

A TEI Project

Interview of Hema Veeragoudar

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1. Transcript

1.1. Session 1 (August 2, 2010)

Hampapur

It is August 2, 2010. This is Veena Hampapur, and I'm here today with Hema.
Thank you for joining me today for this interview.

Veeragoudar

You're welcome.

Hampapur

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

Veeragoudar

Sure. I was born in a city called Kolhapur, which is in the State of Maharashtra in India. I was brought up on a sugar-factory colony where my dad used to work as the deputy general manager, and so until I was sixteen years old I was living on the sugar-factory colony, and life there was like a close-knit family. Neighbors were just like families. We could go anytime. The doors were open. We could go say, hi, auntie, go to their house and go and see the friends. It was so safe that we could play outside until seven, eight o'clock. There was no problem, and so the life was very easy and not afraid of anything. I studied there until--elementary school was on the colony--until fourth grade.

Hampapur

Can I interrupt you one second?

Veeragoudar

Sure.

Hampapur

Can you explain what the--it was a sugar--

Veeragoudar

It was a sugar-factory colony, where my--

Hampapur

Can you explain what that is?

Veeragoudar

They used to make sugar from the sugar cane. Yes, it was a sugar-cane--I mean, the sugar factory. They produced the sugar, manufactured sugar.

Hampapur

So everyone living around you was involved in that as well?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Mostly everybody was working for the sugar factory, so they had housing there.

Hampapur

Okay. Was that the big industry in your city, or were there other--

Veeragoudar

Yes, it was a big industry in the city.

Hampapur

And just to clarify, what state was your city located in?

Veeragoudar

In Maharashtra.

Hampapur

Can you describe to me your neighborhood a little bit, what it looked like? I'm not familiar with that city.

Veeragoudar

Oh, okay. The neighborhood, since I lived in the colony, pretty much the housing was the similar type, tract housing, like two-bedroom houses. There were a couple of bungalows where it was larger. They had like a backyard, front yard, and lots of land, open land.

Hampapur

And had your parents grown up there as well?

Veeragoudar

No. My parents were from Sangli, which is also in Maharashtra, and my dad moved to work there, to Kolhapur, which is just thirty miles distance between Sangli and Kolhapur.

Hampapur

And your mom moved when she got married?

Veeragoudar

Yes. She got married really young. They both got married young. My mom was--I think she was ten years old or something, and my dad thirteen, fourteen years old. And then even though she stayed in her in-laws' place, she went to school, and, of course, my dad did too, and he finished his bachelor's in sugar technology or agriculture.

Hampapur

Was he the first in his family to work in agriculture or in sugar?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Yes. His other brother was a lawyer, and the younger brother, he just did the farming.

Hampapur

Okay, I see. Did you have any siblings?

Veeragoudar

Yes. I have three older sisters and one younger sister, so we are five. And there's a lot of age distance between sisters; we're all sisters. So like maybe when I was, I think, seven or eight years old, my oldest sister got married.

Hampapur

Did you spend any time with--were any of your siblings close to you in age, or all of them there was big gaps?

Veeragoudar

There is a gap, yes, there are gaps. But we're still close, very close. I go now, almost every year I have been going recently and seeing them, and they visited here.

Hampapur

Okay. Can you describe to me what your home was like where you grew up?

Veeragoudar

Oh, okay. We used to live in a bungalow, which had about, I think, maybe three or four bedrooms, and there was a big backyard where they had mango trees and fruit trees, a lot of fruit trees. And then my mom was very interested in growing vegetables and also we had lots of vegetables; of course the flower gardening and all that. And we used to have a garden from the company. They used to provide gardeners, so they can take care of the yard and everything.

Hampapur

Did the housing come with the company?

Veeragoudar

Oh, yes, yes.

Hampapur

Okay, so that's the tract housing you mentioned.

Veeragoudar

Yes. But this was like--they had two bungalows. One was for the deputy manager and one for the engineer. Two bungalows, and then there was a little back housing.

Hampapur

And was your backyard shared with the other families, or was it private?

Veeragoudar

Just the next bungalow, yes. But they had their own backyard, like they had a backyard, and there was a little fence like over here.

Hampapur

Okay. I'm starting to get a picture in my mind now. Do you remember what kind of fruit trees you had, what kind of fruits?

Veeragoudar

Oh, we had lots of mango trees, and there's another fruit called jambu, and chikoo, and wawa.

Hampapur

And you could just take the fruits and--

Veeragoudar

Yes, we could eat.

Hampapur

That's nice. Do you remember what kind of vegetables your mother used to grow?

Veeragoudar

Oh, yes. I remember cauliflower and beans, things like that.

Hampapur

Was your mom at home while you were growing up?

Veeragoudar

Yes. She was a stay-at-home mom.

Hampapur

Okay. So you must have got to spend a lot of time with her.

Veeragoudar

A lot of time with her, and she used to take care of us. Before going to school, all the food was ready, and after coming from, the snacks were ready. So she was a stay-home mom and took good care of us.

Hampapur

What did your father have to do for his work?

Veeragoudar

He was also a chief chemist, which he has to go and, of course, manage and see everything is taken care in the factory, all the work and all that.

Hampapur

You mentioned that you, a lot of your neighbors and everyone was friendly.

Veeragoudar

Yes. We were just like a family. If anybody had a wedding, we will spend time in their house all day and help them out and all that. It was just like your cousins; the friends were like cousins.

Hampapur

Did you have any other family in town?

