, and others were mostly Hindu. And then, of course, we had Independence Day and Republic Day. And what else? Yes, that was the main thing.

Hampapur

Was there anything special happening for Independence or Republic Day, since you were in Delhi?

Madhusudhan

There were a lot of parades. Especially in Delhi, being the capital, Republic Day was very--just like you have the parades during Rose Bowl Parade, we used to have it for twenty-six January is our Republic Day, I think.

Hampapur

And people would go watch?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes. People would go watch, and it used to be televised.

Hampapur

Oh, wow, okay. On the one channel you mentioned.

Madhusudhan

Yes. [laughter] One channel, that's true.

Hampapur

Were there any other activities or festivities that went on specifically in Delhi, compared to the rest of India?

Madhusudhan

No. I think basically it was the Republic Day and Independence Day, which was celebrated more in New Delhi.

Hampapur

Did you celebrate those in school as well? Did you learn about independence and the importance of Republic Day?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. Oh, yes. And relatively, India was--when was it freed, 1947, so it's still a new country compared to many other countries. So, yes, we used to celebrate it. Obviously it would be a holiday.

Hampapur

Right. Was there ever any mention in the news, or did people talk about independence still, since it was relatively recent when you were growing up?

Madhusudhan

What do you mean by that?

Hampapur

Like was it discussed on the news?

Madhusudhan

It was discussed on the news, and also the whole day, like all the parades and all the functions that took place with its significance was the whole day. Yes, of course it was, and being a holiday and all, people would definitely know it's an Independence Day and the celebration, just like in this country.

Hampapur

Okay. So even when you were a child growing up, you knew the meaning behind it?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes, yes.

Hampapur

I see. When you were growing up in Delhi, did the different communities get along with one another, in your experience? Like different religious communities.

Madhusudhan

Yes, oh, yes, yes. There was no problem with that. So, yes, I had friends from every community, and mostly like when I was growing up, it was all Hindus around us. And we grew up speaking so many languages. Because of friends, we would speak in Hindi, and in school we would speak in English. At home we'd speak in Kannada, and then I had a lot of Tamil friends, so I got to speak Tamil. So I grew up learning four languages and speaking four languages without any difficulty.

Hampapur

That's really nice. Oh, one more question I wanted to ask you earlier with the talk about independence. Did you have any patriotic activities in school?

Madhusudhan

All we'd do was sing about the country, mostly, and then they would talk about all the leaders at that time, people who played a key role in freeing the country, and Gandhi was the main person, Gandhi and all. The first prime minister, I don't know if you've heard of him, Nehru, so, yes, we would learn about them and their speeches and how they grew up and things like that. It's so long time back. [laughs]

Hampapur

Yes. Okay. I know you mentioned you went to an English medium school. Was there any particular reason your parents put you in an English school versus like say a Kannada school or another language?

Madhusudhan

Mostly all schools are English-based schools, so like you literally had to--you know what? Actually, I don't think there are any other schools. Almost, well, I would say 90-95 percent of the schools are all English medium.

Hampapur

Oh, wow. Okay. Was it considered very important to learn English while you were growing up?

Madhusudhan

Not important. It was part of the business language, so it came naturally.

Hampapur

Okay, it was just a part of your life.

Madhusudhan

Yes. It's a business language. Like English is spoken where you work, so English is spoken like in school, so it came naturally.

Hampapur

Did many people speak English, like outside of school or in the businesses, like local people?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. Where you go to work and all, yes, everything is English, but not at home. I don't think we spoke English at home.

Hampapur

Right. You mentioned education was important to your family and going to college was important. So can you explain why education was so important to your parents?

Madhusudhan

The main thing is, see, my parents were not business people, and like I don't think business was in the family at all, including my uncles and my aunt, so everything was based on education. So the more you are educated, the better jobs you get, so everything was focused on education. So unlike, like if you had a big business, you can stop your education whenever you want, if you want, and then like you can still go into business, make money. But if there is no business and if you are looking for a job, the only thing you can fall back is on your education, so that was the main purpose.

Hampapur

Had any of the older generations in your family gone to college?

Madhusudhan

Probably my father did. I'm not sure. Yes, but I don't think my grandparents and all did, but, yes, my uncles, some aunts, not all aunts. But I think starting from my generation onwards, my cousins, our generation, everybody went to college.

