

## A TEI Project

# Interview of Margaret Patel

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## 1. Transcript

### 1.1. Session 1 (June 15, 2010)

Hampapur

This is Veena Hampapur. It's June 15, 2010, and I'm here today with Margaret Patel. Thank you for joining me today. So I'd like to start off talking a little bit about your childhood and how you grew up, so can you tell me where you were born?

Patel

Yes. I was born in England, and this was in 1947, so I'm now sixty-three years old. My father was Indian and my mother was English. My father had gone to England to study engineering from India and lived there for a long time, I think about probably seventeen years, got married there, so I was born in England. Then do you want to know how long I lived there and stuff like that?

Hampapur

Yes, yes, that would be great.

Patel

So then my father's family wanted him to return to India, because as you know, in 1947 there was the partition of India and Pakistan, and my father's family at that time lived in Pakistan. So now they had to move to India and reestablish themselves as refugees, in a sense. So he had three sisters, and they felt that they would like him, being the only brother, to help them in this transition and not be so far away that they could not count on him. So I think there was some kind of pressure for him to return to India, so he did.

Hampapur

Can I interrupt you a second? So just going back to your parents a little bit, I know you mentioned your father was studying engineering, so how did he and your mother meet?

Patel

Actually, I don't know that. I don't know how they met. I'm assuming they probably met at some common gathering. But my father did not talk a lot about his life in England to me, or I think probably to anybody in India, because somehow in India things are not as open as they are here, and people don't always share details of their life with their children, especially when it is not a traditional pattern, so to speak, because he had gone to a different country and he had lived there, and that was probably not accepted very well by his family, since they would have rather had him complete his studies and go back to India. And then he married and then I was born and he went back, so somehow he never really talked very much about his life in England, so I don't know how they met.

Hampapur

Okay. Were there many other children like you growing up, who were half Indian, half English?

Patel

No. Actually, it was kind of a unique experience, in a sense, for me being in India, because my father went back to India, as I said, and I was in England with my mom for probably a few months. My father went to India. I guess he decided that he was going to live there, and then he asked us to come over, so my mom and I, we both went on a ship to India, which took twenty-one days, I believe. So I was five years old at that time. So your question was, yes, whether there were other children. No. Actually, I was probably the only one who had an Indian father and an English mother, so it felt very different to me, even though I was so young. But the fact that I was so fair-skinned compared to the rest made me stand out from the others, and so that made me, I guess, feel a little bit sort of uncomfortable, I'm sure, at first. My mother, however, did not like it in India, and she decided within about three months to go back to England. So during the few months that she was in India, my father was an engineer, and he had a job which took him to a very small town in India, and so we went along with him and lived there. And I think that rural setting and also the social experiences that my mom had with my dad's family in India, I'm guessing, not that I know for a fact, but I'm guessing made her feel that she was not comfortable living there. So she left India in about three months after she had arrived, and I guess that started the next chapter, in a sense, of my life.

Hampapur

Okay. So I have a couple of things, actually, I want to ask you from that. Do you have any memories of the boat trip over?

Patel

No. I have absolutely no memory of the boat trip over at all. I don't.

Hampapur

And did your father have any responsibilities helping his family when he came back? Since they had to move to India, was there any transition?

Patel

Well, yes. They had moved to India at the time when he went back, and he helped them financially because he had a good job, and his sisters also got jobs and brought in income. But he being an engineer, obviously, could make a little more money, and so he did help them financially and in different ways. Yes.

Hampapur

And was partition something that your family spoke about while you were growing up, or the move?

Patel

Not very much. Just to the extent that it was hard and it was scary, but not in any details of exactly what happened. Once in a while they would, but it was not something that was talked about all the time. Probably they wanted to put it behind them.

Hampapur

Right. And so where did they settle? Did they settle in Bombay then?

Patel

They settled in Bombay. And then all his three sisters actually got jobs in the Indian Railways, which was a government job.

Hampapur

Right. Okay. So going back to what you were saying, so your mother decided to leave and go back to England, and so what happened next? Where did you stay?

Patel

So I do have a memory, which is interesting how some single memories sometimes stand out in your mind. I kind of do remember going to the docks when my mom was going to get on this ship to go back to England. I kind of do remember that particular instance when I kind of remember that she was leaving, and it was, I think, one of mixed emotions, not knowing what this means and being so young, being only five years old, not knowing what this really implied. So my father, as I had mentioned, had a transferable job. He was in Bombay also for a few years, and it was a joint family, like most families are, or at least were at that time in India, and still are to some extent. So he lived in the joint family with his three sisters, who were all unmarried, and his father, and so I lived in the same household and grew up, basically was raised by his three sisters. And this was in Bombay.

Hampapur

And this was in Bombay?

Patel

Yes.

Hampapur

And can you tell me about your neighborhood that you grew up in?

Patel

Yes, the neighborhood was--we lived in a building which had eight flats or apartments. In India they call them flats. It was a very cosmopolitan group of people that lived there, which was really nice. They were people from different parts of India who had settled in Bombay, since Bombay has always been such a prosperous, happening city, and so it was really good to grow up in Bombay in a cosmopolitan place, because I find that when you are in a place where there are people from only one community, the thinking and the whole culture and the whole society seems to function in a different way, and you may feel excluded. I think I felt I more included also probably because everybody was sort of a little bit different from each other, even though everybody was Indian and I was half Indian. And then also, actually, I should backtrack a little bit on this, because somehow the memory of this building with the eight flats stands out as my place that I grew up in India, but that was the place I moved to when I was in the third grade, so I was eight years old at the time. And so for the first few years, from the time I moved to India at five until I was eight, we lived in a different suburb of Bombay, which was called Andheri. There it was the same family setup, but at that time my family lived in a huge house with a huge yard and lots of fruit trees, and at that time Andheri was a place which was more undeveloped compared to what it is now, and so people had these big yards and lots of fruit trees and stuff like that, which was kind of nice. So I went to a local school and had some friends in the neighborhood, and then I moved to this other place when I was eight.

Hampapur

Okay. And did your aunts raise you for your entire childhood, or did they leave after getting married?

Patel

Yes. My aunts raised me for my entire childhood. Actually, of the three of them, two of them never married, and the youngest one married, but she married at a later age, and, actually, she was the one who kind of became like a mother to me, because she was a very caring person. This is the youngest of the three aunts, and she herself married only when I was in college. So I'm really fortunate to have had her around, because it was nice to have somebody on your side, so to speak, because my other two aunts were very hotheaded, very hot-tempered, very difficult to please, very difficult to be around, usually. And so it was good to have somebody who was loving and caring and who could give me some support, especially because my father had a transfer of a job, and he was not in Bombay for most of the time.

Hampapur

Okay. So he would travel, and you stayed with your--

Patel

Yes. So he made the decision, which again I think was a good decision, to let me stay in Bombay, because the places that he went for work sometimes did not necessarily have the best schools, and he wanted me to have a good education, and I'm very, very grateful for that to him, because education has always been extremely, extremely important to me, and I think in a way that was a saving grace in my childhood growing up, because I totally was focused on my studies. And at school, I went to a Catholic school run by the nuns, of which there are several in India, and I had a pretty good education. It was very disciplined type of education, as usually is the case with the nuns and the priests, but all the same, the education was good, and I did extremely well at school. So that kind of was my main focus as I was growing up.

Hampapur

What did you like to do when you weren't focused on your schooling? Any hobbies?

Patel

Yes. Well, in our neighborhood, as I was saying, there were several families and kids, and in India the kids always play together after school hours. So we would play in the compound, in the building, different games, or on the terrace, play different games and stuff like that, also just hang out together and play board games and sometimes just take walks together. So there was enough to do with our friends. It wasn't very isolated, as sometimes it can be over here if you grow up in a neighborhood where there aren't many children in the neighborhood.

Hampapur

Right.

Patel

Yes, so that is good. And then I liked to read, I liked to do puzzles and stuff like that when I was by myself.

Hampapur

Did your family go on any trips or have any outings?

Patel

I took some outings with my dad when he was in Bombay. He would occasionally plan to arrange a trip which I would take, just my dad and myself, and that was again very special. Okay, sometimes it would be a trip that was away from Bombay at one of the so-called hill stations, like there's one place called Matheran, which is very close to Bombay, which is a beautiful hill station. So we went there a few times and that was very nice. And even in Bombay itself, sometimes I would go with my dad to Juhu beach, which is a very special beach in Bombay, which I enjoyed very much as a child. But I

didn't go on many family outings like kids have an opportunity to do in this country, and, in fact, I'd never really been on a plane until I came to the U.S., which was when I was twenty-nine.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Patel

So, yes, that's again something which would be strange to kids growing up here. [laughs]

Hampapur

So how did you get around? How did you go on the outings? How did you travel in India?

Patel

You mean with my dad on the trips I went on?

Hampapur

Yes.

Patel

We went by train. Yes, we went by train, because again, not everyone in India has a car or had a car at that time. Now there are a lot more cars around than there were at that time. And so my family never really had a car, and so to get around we used public transport within Bombay, and also to go to some vacation place out of Bombay we always traveled by train. The train system in India is very well developed, thanks to the British, I guess. Yes.

Hampapur

Okay. And was there any particular outing or trip you might have taken that stands out in your memory today?

Patel

I kind of remember one of the trips that we took to this hill station I mentioned, which is called Matheran. I remember that I had gone there with my dad, and we had just arrived at the hotel, and he was sitting in the verandah just having put our bags down. There are a lot of monkeys around at this particular place, and then we had taken some mangos from Bombay, which is a very popular fruit over there, for our trip. And so my dad is relaxed, sitting on a chair reading his newspaper, and suddenly I see this monkey come in and start eating the mangos. And so I'm screaming, "Daddy, Daddy, look at this! Look, look, look!" But he kind of took a while. By that time the monkey was able to grab a mango and take off, and so that's kind of a memory that I remember from my childhood.

Hampapur

You mentioned earlier that Bombay was pretty diverse in like the different Indian populations that were there. So I was wondering, did people get along,

not get along? How did like the different groups interact with each other while you were growing up?

Patel

I would say that they generally got along, but then I find that life in Bombay is pretty busy, and everybody kind of focuses on their daily routine, in a sense, so people don't necessarily interact a lot with the other people in their building on a day-to-day basis. At the same time, if they needed some help, they knew they could count on their next-door neighbors to be of help, so in that sense they did get along. But day-to-day routines normally took up most of their time and so if it came to socializing, they probably would socialize with other people who were their close friends who would come over to visit, as opposed to socializing with their neighbors. The children, of course, all played together and did activities together.

Hampapur

Sure.

Patel

So generally I would say in Bombay people, yes, they did get along well. And, in fact, there are also a lot of Muslims living in Bombay and have always been, and, in fact, we had a Muslim family that lived across the street from us, even though a majority of people in Bombay are Hindus, and all the people in our building were Hindus. But there was a Muslim family that lived across the street, and that was fine, so everybody accepted everybody else. And I think maybe in that sense it was good for me too, because even though I realized I was different, I didn't really feel any stigma as such attached to the fact that I was only half Indian. People in India are not so expressive of their emotions, and so I rarely expressed to people how I felt about this situation, and nobody really asked me how I felt about it, so in that sense I grew up kind of not very happy since I was so different from everybody. I felt the difference and not just in the skin color, but also in the family setting. I did not have a normal family, where there's a father and a mother and a child, but I had this household where I had the three aunts and my father who was often not in Bombay where I lived, so I felt deprived in that sense. And also as I mentioned, two of my aunts were very hot-tempered and difficult to get along with them, and I think I'm grateful that they took upon themselves the responsibility of raising me, so I'm grateful for that. At the same time, I know that there were times when they probably felt like, why did they have to deal with me, and they probably would have been happier if they did not, because it was an added responsibility, and raising a child is not always the easiest thing. So in that sense I felt--I missed not having sort of a normal family situation, and I got quite, I would say, connected a lot with my friends from my school and their families and their mothers, because I could see what it meant to have a loving family and to have that closeness and

affection within the family, which, as I mentioned, I only had from my youngest aunt, and she was not the most powerful person in the family, because she was the youngest, so the other two had more power. And so I would often visit my friends, my school friends, and got very close with their families, because visiting in India is very common, much more than here. So I felt a lot of affection from their mothers and enjoyed that a lot.

Hampapur

Did you see your mother or her family at all when growing up?

Patel

No, I never saw my mother as I was growing up. She would initially write letters to me, which I think in the beginning when my father lived in Bombay, he let me have the letters or read the letters or read them to me. But then my father was usually not in Bombay thereafter, and his sisters, I think--my mother would send a Christmas card every year for me, which in the beginning sometimes I would get and sometimes I would not, and then I think they tried to prevent me from really receiving any communication from her, because they probably felt it's better for me not to be torn between her and my Indian situation, that maybe it may cause a conflict in my mind, or I don't know what the thinking was. But they did not encourage any knowledge or information sharing about her at all, and, in fact, they would be critical of her when they would talk to anybody about her, that she just decided to go back, and she's not a nice person and running her down. So I kind of had the resentment against her that she left me in India and just went away and that I had to grow up in this kind of a setting because of that, and I wish it had never happened, so those were the regrets that I had as I was growing up.

Hampapur

Sure. So it sounds like from your aunts' perspective you were raised as an Indian child. They didn't mention your English side at all, or your mother's family. Is that right?

Patel

Yes, yes, yes, absolutely. Nobody mentioned anything about my mother's family at all. It was kind of something nonexistent almost. Then I did see my mother, but I saw her only when I was about probably thirty-two, so that happened at a much later stage.

Hampapur

Much later. Okay. And then just a quick question about feeling different. When you were growing up, could people tell that you were half Indian, half British? Or what did people assume when they met you? Or how did that come up?

Patel

I think they knew by the color of my skin mainly, because I was very fair at that time, much fairer than I am now, and I had a lot of freckles. So they would

ask a question to find out--they would not ask me, but they would ask whoever I was with, to know about me. And so then they would find out that I was half Indian and half English.

Hampapur

I see. Okay. So I know you mentioned that you had a lot of interest in school, so I was wondering if you can tell me a little bit more about your schooling. Any memories from grade school that stick out to you?

Patel

Yes. I remember that I almost always stood first in the class, because in India your final exams or any of your exams they give you a rank, so if there are fifty students in the class you are first in the class or you can be thirtieth in the class. You get a rank. You don't get the A, B, C grading system like you have here. So I remember that when I was in the fourth--we call them standards in India, here we call them grades. So when I was in the fourth standard, I remember that I got sick. I had jaundice and I had typhoid, and I had them one after the other and so with the result that I had to miss school for about a month and a half, and that was a very depressing thought, that how am I going to catch up? So I remember that at that time my dad was in Bombay. His job at that time was in Bombay, and so he spent time and helped me with my studies at home just to help me to catch up a little bit, and I remember that as a very significant thing that happened, because it helped me get through that school year, and even though that particular year I stood second in the class, which was disappointing, but all the same it was not too bad at all. So I remember that as one instance in my schooling.

Hampapur

And did your family encourage you to do well in school, or did that come more from you?

Patel

No, it came very much from me. I think internally I was just always very motivated. My family did encourage it for sure. They did encourage it, but I think the initial motivation came from within. And, in fact, I remember, as I had mentioned, my youngest aunt got married when I was in college, of course, and her husband, he would come over to the house to visit her before they got married, and he would often comment about he was amazed at how well I have done in school in spite of having to grow up in this difficult family environment, because he himself had to experience the disapproval of my aunt's older sisters, disapproval of him, and so then he knew that I had a lot of struggles with them as I was growing up. The reason that he had to experience disapproval again was because he was not of the same community as my father's family. My father's family was Sindhi, and my aunt's to-be husband was Catholic, so they did not approve of her marrying, so to speak, out of caste.

Just like I'm sure the family was not happy when my father married my mother, who was again not only not Indian, she was not Sindhi, she was also not Indian, she was from a different country, so those kind of things are not accepted very easily.

Hampapur

How did your father react to her husband?

Patel

He kind of thought that, well, it's her decision, and he did not interfere with it or express disapproval very much. I guess he himself had married out of caste, so to speak. But he was kind of wrapped up by that time in his own family situation, because he remarried later, and so his focus was more on his family. He remarried when I was in the ninth grade and had a son from his second marriage, so I do have a half brother in India right now. So he was very much focused on his family and, in fact, did not really spend a lot of time with his sisters after he was married.

Hampapur

Then you remained with his sisters.

Patel

And I remained with his sisters, yes, because when he got married, he was initially in Bombay for a short while and kind of expressed a desire that I should go and live with him, but I was not interested in doing that, because I wanted to live in the same place where I grew up, because I'd lived there since the beginning of my childhood and all my friends were there, my school was there. And he lived in a place, even though it was in Bombay, it was very far away and I would not have been able to keep up the continuity of my friendships and my school and all those things, which were very important. I was fourteen at the time, so I wanted to kind of maintain that.

Hampapur

Sure.

Patel

So I kind of expressed desire to stay there, and my youngest aunt again is the one who came to my rescue, in a sense, and said, "No, she's going to stay with us." So I continued to live with them.

Hampapur

Okay. And did you see your half brother or your stepmother much?

Patel

Then my father got transferred again out of Bombay to a different place, as I mentioned before, and so it was there in Gujarat that my brother was born, and my father said that I should visit him during my summer vacations from school. So every summer I would go and visit him and stay with him and my stepmother and brother for about a month or so, so that was the time that I

spent with them for probably two or three summers. Then they moved back to Bombay, and then I would go and visit them every Sunday, spend the day with them. So I would see them, but not a lot, so I kind of had a connection with them, but it was not a deep connection. It was not a close connection. I did always feel very close to my father, but my father now had a different life that he was focused on ever since he got married, and so his focus, in a sense, on me was very much reduced, and I guess I got used to that, because at least I didn't have to make a total change in my own living situation, so I was grateful for that.

Hampapur

And do you have any memories from your high school days? Did you continue to compete in school and do well?

Patel

In high school? Yes. Actually, in India once you start school, even if it's like first standard or first grade, usually you continue in the same school until you finish high school. So I stayed in the same school and finished my high school over there, and so I had some friends who I had known for many, many years, and we were together for a long time, so that was again very good for me to build those connections. Yes, I think my friendships also is what kind of kept me going. Besides my focus on my studies, having close friendships also was very good.

Hampapur

And what did you do with your friends outside of school?

Patel

Outside of school, sometimes when we were in college at that time we would go and see movies once in a while, but while we were in high school not very much except visiting their homes like I mentioned. We didn't do a lot of other activities. When I was in college, that's when--I guess when you go to college, that's when you have more independence to make your own decisions of what you want to do, since you're away from home for a longer time. And so that's when some of these same school friends, about four of us went to the same college in Bombay, so then we would go to movies, once in a while go to a restaurant, do different activities, go shopping together and stuff like that.

Hampapur

Did you enjoy going to the movies? Was that a popular activity?

Patel

Sometimes. I was not terribly fond of movies, but I liked to do it once in a while just to do something fun, yes.