Hampapur

Okay. So it seems like there was a bit of a shift where everyone started.

Madhusudhan

Definitely, yes.

Hampapur

I was wondering if you ever thought about getting a job in chemistry or zoology once you graduated from college.

Madhusudhan

I never looked for--I wasn't really career-oriented, and I never thought I would even work in India. It so happened I did for a few years. And then even after coming here, I never thought I would work. But I guess I was working part-time after the kids went to first grade. Yes, I continued working part-time till Malini went to college.

Hampapur

When you got your position in India, how did you find out about that job?

Madhusudhan

How did I find? Word of mouth, I think. I think someone was working and that's how I kind of got into it.

Hampapur

I see. I know you mentioned that you knew how to drive when you were in India and how that was a bit unusual for your time. Do you have any memories of learning how to drive?

Madhusudhan

[laughs] Let me see. Yes. It's typical. Like I remember I am the first of the family, like I'm the firstborn. I have three younger brothers. I remember my dad telling me for a long time, "You need to start learning how to drive." And I said, "Yeah." It's always scary, the first time driving, and unlike here, the roads are not as defined as it is in this country, and it's still stick shift and like a lot of different things. Then I kept postponing it, and then all my three brothers, they learned how to drive before me, and one day I sat up and I go, what's going on here? They're all younger than me, so that's how I started. I was serious. And then my dad would take me, I think early morning before the traffic started, and we would go round, and that's how I started to learn, then became a master of it. [laughter]

Hampapur

And drive yourself to work later on.

Madhusudhan

Yes. I would drive even in the narrowest streets in India. They say if you have driven in India, you can drive anywhere.

Hampapur

I believe that.

Madhusudhan

Yes, you've seen it, right? Oh, my god. It's not like--and it's not like how you drive. You've got to think of how the other person is going to think, like how he's going to react. And then unlike this country, in India you have all different vehicles on the street, anywhere from a tonga to a rickshaw to a scooter, like they're all a different speed, different, and there are no defined lanes, so it's harder to drive in India. So after driving, after I came here, this was a piece of cake.

Hampapur

It must have been like an obstacle course.

Madhusudhan

Exactly, yes.

Hampapur

What was the most common way for you and your peers to get around? Did most people drive or take the bus around Delhi?

Madhusudhan

Oh, in those days, no, mostly auto-rickshaw. Auto-rickshaw is like a taxi, but it's smaller than that, and it's very reasonable.

Hampapur

So that's how people mostly got around.

Madhusudhan

Mostly, yes. Mostly auto-rickshaw or buses.

Hampapur

You also mentioned that there were a lot of things available to you in Delhi that hadn't come to South India yet. So can you describe that a little bit further?

Like what were some things that were in Delhi that hadn't come to Bangalore or other parts of the South?

Madhusudhan

Well, mostly food items. Is that what I was talking about?

Hampapur

You mentioned food, yes.

Madhusudhan

Mostly food items. This is, I'm talking, what, thirty years back, thirty, thirty-five years back, like pizza or Chinese food, it wasn't as common as it was in Delhi; South still didn't have. I think when my husband left that place, India, South, it was all totally new for him, so he had no idea what a pizza was. So that was the difference between North and South. But now, of course, there's no difference. Every city is almost the same.

Hampapur

Okay. You mentioned that you would visit Ankul's family while you were waiting for your visa paperwork to come through?

Madhusudhan

Right, yes, Bangalore, yes.

Hampapur

Was that customary, to visit your in-laws even though you were still--

Madhusudhan

I think the custom even now is, once you get married, you're in your in-laws' family. So but, no, in my case it so happened, because I was working in Delhi, so I was in Delhi with my parents. So after I got my visa, I just visited his family for a few days.

Hampapur

Okay. If you hadn't been working, do you think you would have gone and stayed with them?

Madhusudhan

Probably I would have, yes.

Hampapur

So that was the custom.

Madhusudhan

Yes, it's just a custom, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. When you decided you were going to come move to the U.S., what did your friends in India think of this? You mentioned you had four or five friends who married the same year.