Hampapur

And did you continue to stay with your aunts when you were attending college?

Patel

Yes, continued to stay with them, yes, because generally in India even if you go to college, you usually go to a college which is within the same town where you went to high school, and so you continue living at home. So all of us continued living with our families. It's not like over here where once you turn eighteen, then you're free. If you go to a college that's not in your hometown, you automatically move out of the home, and some families, I believe, even are happy that the children are now going to be independent and they're going to make their own lives, and in India it's totally different. The families are happy. The longer you live with the family, the happier the family is, and they do like that. In fact, even after kids get married, very often the daughter-in-law lives in the same home with her husband's family, and that's how it always used to be. Nowadays, since very often the husband and wife both are working and they can afford to have their own home, they sometimes do move out, but even today a lot of families still live together even after the sons get married.

Hampapur

Okay. And what did you study when you were in college?

Patel

In college I studied economics, and I graduated from St. Xavier's College, which is a really well-known college in Bombay. Then I had always wanted to teach. I always enjoyed teaching very much, so even when I was in school, since I was good at what I was doing, I would often help my classmates, teach them math and stuff like that, that they had trouble with. So after I graduated from college, I had always known, ever since I was in middle school, that I wanted to be a teacher someday. So after I graduated from college I thought, okay, I'll get a job as a teacher. At that time I had a friend who lived across the street from where I lived, who also had done her undergraduate in economics, and then she had done her graduate--got a master's degree in economics, and she was teaching at a college. So she said to me that, "Well, if you get a master's degree, you will be able to teach at a college, which would be so much better than teaching at a high school or elementary school." So that's what got me excited about doing a master's. So there again, now my father was opposed to me going and getting a master's degree, because he, I think, felt that he really wanted me to get married. I think he felt then he would feel that my husband will take care of me, he won't have to be responsible for me, and it'll be a comforting feeling for him if I'm married. But I was just not at all interested in getting married, and I wanted to continue studying. So again here now it was my youngest aunt who came to my rescue, and she said to my dad that, "If that's what she wants to do, that's what she's going to do, and if you don't want to pay for her to go to college, I will pay for her to attend college, but that's what she's going to do." So she kind of put her foot down, and since I had grown up with her, and my dad knew that I was very attached to her, so her

word carried a lot of weight and my dad realized that I was determined to do this. So he gave in and I did my master's, and then paying for the college was not really the issue. My father had sufficient financial resources to do that. But it was just her way of saying to him that, you know, nothing is going to stop her from doing what she wants to do. So I did my master's and then I taught economics at a college in Bombay for six years.

Hampapur

Okay. Oh, wow.

Patel

And I enjoyed that very much, because I kind of fulfilled my desire to teach, because I think teaching is really very rewarding as a profession, and I enjoy it a lot.

Hampapur

Were there many women teaching college?

Patel

There were not many women. There were some women teaching, but not a lot. And also I ended up teaching at commerce college, and in India after you graduate from high school you have to choose whether you want to attend an arts college or science college or a commerce college, so those are your three choices. This was a commerce college that I taught at, where the focus was on business classes, and at that time very few women opted to go to a commerce college. So say in a class of 150 students, which was an average number of students in a class at the time, there would be about ten students who were women.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Patel

Yes. So it was a very big difference. Now things are different now, but that's how it was at that time. So I taught classes which had like about ten women and the rest were guys.

Hampapur

How was that? When you first started, was that daunting at all?

Patel

Well, yes. I guess I would say that the first lecture that I gave I was obviously a little nervous, but it went off fine, and I remember when I came down to, we call it the staff room, when I came down after my lecture, the professor who was in charge of that session, he said, "Okay, you made it through the first lecture. You're fine." So he was very encouraged, and the students were generally respectful, I would say. Once in a while somebody may be a little rowdy, but more or less the students were respectful. I think once they realized that you know your subject matter and you know what you're talking about,

that they would not unnecessarily disrupt the class. So it was good. I enjoyed it very much.

Hampapur

And you were in your twenties then?

Patel

At that time I was twenty-two.

Hampapur

Okay. Wow.

Patel

Yes, twenty-two. Yes, because I finished high school at sixteen, finished my graduate at twenty and master's at twenty-two. Yes, so I was pretty young. And, in fact, some of the classes that I taught were classes that were for employed students. In the daytime they had regular classes with students who had just finished high school and just came to college, but in the early morning hours, say from seven in the morning till nine in the morning, they would have classes for students who were actually in the workforce but who had not been able to go to college right after high school, but now felt they needed to get a degree, and so they would come and attend classes from seven to nine and then go to their jobs. So I did have to teach those students as well, so in many cases in that situation some of the students were a lot older than I was. But they were, in fact, more responsible and more respectful, because they were older, so that is again a really interesting situation.

Hampapur

Yes. So you said you taught there for six years?

Patel

Yes.

Hampapur

And why did you end up leaving?

Patel

I ended up leaving because I came to the U.S., and that was when I was twenty-nine. I came to the U.S. and that's when I gave up teaching. So I came to the U.S. because it looked like I was going to have a good possibility of getting married, so that's what brought me to the U.S.

Hampapur

Was the groom living in the U.S.?

Patel

Yes. My husband, he grew up in the same building as I did in Bombay. Yes, he was living in the U.S. when I came to the U.S. He grew up in the same building, the eight-flat building which I talked about, and he lived downstairs and I lived upstairs. I knew his family, just as I knew all the families in the building, really well, so I particularly knew his family very well, and he had a

sister who was a couple of years older than me but who was with me in school, and so we became very close friends and I would hang out with her all the time. So I'd spend a lot of time at their house and so I got to know him pretty well. We didn't--we never actually hung out together, but I just spent time with the family and so I knew every member of the family pretty well. Then when he was eighteen is when he came to the U.S., about a year after he finished, a year or so after he finished high school. So I guess we would write to each other once in a while, but just a friendly letter like you would write to any friend. We had never really ever dated. We never dated until we got married, even though we knew each other since we were eight years old, since we lived in the same building, and we married when we were twenty-nine.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Patel

But we never dated at all, because that was not something that was done in India at the time. Also, we belonged to different castes, and the caste system in India can sometimes be restricting, and so I think neither of our families were really very keen initially that there should be any connection here. And so even though they may have sensed that we do have some kind of an attraction to each other, nobody really encouraged it, also because dating was not common at that time anyway. So he came to the U.S., went to UCLA, actually, to do engineering, so he did his engineering at UCLA and that was because his father encouraged him to do that. His father wanted him to have a good education. Then he went to USC and did a master's in engineering and continued to live here, and he came back to India a few times during that time, and so we would see each other in the family situation, not one on one. And again, we kind of knew that we definitely had this attraction for each other, but it was something that was never really expressed. I think it was, he feels it was not expressed on his part. As a female, I felt that it should be the guy who should make the first move, and that's just because I grew up at that time. Nowadays I guess it doesn't really matter over here whether it's the girl who makes the first move or the guy does, but at that time it did kind of matter, so I felt that it should come from him. And so we would kind of write letters, and he's very lazy about writing, so he would probably write a letter once every three months at the earliest. But it was nice to just be able to at least have that communication going, because I knew that--I think we both knew since we were in middle school that we definitely had this attraction for each other, but we had never really expressed it, which is, I know, quite surprising I'm sure for anybody who hears the story. So then I guess he feels that he did not express it because even when he came back from the States he was not yet really settled, not yet really making a steady income, and did not feel that he was ready to take on a

responsibility of marriage. And also, I think, there was the hesitation that the family will not accept me because I was from a different caste. He is a Gujarati, which is from a different region of India, Gujarat. And my family felt the same way, although they too had sensed that I had this attraction to him. They felt, I feel, that the culture in our family was different from his, the way things are done, the expectations of a daughter-in-law, whether I would be able to fit into this family or not, they had little concerns about that. So they would have preferred if I married somebody who was from the same caste as my family.

Hampapur

And did they encourage that when you were in your twenties and teaching? Did they encourage you to marry anyone who was there locally?

Patel

Yes. In India a lot of marriages are arranged marriages, and even today a lot of marriages are arranged marriages, so they would sometimes kind of try to introduce me to somebody whom they thought was a good possible match, and this would often happen at weddings, because at weddings a lot of people get together and they say, "Oh, look. That guy's son, he just came from the States, and he's doing well, and he comes from a good family, and he makes good money, and that may be a good match, and he has a good education," and whatever. And so they would try and introduce me to some such guys. But I knew that I could never have an arranged marriage. I knew that right from the beginning, that I just cannot agree to marry somebody because somebody introduces me to somebody whom I see once or twice and just say, "Okay, fine. I'll get married to this guy." I knew that was never going to happen. It had to be somebody whom I loved and I cared for and I really wanted to be with. And moreover, since I was in middle school I knew that I had this attraction to this guy, and so I was not really interested, so I would just tell them, "No, I'm not interested," and that was the end of it. So they didn't do it a lot. They didn't pressure me a lot. They probably may have tried to introduce me to less than half a dozen people, I would say, so in that sense there was not too much pressure. Because my family, my father's sisters, even though they were difficult people to get along with, they were themselves employed. They were not traditional housewives, and they were not very conservative in their thinking, which was good for me. So I would say generally they were liberal with me in terms of giving me certain freedoms to do certain things, so I did not grow up in a very restricting kind of a family situation, which could also happen in India.

Hampapur

And what did your aunts do? Where did they work?

Patel

They worked in the railways, and they worked as reservation clerks, like taking reservations for bookings. Yes, because in India at that time, things were not automated, so people would often come up to the counter to make the reservations, and now, of course, they can make it over the Internet, even in India. So they had a lot of interaction with the general public, so they were pretty aware of how things happened around and the importance of having the independence, so that was good for me.

Hampapur

Okay. Do you know around what year was it that your husband came to UCLA, came to the U.S.?

Patel

Yes. He came here in 1965, and this was one year after he finished high school, and at that time I was in college in India, yes.

Hampapur

And was it common then for people to come to the U.S. to study or to work?

Patel

No, it was not very common. But like I said, I think his father had the foresight to realize how his future would be much better if he was able to go abroad for his studies. And also in India his father suffered from a paralytic stroke, because of which he was bedridden for ten years, and during the time that his father was not keeping well, my husband had to help out with that, and as a result he wasn't able to do as well in one of his exams at college, which was kind of the qualifying exam to get him into a good engineering college in India.

Hampapur

I see.

Patel

And so he was not able to get into the top-notch colleges in India at the time, and therefore this was another very good option that then his father explored, and so he said, "You should go to California, because California has good weather and it'll be a nice place to be." So it was very far thinking on his part, even though he knew that he himself probably was not going to survive very long, that he was interested in building a good future for his son, and also because he was the only son, to be willing to let him leave the family and go abroad. In a way, it was similar like to my father's situation, where again my husband had three sisters in India. But his father was still planning to send him abroad so that he could have a good future. So coming abroad was not common at the time, and also it was not easy because it was expensive, and so his family had, actually, to take a loan to be able to send him abroad, but it worked out well, I think. He's been able to definitely build a good future because he did that.

Hampapur

Okay. And what were the perceptions of America at that time? What did people think when they heard--in India, what did they think when they heard of the U.S.?

Patel

Oh, they think it's the land of plenty and the land of opportunity and the place to be. Even today and ever since I remember, people in India have always been very enamored of the West and always want to imitate it in every way, whether it's in music or whether it's in clothing or whether it's in education or anything.

Hampapur

Okay. And at that time where did people get those ideas from of America?

Patel

From the newsprint, magazines. People in India, even at that time they would read a lot. Like getting a daily newspaper delivered at your home is something that I remember ever since I was in the first standard, first grade. And even today, a lot of people do have the newspaper delivered to their home on a daily basis, even though now they can get cable television as well. So, yes, so reading has always been encouraged a lot in India, and I think especially among the educated people. Even though, of course, as we know, there are so many people who are not educated and cannot read, but among the educated it's really very popular.

Hampapur

Okay. So going back to you specifically, so you mentioned that you decided to leave your teaching post because you were planning to move to the U.S. So can you tell me a little bit more about that time? How did your marriage come about? Just the order of things.

Patel

Yes. Well, what happened is that when I was teaching at college, I had a friend who was teaching in the same--in the economics department, who was about ten years older than me and who became a close friend. And she one day was just pushing me, trying to tell me that, "Look. You really should get married," and stuff like that, and, "Is there anybody that you like?" And I said, "Yeah, there is somebody whom I like." So I told her about him, and she said, "Well then, you know, if you like this person, then you should do something about it." So she kind of pushed me to make a move in that direction, and I think that's what really got me going, in a sense. So in India you kind of have to approach things through your parents, and so I approached--I first thought I would tell my dad, but somehow because he did not live with us in the family, it was not very convenient for me to find an opportunity to talk to him one on one and be able to tell him about what I'm thinking. So I thought it was easier to approach him through my aunt, who is his youngest sister, and so I told her about my interest in this boy. And she related to my dad, and then my dad had to

approach--Manhar is my husband's name. So my dad had to approach Manhar's mom with the proposal, because in India, usually that's how it's done is that the girl's parents have to approach the boy's family, offering the daughter's hand and finding out whether the boy's family would accept. So by this time my husband's father actually had passed away. In fact, he passed away within the first year that my husband came abroad. And so at the time when I was getting married, or the time when this marriage proposal thing sort of started happening, my husband lived in the States, and his mother had also come to the States, so she was in the States living with him. So my dad had to approach her about this proposal. So he wrote a letter to her and then she doesn't write in English, even though she could speak English, so she asked Manhar to reply to the letter. So Manhar replied to my dad and expressed that, yes, he would definitely be interested, but since he could not come to India, it would be nice if my dad could give me permission to come to the U.S. so that we could meet and then we could talk and hopefully things would work out. So that is how this proposal kind of took effect. In the meantime, of course, through our letters we kind of had expressed a little bit to each other that we cared for each other, but never really anything about wanting to get married or, "Let's get together," because it was just not practical since I was in India and he was in the U.S., until this proposal was presented.

Hampapur

I see.

Patel

So then my husband responded saying, yes, that he would like me to come abroad. So my dad informed me of this letter, and fortunately for me, since my dad had himself been abroad and he was an open-minded person, he agreed to let me come to the U.S. and to explore this possibility, knowing that most likely, I mean like 99 percent, it is going to happen, because he knew my husband. Since we grew up in the same building, he knew him very well, and my husband was also a very responsible person as he was growing up, so my father had very positive feelings about him. Even though he may have had hesitations about how the inter-cost thing may work out, but he was willing to give it a go since that's what I wanted.

Hampapur

Okay. So you mentioned your father told you that your husband wanted you to come visit in the U.S.

Patel

Yes, yes, yes. So like I said, I was really happy that my father was willing to give me the permission to go abroad. I think had he said he was not willing, I would have probably insisted on wanting to go, and again I'm sure my aunt would have come to my rescue, as she did in the past, but that did not become

necessary, because he was willing to give me the permission, and I think that's also because he knew my husband's mother. He knew that his mother was living with him here and that when I came here I would live with them and I would be in this family setting that he was familiar with. My husband's sister also was living here in the U.S. at the time, so he knew that it will be a normal family situation. It's not like he's just sending me abroad not knowing where I'm going to end up or what's going to happen. So that was good, and so I came here and I arrived. Actually, before coming to California, which is where my husband was, I decided I want to travel a little bit, to see part of the country before coming to California, and so that was another, I think, very good decision. Somebody who had been abroad gave me suggestions about which places to visit. So my husband had a sister who lived in New Jersey, and so I arrived in New York and I stayed with her and her family--she was married--for ten days, during which time I visited New York and New Jersey. Then I took a tour bus and went to Philadelphia, so now this travel from New York until I ended up in California I did by myself, which was also a lot of fun. So I went to Philadelphia. There again I stayed with a friend a couple of days and saw the city. I then took a bus and went to Washington, D.C., again stayed with some friends and saw Washington, D.C., which I was very, very impressed with, and then took a bus again, went to Chicago and stayed with one of Manhar's cousins whom he had arranged for me to stay with, and spent a couple of days in Chicago and then flew to Los Angeles. So I was really glad to have that opportunity to see all these places, because I do enjoy travel very much. So I came to Los Angeles. I arrived here in the middle of May 1976, at which time Manhar and myself, we were both twenty-nine years old, and two weeks after I arrived we got married. So actually, a day after I arrived we decided that we were getting married. So it was kind of something that I feel it was meant to be, and I do believe in fate and also the fact that we really had this attraction for each other. As I said, we'd never dated or never really expressed our love for each other, but it was something that was sort of a silent communication in a sense. So the day after I got here my husband said, "Well, your dad knows that you're getting married, right?" And I said, "Yeah, he does." And so he said, "Okay. How about we get married in a couple of weeks? There's a long Memorial [Day] weekend coming up. That'll be a good weekend we can plan to have the wedding." And I said, "Okay."

Hampapur

Sorry. Just to clarify, did your father know you were getting married, or was the trip just to go meet your husband and see if you wanted to get married?

Patel

Well, it was kind of that Manhar seems to be inclined to go along, and so he kind of knew that once I came here and if everything went off well, that we

would get married here. Yes. He did know that, because it would not have been practical for me to fly back to India and then for my husband to come to India for us to get married over there. It would just be a lot of impracticality in doing it that way.

Hampapur

Right. Okay.

Patel

So my father was also quite practical, and he had no objection to me getting married here--

Hampapur

Okay, I understand.

Patel

--even though none of my family was here at all. I was the only one here, so I had nobody on my side at the wedding at all, but that didn't seem to really matter to me at that point. I didn't care who was there, who was not there. I just wanted to get married, because I liked this guy.

Hampapur

Yes. So where did you get married?

Patel

So then my husband said, "Well, we have a choice. Either we can just go to the city hall and just register the marriage, or," he said, "there's this place called SRF, which is the Self-Realization Fellowship in Pacific Palisades, and there's a beautiful lake there, and it could be outdoors, and we could get married over there." And so he took me and showed me the place, and I said, "Yeah, definitely I would choose this beautiful setting rather than just having a registered marriage in court." So that's where we got married. Have you been to the SRF any time?

Hampapur

No. I've heard of it, but I've never been there.

Patel

Oh, yes, it's very beautiful. So it's in the Pacific Palisades, and it's a place that was started by Paramahansa Yogananda from India. The philosophy of the place is integration of all the different religions, so even though it was started by an Indian person, the focus is not on Indian religion alone. They have a beautiful lake, and you can walk around the lake. There are beautiful landscaped gardens all around, and they have different statues depicting different religions. They also have a small portion of Gandhi Ji's, Mahatma Gandhi's ashes there as a memorial. They conduct wedding ceremonies among other things they do, and the wedding ceremonies are kind of nondenominational, even though there is some Indian aspect to it. So it's Indian in origin, but not completely Indian in all the stuff they do there. So we were

happy, because they incorporate some elements of the Indian tradition in the marriage ceremony, and so we were happy with that, and it was outdoors overlooking the lake, and it was very pretty. So that's where we got married.