Madhusudhan

Yes, right. You know what? You won't believe. Out of those four or five girls who got married with me, out of the five, four of us are in this country.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Madhusudhan

Yes, two in New Jersey and one in Toronto, I think, and one is in India and one in L.A. out here. So they were all here before--see, I don't know if you remember, I was the last one to get married. I got married in December, so most of them were here already.

Hampapur

Okay, so they came to the U.S. then.

Madhusudhan

Yes. Another good friend is in Toronto. So, yes, some of my friends, they all knew I was coming. It's kind of bittersweet going away so far from them, but still, it's an exciting new life.

Hampapur

Right. So you knew some people in the U.S., then, before you came.

Madhusudhan

Yes, I knew, but they're all in New Jersey, they're all in different places, but nobody in L.A., nobody in L.A.

Hampapur

Okay. You also mentioned when you first came to the U.S. that everything was really different and you didn't like it at first.

Madhusudhan

Yes. At first I didn't, because it's a cultural shock. It's different, even though you've read about this country and you knew about this country. The first and foremost thing I remember is, we were in an apartment. You know how everybody, the doors are closed, everybody's lived in their own house. It's very, very different from what it was in India. Like in India, literally, everybody's windows are open, and if we are in flats, we know who's cooking at what time. Like the pressure cooker, we can hear the pressure cooker go off and things like that, and everybody's talking to each other, neighbors, so I found that a little different here. And then also the main thing is I didn't have any friends when I first landed in this country, so it took a while for me to get used to.

Hampapur

Were there any other differences that stuck out to you here?

Madhusudhan

That was the main thing.

Hampapur

Yes. I guess that's a big change in your day to day.

Madhusudhan

Yes. It really took a long time, because in those days there weren't too many Indians around here either. So one by one we'd make friends, and now if you ask me to go back, I have more friends here than I know people in India, so to me that's a foreign country now.

Hampapur

Right. Right. When did you feel like you started to like living here and feel more comfortable living here?

Madhusudhan

Maybe about four or five years. It took me three or four years. Once I started making friends, like then it was a little different. In those days, we couldn't talk on the telephone as much as we do now. It was very expensive, relatively speaking. So, yes, things were different. There was no Internet in those days.

Hampapur

Sounds like a big adjustment, at first.

Madhusudhan

It was, yes, yes. I got used to this place.

Hampapur

Okay. Were there any new skills you had to learn or develop after moving to the U.S.?

Madhusudhan

No, nothing. It was actually easier. As I said, driving was easy compared to-- and nothing else. I didn't have to learn the language; that was not a problem. Except, yes, I had to learn the streets and things like that. Other than that, which any new place would bring the same challenges.

Hampapur

Did you have any anxieties or worries about moving to the U.S.?

Madhusudhan

No, no. Only thing is after I moved to this country, I lost my parents, so that was a little setback, kind of like depressing. That was a little depressing, and till this day I don't talk much about it, because it's not the most fun thing to talk about. So added to that, as I said, because I didn't have too many friends, that was a little dark period in my life. But other than that, it was okay as time went by.

Hampapur

Were there any changes you had to make in terms of dress or food or anything?

Madhusudhan

Nothing, absolutely nothing. Yes, at home I'd still make Indian food, so no change at all.

Hampapur

Okay. So I know you were on the East Coast just briefly before you came to L.A.

Madhusudhan

Yes, just about two weeks maybe.

Hampapur

Did you have any expectations of L.A.? Did you think it would be different from the East Coast?

Madhusudhan

I thought it would be almost the same as the East Coast. To be very frank, I was a little disappointed, because the East Coast is very green. You've been to East Coast? Yes, it's very green and very different from India, so I thought this place would be the same. But actually, L.A. reminded me more of India. There's more concrete, cement around; the weather. Other than that, everything was the same.

Hampapur

When did you start liking the L.A. area?

Madhusudhan

L.A. I liked right from the beginning. It's not that. Weather here is beautiful. You can't beat this weather. Yes, I started liking this place more after I made a few friends and got settled here.

Hampapur

You mentioned after being here for a little while, you started to meet other Indian families. Can you explain to me a little bit more how you came across one another initially?

Madhusudhan

There were a couple of friends who--you know what? Actually, in those days there weren't too many Indians, so even if we went to an Indian grocery store, in the local Indian grocery store we'd see Indians there, we'd immediately exchange telephone numbers and promptly within one or two weekends we would get together, and then the networking, like from one friend to another, we'd get an increase of friends. Then I think--I came in 1981. In 1985--when were you born?

Hampapur

Eighty-four.

Madhusudhan

Eighty-four, okay. In 1985, I think, all the Kannada people from this area, we all got together somehow or the other. Like they called and we all got together for a picnic.

Hampapur

At Hesse Park.

Madhusudhan

Not Hesse Park, the other park, down Hawthorne, what is that?

Hampapur

Ryan?

Madhusudhan

Right, the big one, I remember. That's where we had our first picnic in 1985. That's where I met your mom, Jyoti, and all the Kannada people. We were all brand new, so we didn't know each other at all, and since 1985 we've known each other, yes.

Hampapur

Long friendships.

Madhusudhan

Yes, before [unclear] was born, Meghan, Malini, of course.

Hampapur

A couple of other people have actually mentioned that same picnic to me, and I was wondering, whoever organized the picnic, how did they find you and Ankul?

Madhusudhan

That's what I'm surprised, how they found me. I remember very well, Ushanti made the phone call. She called her. Okay, do you know who Hemanti is? Okay, Hema, I met Hema in a grocery store. Okay, that's how since 1981, I think, we know her. So Usha was a friend of Hema's, I think. So like then Hema said, "Oh, there's another Kannada person here." And someone must have made a list of all the Kannada people. So like, "Do you know anybody else?" and like one by one, so that's how. I got a phone call, and we said okay.

Hampapur

Wow. [laughter]

Madhusudhan

Long time back. Eighty-five is, what, more than twenty-five years. Wow, that is something.

Hampapur

Since that time, do you attend any sort of Indian cultural or religious activities?

Madhusudhan

I used to attend more when the kids were little, because I would take them and they would enjoy Kannada Koota. We have our own community, so, yes, we used to go there quite often, and they arranged some good dramas and things like that. But ever since the kids grew up and there's nothing much for them to do there, I haven't gone there for the last three or four years.

Hampapur

What kind of programs did Kannada Koota have?

Madhusudhan

They had different programs. They would, I think, meet about four or five times a year. So in February or so, they would have drama festival, and then they would celebrate Kannada New Year, and they would have one day for children. It would be called children's day or something, where all the kids would perform, so that used to be fun. The kids loved that when they were little. So, yes, that's another fun place, get to meet more people, more Kannada people.

Hampapur

Was that already in existence when you came to L.A.?

Madhusudhan

It was, yes. I just didn't know about it. Yes, so after '85 when we all met, that's how I learned about it.

Hampapur

I guess there would be no other way to hear about it.

Madhusudhan

Yes. There was no other way. I didn't know too many Kannada people till 1985.

Hampapur

Do you know if there were other Indian associations at that time as well, for different groups?

Madhusudhan

Yes, there still is. I'm sure that they have Tamil people, Telugu people. I'm sure there is, but since I don't speak that language, so.

Hampapur

Right. Was it a big organization when you first started going?

Madhusudhan

The Kannada Koota? I think it was fairly big. I wasn't involved with the committee as such, but, yes, it's growing. Day by day it is growing, and now we have so many Kannada people, especially people who come on H-1 visa, so there are a lot of people here now.

Hampapur

So switching over a little bit to Meghan and Malini, did you see any positives of raising your kids in this country versus in India? Any positives or negatives?

Madhusudhan

Since I don't have the other experience, it's hard for me to compare. The only thing is, like I've seen most of my cousins and other people, and especially when the child is young or the baby is born, they get so much help if you're in India, like from your moms or your mother-in-laws and all. That's the only thing which was missing. So everything I had to take care of the baby, the house, and that was a little different, because in India, when I was in India I'd see all my cousins totally pampered. That was different. Other than that, raising the kids, I really can't answer that, because as I said, I have nothing to compare. And I haven't been to India for the last sixteen years, so I haven't seen anybody else raise their kids either, so it's a hard question for me to answer.

Hampapur

Sure. Did you have any concerns about raising kids here, since you had grown up in India yourself?