Hampapur

Okay.[End of interview]

## 1.2. Session 2 (June 18, 2010)

Hampapur

This is Veena Hampapur here again with Margaret Patel. Thank you again for agreeing to do this. So last time we left off talking a little bit about your move to America, and we ended with talking about your marriage. So I wanted to back up a little bit and I was wondering if you could tell me more about the process of preparing to come to the U.S., aside from having to get your father's permission to come.

Patel

You mean preparing in what sense do you mean?

Hampapur

Preparing to leave India or any practical preparations you had to do with paperwork or packing.

Patel

Oh, yes, yes. Well, I guess as I had mentioned to you before, I had never really flown until I came to the U.S. was the first time I really even got a passport made. No, yes, actually, the first time I had a passport made. Then you have to get a visa, and getting a visa to come to the U.S. is always difficult and so you're always a little tense about that. So I went to the U.S. Embassy, and you have to get in line, of course, and do the whole thing, and you have to try and convince them that you will be returning to India if you're going to apply for a visitor visa, which is what I was doing, and so you have to present certain documents if you can, which would prove that you have a reason why you want to come back to India. Especially if you're a young person, there's always the fear on their part that you may settle in the U.S. and become a burden to the U.S. economy and that kind of stuff. So since I had a job teaching at a college, I got a letter from the principal of the college stating that I was a responsible and a good member of the staff and that I was taking a vacation while college was closed, to go to the U.S. and that I was planning to come back. So I think that kind of documentation was of some help, and I did manage to get the visitor visa to come to the U.S., which interestingly I got on the first of April, April Fools' Day. So kind of maybe I was thinking, okay, in a way I'm kind of fooling them, because I'm really most likely not coming back. [laughs]

Hampapur

Right.

Patel

So, and then besides that I would say I did not have any difficulties in preparing to come to the U.S., because my family, they were all very eager for me to get married, and they knew that this is a good possibility here. In fact, they felt, I think, pretty certain that this would materialize, even though it had not yet been kind of really confirmed in any way. So I came to the U.S. and as I mentioned to you before, I did travel to a few places before arriving in California, where my husband-to-be lived, and the adjustment was actually very easy, I think mainly for two main reasons. One is that I spoke English very fluently, having gone to a so-called English medium school in India, where the education was in English, although they did teach us some other Indian languages, and going from one big city to another big city also made it easy to adjust, and I think that probably is the second reason. I think the first most critical reason why it was easy is that I knew my husband-to-be's family very well, since we knew each other since we were about eight years old, and so I felt very comfortable in the family setting, because I lived with them when I arrived. And so I didn't have that period of adjustment to a situation where I didn't know anybody, and that was a big, big step for--very, very helpful factor in adjusting.

Hampapur

Okay. You mentioned you did some traveling on the East Coast and in the Midwest before coming to California. Can you remember some of your initial impressions of the U.S. when you first arrived?

Patel

Well, one of the very first impressions that I remember is that when I was traveling from New York airport, where I landed, to New Jersey, and I had been picked up and we were driving on the freeway, and I kept wondering why there is no noise at all. Like everything was so silent. Nobody was honking, nobody was screaming, they weren't--like in India when you're driving on the streets there's like constantly a million sounds and a lot of honking and a lot of yelling and a lot of people on the roads, so here everything seemed very quiet and calm and just a bit too organized, in a sense, so that seemed very, very different to me. That was one of my first impressions, and that is what even today when people come to visit from India, I find that sometimes they say that, "How come we don't see people walking on the streets very much here?" Because it's nothing compared to what you see in India. So that was one of the first things. And then another thing I remember clearly, I spent a few days in just--as I said, I wanted to travel to a few places. And so I had made some reservations on Trailways, which is a bus, kind of a tour company that organizes--just like the Greyhound. I don't know whether Trailways exists today or not, but it was just like the Greyhound bus service, to go from New

York to Philadelphia and then to Washington, D.C., and then to Chicago. And so I wanted to confirm that my reservations were really in place and everything was in order, and so I walked many, many blocks in New York to the office of this bus company to confirm with this travel agent that everything was okay and I was set for my trip, not realizing that in the U.S. you can just make a phone call and you can just confirm everything over the phone, and that is pretty much certain, because in India everything at that time had to be done in person. Like if you make a reservation to travel somewhere, you have to go to the train station, you have to go to the bus station, you have to confirm everything is fine. So that was another interesting thing to learn. Another thing I think I observed initially--again, this was, I think, probably in New York soon after I arrived, is that when you're talking, when you're in an office and you're talking to somebody, and it's a situation where you kind of--there's some kind of a line or there's more than one person waiting to ask questions, that the person who's attending to you will always wait until she has completed answering all your questions before she even speaks to the next person, whereas this is very different from how it's done in India. In India people will often try and talk to several people at the same time, try to help several people at the same time. In the process, everything takes forever, things get delayed a lot, and it's not done as efficiently. So that is something that I even remember till today when I'm tempted to put aside one job and start a second job, and I say, "You know, I really need to finish this one job first and then start my next job. It's just a more organized way of doing things," you know?

Hampapur

Right.

Patel

So that was something that struck me.

Hampapur

Okay. That's very interesting.

Patel

Yes, yes, yes.

Hampapur

In a similar vein, do you remember your first impressions of Los Angeles when you arrived here?

Patel

Of Los Angeles? Well, in Los Angeles my husband lived in Santa Monica, and so I have spent most of my time for the last, I would say now, thirty-four years that I have been here, in and around Santa Monica or pretty close to Santa Monica. So we have two restaurants. They both are located within a couple of miles of our home, and so most of our life has been spent in this part of town. And since in Los Angeles the public-transport system is not developed so well,

so I feel that I have not explored many areas of Los Angeles as I would probably have liked to and I would have done if there was good public transport, is what I feel. I do drive, but I don't particularly enjoy driving the freeways very much, because I feel it's too stressful and it's just something I would rather avoid if I can. And there are certain areas of Los Angeles which are not as safe and as comfortable as others, so I feel I'm fortunate to be living in a part of L.A. which is relatively safer, where the air is cleaner being close to the ocean and stuff like that. But I like the area where I live, and my impression when I arrived was this is a really beautiful place, and I still feel the same way. I do like the Westside very much, and I don't like the traffic in Los Angeles at all. So for that reason, actually, my kids have now grown up and they have moved to northern California, and I think it's probably a good thing, because they are happy where they're living, and Los Angeles has a lot of its own problems, so if they choose to live there, that's okay, even though I'm happy living here.

Hampapur

I wonder, are there any big changes you've seen in Santa Monica while you've been living here?

Patel

Well, our restaurants are both located on Main Street, and Main Street has gone through lots of changes in the past, I guess, forty years. So when I arrived, Main Street was not as chic and prosperous as it is today and did not have the upscale kind of stores that it has now. There were a lot of kind of thrift shop type of stores around, and so it was not really very well developed. And even the area which is now the Santa Monica Place, which is the mall and the promenade, was again the same way, just very small little stores and not really very well developed. So, yes, it has gone through lots of changes. There was a time when we had a lot of homeless people also wandering the streets, which kind of became a little bit of a problem at the restaurant, because they would just wander in. However, Santa Monica now offers a lot of facilities for the homeless, and I think that has helped move them off the streets into these shelters that provide them with assistance of various kinds, so now we do not have that kind of a problem anymore. And I think the street is getting better as the years are going by. And Main Street doesn't really have the chain stores, so to speak, which is also a good thing. The promenade in Santa Monica now has lots of chain stores, which is kind of not probably the most desirable thing.

Hampapur

Was it a gradual change--

Patel

Main Street?

Hampapur

--things improving in this area? Or was there one point in time when the area was redeveloped?

Patel

No, I would say that it has been gradual and steady, and right now I think Main Street is pretty nice. But ever since the Santa Monica Promenade came into being, the main focus of tourists and the main attraction for tourists shifted to the promenade. So in that sense, even though Main Street now is a lot better than it was before, it doesn't draw as many people as the promenade draws, and so in that sense the Main Street businesses have lost out to the promenade and could use some help.

Hampapur

Okay. What about when you first arrived in L.A., before Main Street and the promenade or what they are today--were there particular neighborhoods or areas of L.A. that people liked to visit a bit more?

Patel

Which areas people like to visit, you mean?

Hampapur

Yes. Like when you first arrived, you said that Main Street wasn't as developed as it is today, and the promenade wasn't there, so where did people like to go visit in L.A. at that time?

Patel

Oh, at the time when I arrived, at that time, actually, Westwood somehow was very popular, and since my husband had gone to UCLA for his undergraduate studies, he was very familiar with Westwood. So I remember that sometimes if we wanted to go out and do something special on a weekend evening, he would say, "Oh, let's go to Westwood, and let's go have dinner at a restaurant in Westwood." And so Westwood did definitely have more of an attraction at the time, since the Santa Monica Mall did not exist, the promenade the way it is today did not exist either, so that was not a focus for entertainment as such. And the grove, which is another attraction now, did not exist either at that time.

Hampapur

Okay. When you first came, what did you like to do for fun, you and your husband? Were there any tourist attractions or anything you liked to do around here?

Patel

Well, I mean, I did visit the standard tourist places. I did go to Disneyland. I did go to Universal Studios, and there was another one called Marineland in the South Bay, so I did visit those places because of the standard attractions when somebody is new to the area. In terms of other just fun things that we did on a kind of regular basis, I would say we do like to walk a lot, so we'd take a lot of walks on the beach and stuff like that. My husband at that time was very

interested in camping as well, and so we did camp a few times a year in different places in California, which is kind of fun. Went to Yosemite a few times as well, so that was what we enjoyed doing, sometimes hiking.