Madhusudhan

No, no, I had not, because at home we still follow a typical Indian thing, so I never thought I would, and knock on wood, I haven't. Now they're all grown up, so hopefully did a good job raising them.

Hampapur

Did you try to teach them any Indian cultural or religious things about their heritage?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes, we do. Even now they worship with us on special pooja days, and even now like they'll do the little prayer after shower, which is so typical of India. Like the moment we take a shower, we worship god, and, yes, at night

before going to bed, like the way we pray and all, it's all in them, so hopefully we've laid the foundation.

Hampapur

I know you said you took them to Kannada Koota programs when they were younger. Did they do any other programs or classes?

Madhusudhan

Yes, we did have--we had Bal Vihar, it's called. Yes, we did. I think six or eight families, we would all take turns. Every other weekend, I think, we would meet on Sundays, yes, and then each one would take turns hosting. So the kids would learn, like would talk about all the pooja days and things like that, and they would learn some songs, Kannada songs, and then we'd have light lunch, so that's how when they were very little, not in high school, much, much before that. So that was their exposure to Indian culture.

Hampapur

Would you visit India at all?

Madhusudhan

I haven't for the last fifteen, sixteen years I have not. Yes, I last went when my second brother got married, and then the following year my youngest brother, my third brother got married. Those are the two years we went, and I haven't gone to India after that.

Hampapur

Have you had any visitors from India while you lived in the U.S.?

Madhusudhan

My brothers came and they're settled here now, so that's the only thing. But, no, no other relatives. I have an aunt who lives in Texas who used to live in San Jose, and now she's moved to Texas, so she visits us frequently. So those are the only people, and some of my husband's relatives have come.

Hampapur

So it sounds like you have some family and friends here who were in India.

Madhusudhan

Yes, a little bit, yes, not too much, though.

Hampapur

Okay. Do you foresee yourselves staying in Torrance in the future?

Madhusudhan

Yes. Definitely. Compared to what, going back to India?

Hampapur

Going back to India or moving elsewhere?

Madhusudhan

No, at this stage I don't think we'll be moving, and definitely not to India. As I said, India is a foreign country now. So their way of living, like or dealing with

the government office, or anything, we are so out of touch, so we wouldn't even know how to survive in India now, because things are very different there.

Hampapur

Right. So looking back, you've lived in a couple of different places. Was there any place in particular that stands out as your favorite?

Madhusudhan

I haven't lived in very many places, Delhi and Torrance, two main places. I'm so settled here. I like Torrance. And growing up, that was fun too. But then like if I go back to Delhi, it won't be the same, not like when I was growing up, carefree life with my parents. Like it's not the same, so I don't know if I'd want to go back now.

Hampapur

Okay. In current times, aside from when you're working, what do you like to do for fun?

Madhusudhan

Watch TV. I don't read at all. I have to start reading. I don't have time to read. Yes, it's mostly being with the kids, watching TV. I love to listen to radio, and, yes, that's basically it, taking care of the house.

Hampapur

It sounds like a lot of those friends you made in your first few years here, you still are in touch with?

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, I'm still in touch with them, and luckily, we're all in the same area around here, so, yes, almost every other weekend we meet. That's fun.

Hampapur

Do you see a lot of newcomers from India in your social--

Madhusudhan

Newcomers, not really, no. Creature of habit. We stick to the same people. Now we are not adventurous to meet new people. We have our own big circle, so like unless--there aren't any new people we've made friends; same old people.

Hampapur

Can you tell me, compare your experience working in India to working here?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. It's a little different. Like back home everybody still is a little formal, like we'll never call your senior or even anybody first name basis, so that was another, a pleasant shock when I came here, like whether you're the assistant vice president of the company or the president of the company, it's all first-name basis. It is very, very unusual and rare in India. It's always Mr. so-and-so, Mrs. so-and-so. Like even if they call me, they'll say, Miss so-and-so, so it's never by first name. It's always last name. But it's not as casual as this country,

and I love the way we are here in this country. I think in India it's still very, very British, so it's Mr. so-and-so always, Mrs. so-and-so.

Hampapur

Oh, that's where the formality comes from.

Madhusudhan

Yes. That's one big difference. But otherwise, like I always worked for big companies, British companies and American companies, so otherwise I would think almost the same, except for what I mentioned.

Hampapur

Okay. So it must have been easy to make that adjustment, then, when you were coming--

Madhusudhan

Oh, yes, yes. It's from more formal surroundings to an informal, which is easier. If it's the other way around, I think it'll be a little more difficult.

Hampapur

Was that something you noticed right away when you started working here?

Madhusudhan

Yes. It was kind of unusual for me, like to go and call my manager, "Hey, Paul." Like wait a minute. [laughs] We wouldn't say that; that's kind of fun. I wonder how I'll adjust if I go back to India and start working, calling people by first name. It's kind of fun.

Hampapur

Have you enjoyed working with the bank?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. I've always loved working with the bank, mainly because, especially the bank I am at, very flexible. So when the kids were little, my house, then kids' school in the back, it's like a triangle, two, two and a half miles, so it was really fun, because even the Halloween parade kids used to have in elementary school, I could still take time off and like drive down two minutes, five minutes' drive, so be with the kids like almost every minute when they're not in school. So that I really enjoyed.

Hampapur

So it complemented your lifestyle well, then.

Madhusudhan

Right, right, yes. And then like I always feel one parent should be with the kids, especially when they're growing up, so Wells Fargo let me do that, and I'm grateful. And then as I said, Malini went to college three years back, right? That's when I started full-time, so now I'm working full-time.

Hampapur

Was it a bit of an adjustment to go from part-time to full-time?

Madhusudhan

Not really, no. It happened very gradually, because then from twenty hours I think I started thirty hours, and some days, even though I was a thirty-hour employee, I would work more than thirty hours, so it gradually increased and now full-time.

Hampapur

Right. I guess you didn't have, since Meghan and Malini were [unclear]--

Madhusudhan

Yes. Now, of course, yes, I had no running around to do, no picking up, no dropping, so I had more time.

Hampapur

One thing I did want to ask you is, did you start celebrating any American holidays after moving to this country?

Madhusudhan

Yes, yes. Christmas was big, yes, still is. Christmas is big, and, of course, Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is another American, Christmas, Thanksgiving, what else. The only thing I don't celebrate is Easter, and like maybe because Easter comes so soon after Christmas. I go, I'm not buying any more toys for kids. That's enough. Yes, Thanksgiving and Christmas are the two main, and, of course, Fourth of July and Memorial Day. These are the few big holidays.

Hampapur

Did you celebrate those before you had your daughters, or was it mostly after they were born?

Madhusudhan

Thanksgiving was always. Christmas is mainly after the kids were born. Yes, Christmas is mostly because it's more fun to watch them open presents. [unclear] was there before the kids were born.

Hampapur

You mean St. Patrick's Day and for their birthday?

Madhusudhan

Yes, right. [laughter] St. Patrick's Day. Meghan was born on that day, so it's very significant.

Hampapur

So you said you celebrated Thanksgiving even earlier on, so how did you first hear about Thanksgiving?

Madhusudhan

Only after I came to this country, because I don't think I knew about Thanksgiving when I was in India. Yes, after coming, so everything the same except turkey; Thanksgiving. So even now, Thanksgiving is all like non-Indian food in our house. It's kind of fun.

Hampapur

So did you enjoy celebrating these American holidays?

Madhusudhan

Immensely, very much.

Hampapur

Thanksgiving reminds me of another question. I know you cook a lot of different foods, and I was wondering, how did you learn, and did you also do that in India?

Madhusudhan

No, no, not really. I learned most of non-Indian cooking after coming to this country. So, yes, my typical Thanksgiving dinner is lasagna, salad, and pizza, and things like them. But, yes, all that I learned after coming here.

Hampapur

How did you learn?

Madhusudhan

Books, I guess. Friends, tips, books all included, a little bit of knowledge from here and a little bit of knowledge from there, so created my own recipe in the end.

Hampapur

Okay. Then one other follow-up question I had too is, I know you mentioned when you first came to California, there weren't that many Indians around. So was everybody white, or was it a mix of different people, just not Indians?

Madhusudhan

Oh, the non-Indian people? I think mostly whites. Yes, mostly whites.

Hampapur

And is that something that's changed while you've lived in Torrance?

Madhusudhan

Not really, no. It's the same; white people.

Hampapur

Okay.[End of interview]

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