Hampapur

Were there many South Asians or Indians in this area when you first came?

Patel

No, there were not many South Asians, and even today there aren't many South Asians in this area. There are some, but not a lot at all. But somehow that doesn't bother me at all, because I kind of do always enjoy a cosmopolitan group more than a specific group to associate with, so I'm actually happier in this environment.

Hampapur

Okay. So going back to your marriage, so after you got married, did you have to adjust your paperwork since you were on a tourist visa?

Patel

Yes. So the way it worked at that time and probably the same maybe today, I don't know, is that my husband, he had a green card and so he had to apply for me as his wife to also get a green card, and the stipulation then was that I could not leave the country until my paperwork was processed, which would probably, they said, be about a year. And so that was the only restriction that I had to abide by. So six months after I arrived, actually, my husband had to go to India to attend his sister's wedding, and I could not go because of this requirement to be here, but that was okay. It was not a problem. I think it was probably better for him, because he asked me to take care of the restaurant, the Indian restaurant which he had at the time, while he was gone, and so that was my experience at running the restaurant on my own.

Hampapur

And so when did your husband open this restaurant?

Patel

He opened this in 1972, which was about four years before I arrived. I arrived here in '76. And at that time his sister ran the place for him on a day-to-day basis. And then his mother also came here a few years later, and she also lived with the two of them, the brother and sister, so there were three of them living here together and running the restaurant. And when I arrived in 1976, at that time my husband's sister, who was doing this, she was ready to get married. She was actually about three years older than my husband, and her mother was very worried about her not yet being married.

Hampapur

Sure.

Patel

And in the Indian tradition, normally they would expect her to be married before the younger brother gets married, so her mother wanted to take her to India to find a match for her, and so she actually left about a month after I arrived, and the mother and daughter both went back to India to try and arrange a marriage for her.

Hampapur

I see.

Patel

So that's when my husband--actually, he, almost as soon as we got married, which as I had told you before, we were married two weeks after I arrived, and then we went on our honeymoon to Yosemite, and so almost like within two weeks after I arrived, my husband was asking me, "Oh, you know, it would be nice if you can take over from my sister and run the restaurant, because she's planning to go back to India." And I said, "Well, you know, I've never done this. I don't think I can do this. This is not something I'm familiar with at all." So he said, "Well, she'll help you. She'll teach you, and you'll be fine." So then that's when I got involved with the restaurant.

Hampapur

And what are some of the things you had to learn in order to manage the restaurant?

Patel

Well, first of all I had to learn the recipes that they were making so that there wouldn't be--first of all, I was not familiar with cooking on such a large scale, and I had not done a lot of cooking in India even for the family, just minimal. So it was totally something that I had never dreamt that I would be involved in. So she kind of taught me the recipes, and since I knew her since our childhood, we had a good communication in that respect, so she was able to tell me exactly what she's doing and how she's doing it and stuff. But I would say the initial few months were pretty difficult, because you had to handle these huge pots and do cooking on a big scale. The most difficult thing, I would say, in terms of the cooking, was chopping onions, because that is like for Indian cooking you have to chop lots of onions, and I remember that was the most distressing thing, because your eyes start watering and oh, my god, it's pretty intense. But then there was a helper who would help do these different things, and so somebody would do the prep stuff for me, and I would do the cooking. So I would say after the first six months I felt a lot more comfortable, and then I slowly hired more people, because at the time when my husband's sister left, she had just one helper in the kitchen and she was doing everything herself, which is what I did in the beginning too. But then I slowly hired more people, and I trained them in how to do the cooking once I was myself comfortable, and then I was able to

step back a little bit more, gradually, so that they could kind of take over and I could just show them new dishes as and when I wanted to.

Hampapur

Okay. Did you ever think about going back to teaching at all?

Patel

Not really. I think mainly because I knew that I would have to re-qualify. I had already done a master's in India. I would have to do--minimum, I would have to do a master's here and probably something more. I would also have to get a teaching credential--

Hampapur

I see.

Patel

--which would mean a lot more academic involvement. I like academics a lot, but since I got married my focus kind of was now a little different, and I wanted to just focus on the family, so I did not think about going back to teaching. But I did take a few classes. I took a couple of classes at UCLA and a few classes at Santa Monica College through the years, just to improve my own understanding of certain subjects, just out of self-interest, not towards a degree.

Hampapur

Okay. And I know you mentioned your husband was here to study engineering, so has he worked as an engineer? Or was the restaurant his focus too?

Patel

He actually worked as an engineer for the first few years after he graduated, but then he said that that was a time when most of the jobs that were available to engineers were sort of related to the Vietnam War, and he was not interested in participating in those businesses because of that reason. And also, I think there was some issue also with his status, and so his opportunities were a little bit limited for that reason. And so somehow he got--and he had another friend who also was an Indian person, also had done engineering, and the two of them got involved with the restaurant, and they just started experimenting with food, and then they started enjoying it a lot, and they liked the idea of being their own boss, and so then they just decided to stay with the restaurant business.

Hampapur

And after your one-year probation period was over, after changing your visa, did you visit India at all?

Patel

Oh, yes, I visited India. I've been back to India several times. I would say approximately once every three years I have been back, so I've made many trips to India. Yes.

Hampapur

Okay. And were you homesick at all after moving here to the U.S.?

Patel

No, I wasn't homesick at all, I think because I was very, very eager to get married to my husband-to-be at the time, so it was a desire that was finally fulfilled, and I was extremely happy because of that, and so I did not feel homesick at all. I think that's also because I did not have a very strong, loving family situation in India, and I was generally not, internally not really happy as I was growing up in India, although I didn't really express that or share that with anybody, since I was a very private person. And also, Indian culture doesn't usually encourage you to talk a lot about your emotions as people do here, and by nature I was very, very quiet, very, very reserved. But I was not really happy with my home situation, so maybe for that reason also I did not really feel homesick at all.

Hampapur

And did you ever have relatives or friends from India come visit you here in L.A.?

Patel

My aunt, one of my father's sisters, the only one who really enjoyed traveling a lot, she did come and visit one time. And then the third, the youngest one, who was like a mother to me, she visited once as well. And then my half brother visited one time, so just a few visits, not a lot. My youngest aunt actually is very much a home person, doesn't like to go out of the house. Even within India she's happy being home and taking care of the home, and she loves people to come and visit her, but she doesn't like to go out very much. So for her to come to the U.S. even once was a major, major step, and she came only because she wanted to see me. But I haven't had a lot of family visits. Like, for instance, my father never really visited me over here, which I would have liked, but a trip to the U.S. was very expensive at the time. Now things are a lot cheaper and now people do travel a lot more than they did at that time.

Hampapur

Aside from learning to run the restaurant, were there any other skills you had to learn or develop after coming to the States?

Patel

Yes. I think one major skill I had to learn after coming to the States was to learn to drive, because I had never driven in India and always used public transport. That's why I enjoy public transport so much, being in Bombay. So I had to learn to drive, which was a major thing for me, and initially my husband decided to try and teach me how to drive, which was the worst thing in the world, because I think husbands can never teach their wives how to drive. They just expect too much and it ends up in a yelling match rather than a teaching session, so it was not very pleasant. I did sign up for some classes at Santa Monica College, yes, I think Santa Monica College. They had some driver-

education classes, but they were very minimal. It was kind of one of those cheaper versions of the classes and therefore very minimal instruction, so it was not the best way to learn. Looking back, I feel that had I taken lessons in a proper, more systematic way from a regular driving school, I would probably have had an easier time learning to drive, and I would have had more confidence as well, but anyway, I am very confident driving surface streets. But I think the hesitation I have about the freeway driving is in some way related to the fears I developed in this process of learning, and also, I don't know, I just find it kind of stressful. Maybe that's related to my nature. I don't know.

Hampapur

Or L.A. freeways, they are pretty stressful.

Patel

Yes. So that was another thing to learn.

Hampapur

I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Patel

No, that's all.

Hampapur

Okay. Were there any other changes you had to make in terms of dress, in terms of anything in your daily life after coming?

Patel

Not very much. In terms of dress, in India I did wear the Indian dress when I was teaching, the sari. I wore that every day, because wearing a sari also made me look a little bit older, and as I told you, I was teaching students who were at times older than me, so it was nice to be able to dress up and kind of give yourself a little more kind of older appearance so you would be more respected. But except for teaching I did not wear the sari at other times in India, and I did wear another Indian outfit there, which is called a salwar kurta, but not all the time. And pants and shirts were pretty common. Like when I went to college, I also wore pants and shirts, or I wore the Indian outfit, the salwar kurta, so I wore both. And so coming over here it was not a major change to be wearing pants and shirts again all the time, so dress-wise I did not have to make any change that was difficult.

Hampapur

And then when you first came, in running the restaurant, was it easy to get access to all the ingredients that you needed to run an Indian restaurant?

Patel

It was not as easy as it is now. Now a lot more items are available more easily, because there are a lot more Indian grocery stores around than there used to be at the time. But all the same, there were one or two. They were not as close as

they are now. They're a little further away, but more or less stuff was available, so it wasn't too difficult.

Hampapur

And I know you mentioned you like the diversity of this area, but I wonder were there any South Asian cultural or religious-type activities that you pursued after moving to the state?

Patel

No, not really, and I think that's also probably because I did not come from a family that was very religious-minded and did not really conduct religious ceremonies in the home very much. I do like going to the temple, but that's a personal thing that I do like. In my family there was one person who liked to go, but the others were not particularly interested in going to the temples. I do like to go, because I do believe in God, and I do say a small prayer every day at home, but I didn't visit the temples regularly and did not perform any religious ceremonies on a regular basis.

Hampapur

Okay. And when you first came to the U.S., were you and your husband set on staying in the U.S., or were there ever any thoughts of this being a temporary place to live and moving back to India?

Patel

I would say no. My husband sometimes would say, but I think he was kind of joking, he would say, "Oh, I would love to live in the U.S. for six months and then live in India for six months," because he felt that would be very enjoyable, but never, never seriously. Yes. And now he still says sometimes that, "Oh, if you are not around one day," like if I'm dead and gone that, he says, "I would move back to India," he says. And I say, "No, I don't think I'm going to do that. I'm going to continue to live here, because I like it better over here."

Hampapur

Okay. And can you speak a little bit more to that? I know you mentioned you really like the Santa Monica area. Can you tell me some of the things that you like to do here maybe now, in the present time?

Patel

I love to go to the beach, take a walk. In fact, after we finish the interview, that's what I'm going to do. And I like the fresh air, and I think it's probably also I do enjoy the water a lot, being near the water. But I think also it kind of is a reminder of the beach in Bombay, the Juhu beach, which I used to enjoy going to, so that's one activity that I like a lot. Besides that, I think Santa Monica, I kind of like the attitude of the people here. I think there's a difference between, say, the attitude of people here as compared to, say, people in Beverly Hills. People here are more relaxed, and it seems like people accept each other as they are, which I like a lot, so that's another thing about Santa Monica that

appeals to me. We don't do a lot of activities, which is kind of the area that disappoints me, because I personally like to do more stuff. But because we have the restaurants, my husband on the weekends is busy with the Rose Café, his other restaurant, which is pretty busy on the weekends. So he usually doesn't take time off on the weekends, and in the evenings I'm busy with the Indian restaurant, which is open only at night, so with the result that we don't have a lot of free time and so we don't do a lot of activities. Like we'll go to movies very, very infrequently. Sometimes we may watch a movie at home, but again, not frequently at all, maybe once a month if at all. My husband likes hiking a lot, so common activities that we do together is sometimes we like to go hiking in the Santa Monica Mountains, which are very close by. That's another very good thing, that you can kind of just drive a little bit and you can be in the mountains, so it's very close by. That's another thing which is nice about Santa Monica. And we have a cabin which is in a place called Idyllwild, which is up in the mountains near Palm Springs, and we sometimes go there for a couple of days. It's very pretty and very rustic, so we like to kind of go over there and get away for a couple of days, which is usually maybe once every three or four months.

Hampapur

And you mentioned you had two children?

Patel

Yes, two children.

Hampapur

Okay. Did you have any concerns about raising your children in the U.S., since you and your husband hadn't grown up here yourselves?

Patel

Frankly, no, I did not have concerns, and I think maybe it's because the problems that kids have, particularly in middle school here, it seems like a lot of kids here do get into or are exposed to drugs and other drinking and other problems. I think I was kind of unaware of these issues, because I had just arrived here and then we had our son was born a year and a half after I arrived. Our daughter was born another five years after that, and then I was just totally involved with raising the kids, and I didn't really focus very much on what are the possible problems we may encounter with raising the children in the U.S. Nowadays families do focus a lot on that, particularly South Asian families. I think they do think about that more so, I think maybe because the problems have become more accentuated in the last twenty years than they were earlier. That's just my personal impression. I was totally dedicated to the kids and was very involved in all their activities, and also I was very determined to build a very close relationship with the children, since I did not have a close relationship with my parents. I was very much interested in having a really

good communication with them, being very involved with their lives and being as much of a support for them as I can, and I think that paid off very well, because I do even till today, even though the kids don't live at home, I have a very close connection with them. So I made good choices for them regarding their schools and education, and we were very fortunate, actually. We did not have to deal with any problems with them, with drinking or drugs or sex or any of these issues that can become very difficult problems.

Hampapur

And did you take them to visit India when you would go?

Patel

Yes. We would take them on our trips to India, so that would be once every three years or so, so they did make a few trips to India while they were in school, yes.

Hampapur

And were there any elements of their cultural heritage that you wanted to expose them to when they were growing up? Or was it mostly just the trips?

Patel

I think it was mainly the trips. I think my husband and I did not focus very much on exposing them to other cultural aspects. And looking back, I feel that maybe we should have done a bit more in that area is what I feel, because they really do not connect with Indian cultural stuff almost at all. One area where we tried to expose them was, there's a ceremony in India which is called Raksha Bandhan or Rakhi, and this is sort of a brother-sister day, where the sister ties a little band on the brother's wrist, and it is supposed to symbolize the closeness in the relationship between the sister and the brother and the protection that each of them will provide for the other through life, and so it's a very significant ceremony, even though it's very simple and short. So we would have our daughter tie this wristband on our son's wrist on that particular day, and also we would have the cousins come over and they would do the same. So basically, all the family members--all the sisters would tie these bands on the brothers' wrist. But even though we did that, the children, our children and their cousins, that is, my husband's sister's children, did not quite grasp the significance of it. It didn't seem to mean much to them, and so as they grew older we kind of figured that we should probably drop this tradition, because they don't seem to really get the significance of it, and we would rather not do it than have them do something just for the sake of doing it, without really getting into it. So that was another thing that happened, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. Were there any American holidays or events that your family celebrated?

Patel

Well, after our son was born, then we started having a Christmas tree at Christmas time and having the gifts under the tree and the lights and all that stuff because it was exciting for the kids. So we did that until our kids grew up, but our daughter, once she grew up, she began to question the idea of having a live tree which you cut and you bring into your home and then the tree dies, and this is really not good for the environment and so she was totally opposed to it, because she's very environmentally conscious, so then we discontinued having the Christmas tree, but we did that all through the years when the kids were growing up. And then Halloween, of course, they would dress up and go around the neighborhood, that kind of stuff. And then regarding Thanksgiving, we would not do a very big Thanksgiving dinner or anything, usually. Once in a while if the whole family got together, the extended family, then we would do a Thanksgiving dinner, but it wasn't something that we did every year, because nobody seemed to like turkey very much. I think that's the reason why we didn't get into that very much.

Hampapur

Aside from Thanksgiving, did you enjoy celebrating these things with your children and your family?

Patel

Yes, oh, yes. I enjoyed celebrating Christmas a lot. I think that's because Christmas is a festival which is celebrated in India as well, even though it's not celebrated by all Indians as much, but when we were growing up, it was mainly the Catholics in India who celebrated Christmas. Now it's kind of become a more popular thing and so a lot of people celebrate it today, but at that time it was mainly the Catholics who celebrated Christmas, and since we went to Catholic schools, we were exposed to that celebration, so we kind of connected with it. And so it was easy to kind of get excited about Christmas here in the U.S., but not so much Halloween.

Hampapur

Yes. In your last session, you mentioned that you did see your mother again in your early thirties. I was wondering if you could speak to that.

Patel

Yes. After I got married, my husband kept encouraging me that I should try and connect with my mother, and I had, as I had told you before, had no connection with her since I was five years old. There were a couple of letters, a few letters that she wrote which I was allowed to receive, but after that there was no connection at all, because the family did not want that to happen, and so with the result I grew up with a lot of sadness, a lot of resentment against my mom, because I never understood why she had left me and gone away. I felt that that was the main reason why I had to suffer through my childhood in living with my aunts, who sometimes were easy to get along with, but the majority of the

time were not easy to get along with. So when I got married, my husband encouraged me that I should connect with my mother, and at first I was totally opposed to the idea, because I kind of didn't really--I was very sensitive about the topic, and I would kind of cry when he would ask me to do that. I just didn't want to even talk about it. But he was persistent and patient, and he would bring it up once in a while when he had an opportunity, and so then when my son was born, when my son was about a year old and we were planning a trip to India, and so my husband said, "Well, we have to--we'll be going via London and we could stop for a couple of days and visit your mom and then continue on to India." So I finally agreed and we did stop and visit my mom in England on our way to India. So I think it was a good thing, because it kind of brought a closure in a sense to this chapter of my life which was kind of open-ended. So I got to meet her, but I would say that there was really no affection, which is very sad, but that's exactly how it was. I didn't feel any sense of warmth or affection towards her, and I couldn't see any affection really coming from her, because there was so much time that had passed, about twenty-six years since I had seen her, so there wasn't really much feeling. We met. There was no kind of--there was no negative feeling as well, but it was just very kind of, I would say, cold, and that obviously was very disappointing to me, because I did not know what to expect when I went to meet her. But I think through the years and having her own hardships in her life, I think she probably had suffered a lot through the years having been alone and must have had her own difficulties. So I think on her part she probably felt possibly that she had made a lot of attempts to connect with me and that nothing had happened, not knowing that at my end I was not allowed to really build that connection. She may have thought that I did not want to build a connection with her since I did not respond to her letters, so I think probably because of all these different reasons there wasn't really very much.

Hampapur

Okay. And then some of the people I've talked with have mentioned--are first-generation immigrants--a survival instinct, building a life in the U.S., and have contrasted this with their children. So I was wondering if you feel like this applies to you at all, like a first-generation survival instinct in America, starting off a life here.

Patel

Could you repeat that if you don't mind?

Hampapur

Yes. Some of the--

Patel

Yes. Well, before I answer that question, I'll just complete what I was telling you earlier about my mother is that on her side she definitely made an attempt

to make us very comfortable when we went to visit her, and my son was little and she kind of had some gifts for us as well, so she did make an attempt to connect with us. And on our part too, we got some gifts for her. We spent time with her. We took her out, so we too made the gestures to accommodate and to get to know her. So on both sides there was the attempt, but I think a lot of time had been lost and a lot of opportunity had been lost and a lot of feelings had been hurt, and it was hard to bridge that gap after so many years. Now, so regarding your question about building a future for our children in this country, I think having grown up in India I find that we are very much driven to accomplish our goals and have a very strong work ethic, and so that comes very naturally to us, of trying to do our best and trying to excel in what we're doing and build a good future for the children, financially and otherwise. Regarding our children today, who are now adults--our son is thirty-two and daughter is twenty-six--they also do have a good work ethic and are dedicated to their respective professions. But if you were asking me the question more in a general sense of what I feel about the next generation in this country, I would say there is a big difference in the attitude, I feel. The next generation seems to be--having gone through education in this country, they have a very different approach to things than we did. For instance, growing up in India, guys were always told that, "You go to college. You should try to be an engineer, or you should be a doctor, or you should be a--." Engineer or doctor were the two professions that were most emphasized, because you can make good money, you can make a good future. And here, having our children who have been to school here, I feel that they have been exposed to different thinking, and so they have been told to follow their instinct about what makes them feel good, what they really enjoy, what are their interests. It's more about what they like to do more so than about how much money they would make. And so the emphasis has been very different, and then I think as a result of that the children have different goals than we did, so their whole attitude is totally different. I think that's a good thing, that everybody should do what they really enjoy. That's what I told my children as well, because I think then you feel satisfied with what you're doing, and it's good to be happy and satisfied than to be just making a lot of money. I find a lot of South Asian families have children who have got involved with nonprofit organizations also. The parents sometimes don't understand this at all. They kind of question how you're going to make a living. "This is not going to get you anywhere." Or if a child is interested in music, then that's something they totally may not understand or it'll take a while to convince them that it's okay for me to follow my passion because that's what I like.

Hampapur

Okay. I think you already sort of hit upon this, but you mentioned that you would like to continue living in the U.S. as opposed to your husband kind of joking sometimes. So do you see yourself staying in Los Angeles in the future?

Patel

I think I do see myself living in Los Angeles and basically close to Santa Monica, I would say, more so than Los Angeles in general. Our children live up in the Bay Area. Our son lives near San Francisco, our daughter lives in Berkeley, and I do miss the kids. My husband also does miss the kids, and we would like to be closer to them. It would be nice if they lived closer, but it's important that they should be able to follow their own professions, and they are happily living up there and they're happy, so that's okay. I feel that in future, if at some point either my husband or myself are by ourselves because one of us passes away, then it would be lonely to be living here, because either one of us, I think, would then really miss the kids, because no matter how much you are involved with your job, I think our family connection is very close. It's a close family. The four of us are pretty close, and I think we would miss that a lot if we were alone. So, however, I feel that in spite of that, I would not want to live with my children, because that's not something that they would enjoy and that's not something that probably I would enjoy, because everybody likes their own independence. But it would be nice to be close. At the same time, both of us have lived here so long and feel so comfortable in this environment that I feel I probably will continue to live here even if I were alone, unless I was physically not capable of taking care of myself. Then I would choose a different option. Yes, so I thought I would tell you a little more about my children. So my son, who is now thirty-two, he got married a couple of years ago and now has a son of his own as of the last six months, so he is now married and settled. And my daughter, who is now twenty-six, she lives in Berkeley, and she graduated with her major in environmental economics and now has decided to study homeopathic medicine--

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Patel

--which is totally different from what her major was, but she's just taken an interest in it, and she's really, really enjoying it. In fact, she is studying hard for her exam, something she has never done on her life. She never ever studied for her SATs. She never studied for any of her exams in school or in college either. Things just came easy to her. She's just, I guess by nature, a bright, intelligent person. But she's studying homeopathy very intensely, which is very interesting, so that remains to be seen how things work out for her. I guess one of her goals in doing this is that she feels that Western medicine is outrageously priced, it is out of control, it is out of reach for many people who cannot afford

it, who don't have insurance, and she feels there should be some alternative which is more easily available to people and that homeopathy could provide that. And homeopathy is very popular in India as well, so she's kind of pursuing that, and I hope she is able to make a success of it. That remains to be seen, since homeopathy is not recognized at this point, so it remains to be seen how well she's able to do, although it is getting more and more accepted, I would say, in this society. Another thing that I thought may be of interest that I could mention to you is that my daughter is gay. She went off to college when she was eighteen, until which time this had not surfaced. And while she was at college, some of the conversations we had kind of suggested to me that something along this line may be going on, so anyway. So basically it was during that first year of college that we found out that she was gay, and this was at first very difficult for my husband and myself to handle, because it was something we had never thought about or something we had never focused on, not really read much about it or known much about it, so it was initially very hard, and I think more so for my husband than for me, because he kept telling her that, "Look. You'd better think this through," and he thought this may be just something in her head, maybe she's just--because she's always been very feminist in her thinking, and so he thought this may be an extension of that and may not really be what it is. However, she was very firm and she's very strong and very independent, and so she said, "No, this is exactly who I am," and stuff like that. So we asked her if she would like to get some counseling, and she said, no, but she thought that we should get some counseling, which was very interesting but I think was a very good suggestion on her part, because it kind of helped us in a way also learn to talk about the situation, since we had a friend who is a counselor. So we spoke to him and helped us express ourselves, and we realized that we really have to give her our support and just accept it, because there is no point of trying to question it or trying to change it. She's the one who knows best who she is, what she feels like, and so we have given her our full support, and she really appreciates that very much.

Hampapur

Was that difficult at all with your relatives and stigma in the South Asian community?

Patel

Well, my husband has three sisters, two of whom live here in the U.S., and so he decided a few months, I guess, after we had found out about this, to talk to them and let them know. So he told them and surprisingly, they accepted it very well. So that was very easy to do. A few other people, some of our close friends we have told them about this, and most people seem to be okay in terms of accepting it. Nobody has really expressed anything kind of disapprovingly. I don't know how it would be received in India. In fact, my daughter, she is

planning to take a trip to India at the end of this year, and she's curious to see how people would respond to her, not that she's overtly going to express the fact that she's gay, but it may come through in how she dresses, in how she expresses herself, in different ways, so it'll be an interesting experience for her, since she hasn't been back to India for many years now.

Hampapur

Is she going for her homeopathy, or just--

Patel

She actually--on two of her previous trips to India she got sick, and so she got totally turned off against India. She's very sensitive to--she has kind of an allergic reaction to smells and so probably because of that she was really, really sick on two previous trips to India. So she said, "I'm never going back." Now all of a sudden she's expressing an interest, and she's quite determined to go back to visit India. I don't know exactly what has suddenly got her interested in it, but she is, and homeopathy is one of the areas that she wants to explore. She does want to find out how homeopathy is practiced in India and what are the different approaches, which approaches seem to work better than others, so I think she can formulate how she wants to develop her practice. That is one of the reasons, but not the only or the main reason, I think. She also wants to visit my aunt, my father's youngest sister, who is still alive and whom I go to visit when I go to India. She wants to visit her as well, who would be like a grandma to her. And she's got very interested in learning Gujarati, which is my husband's mother tongue, so she feels she wants to be able to understand the conversation that people make whom she's around in India, so she is teaching herself Gujarati right now.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Patel

Yes. So she can actually almost speak it, not very fluently, but she can make a simple conversation now in Gujarati, just from teaching herself.

Hampapur

That's pretty impressive.

Patel

Yes, yes, yes.

Hampapur

Was she able to understand while she was growing up?

Patel

She could understand, I would say. Yes, probably she would understand at least about 60 percent of the conversation. Yes.

Hampapur

Wow. And was her brother like that too?

Patel

Brother kind of understands, but he is not so much into languages as she is. I think he actually was exposed to Gujarati more than my daughter, because my mother-in-law used to live with us when he was very young, and she spoke in Gujarati. We spoke to her in Gujarati at home, so he heard a lot more Gujarati than she did. So his exposure to Gujarati has been more than my daughter's, but her interest in languages is more than his. She's just more of a language person. And so now that she's taken an interest, she's catching on pretty quickly to the language.

Hampapur

Okay. And how did you learn Gujarati?

Patel

I learned Gujarati because I grew up, as I was saying, in Bombay in this building where there were people of different communities, and there were a few families that were Gujarati families who would talk Gujarati. And then when I taught at a college, the college I taught at had a majority, a huge majority of Gujarati students, who would all be talking to each other in Gujarati, so I had a lot of exposure to listening to the language. And I'm pretty good at languages, so I learned Gujarati, and then after I got married, I talked to my mother-in-law in Gujarati, because she would come and live with us in the U.S. for about six months, then go to India for a few months, go back and forth, and so I had a good exposure, a good practice while talking to her. So that is how I learned Gujarati, and so my daughter is doing pretty well with it.

Hampapur

Wow. I'm impressed. Languages are hard for me, so I'm impressed to hear that.

Patel

Yes, it's good.

Hampapur

Do you speak any other languages?

Patel

I speak Spanish, pretty fluently, actually, because since I was running the restaurant, I had a couple of guys working in the kitchen who spoke Spanish, and some of them did not speak much of English at the time, so I decided I'd have to learn some Spanish words, and so I took a couple of Spanish classes at Santa Monica College a long time back, and then I practice all the time, so I'm really fluent in Spanish and I enjoy speaking it very much.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Patel

Yes. In fact, if I have employees who speak English, I tend to speak to them in Spanish just because I like to speak Spanish. Yes.

Hampapur

Okay, I think.[End of interview]

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