Veeragoudar

Over here?

Hampapur

No, while you were growing--

Veeragoudar
Not really, just acquaintances, no close family there.

Hampapur
Okay. So it sounds like most of the people you saw, like you said, were your neighbors who you spent time with.

Veeragoudar
Yes, yes.

Hampapur
Did your neighbors have children your age?

Veeragoudar
Yes, they did. That's how we were growing up together with school or playing outside, all different games.

Hampapur
Can you tell me more about the games that you used to play?

Veeragoudar
Yes. We used to play badminton, and then, of course, when we were younger, hide and seek and all those games. And there's, what do you call it, the p_____, they play, p_____ or something as they call it. It's like a frisbee, but it's played with a net.

Hampapur
Okay. So it sounds like--

Veeragoudar
That game.

Hampapur
So it sounds like you spent a lot of time outdoors.

Veeragoudar
Table tennis. Yes, outdoors a lot, yes. We never used to stay home. Especially after coming from school, have a snack and then just go play.

Hampapur
Sounds nice. Were your parents also close with all the neighbors?

Veeragoudar
Yes, yes.

Hampapur
Was everybody else from Maharashtra as well, or were there people from other parts?

Veeragoudar
There were some people from other parts, some from Punjab and Delhi, from Delhi and all that. And then later on from South also there were a lot of people coming, but most of them were Maharashtrians.

Hampapur

And when people came, it was to work for like the sugar colony, like you said.

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

Did your family have a radio?

Veeragoudar

We used to have a radio, yes. No TV, so we used to listen to the music and the news.

Hampapur

What kind of music did they play?

Veeragoudar

Mostly Hindi film music or the Marathi music, folk music or the movie music.

Hampapur

Did most people have a radio, or was that rare while you were growing up?

Veeragoudar

Most of them had radios, yes. That was pretty common.

Hampapur

Did people follow sports?

Veeragoudar

Yes, on the radio, cricket, especially cricket.

Hampapur

What did you like to listen to? What was your favorite thing?

Veeragoudar

I used to like Hindi movie music or the Marathi music, mostly Hindi music. On Wednesdays or something, there used to be a series of like music from the film. It was called "Binaca Geetmala." All the famous music used to come on, popular music.

Hampapur

Did television come when you were older, or was that after you moved?

Veeragoudar

No, after I left India.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Veeragoudar

Yes. So I left India when I was almost twenty-four, so after that, television came.

Hampapur

Okay. Was there a movie theater or anything like that in your town?

Veeragoudar

Yes. We used to go to a lot of movies, movie theaters. Yes, we had a lot of movie theaters around there, but we had to go to the city, so take a bus or

something and go to the city to see a movie. But we all friends used to go, sometimes family. My dad will take us by car.

Hampapur

Would you say going to the movies was a popular activity back then?

Veeragoudar

Yes. That was the most entertainment.

Hampapur

Are there any movies or actors that stick out in your mind that were very popular in that time, when you were growing up?

Veeragoudar

Yes, at that time was Dilip Kumar, Vyjantimala, Sunil Dutt, Dev Anand.

Hampapur

So you would watch Hindi movies then.

Veeragoudar

Hindi movies, and my dad also used to take us to English movies, when good English movies used to come, like "Ben Hur," I remember, and then some other movies also. Oh, yes, I remember seeing with friends "Vertigo" and then "Sound of Music," those movies. Then my dad will take us for matinée shows when some nice movies come, English movies.

Hampapur

Okay. You mentioned your dad had a car?

Veeragoudar

Yes. He had a car from the company he used to work for. They used to provide him car, where he has to just call and the [unclear] will bring the car.

Hampapur

Did the other families also have cars from the company as well?

Veeragoudar

Only like the officer position can have the car, whoever it is in that position.

Hampapur

Okay. So you mentioned that you would have to go to the city to watch the movies. Did you go to the city for any other activities?

Veeragoudar

Of course, like with the middle school, because the school there was up to fourth grade, and then we had to go to city for further education.

Hampapur

I see.

Veeragoudar

College or high school and all.

Hampapur

How far was that?

Veeragoudar

It was about five miles, five, six miles. But they used to have bus there. The company used to have a bus, and they used to have a bus going to the city to bring all the people who--some people used to work but they used to live in the city, so to bring them, they used to have a bus going there, so we used to take that bus to go to the city. And then while coming, we'll take the public transportation.

Hampapur

Okay. So it sounds like it was pretty easy to get around then.

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes.

Hampapur

What about shopping? Would you have to go to the city for that as well?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Vegetables and all, we used to get them around, because it was open land, so there were lots of farming lands and all that, so the vegetables we used to get, but still, like every Sunday we all used to go to the city. Whole family will go.

Hampapur

And what did you do on those--

Veeragoudar

Just do the shopping, and sometimes we used to go to the temple there.

Hampapur

Was that something you enjoyed, going to the city?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes, going to the city, yes.

Hampapur

What kind of temple did your family used to attend?

Veeragoudar

We used to go to Jain temple.

Hampapur

Okay. And you went once a week, is that right?

Veeragoudar

Yes, once a week, sometimes once a month, it all depends.

Hampapur

Did your family do any religious activities at home?

Veeragoudar

Well, in Jain we don't do too much religious things at home, so maybe just a little, putting light in front of a picture of Bhagwan Mahavir, and that's about it, nothing really big. It's not like Hindus, how they do big poojas and all. It's not done that way. You either go to the temple and do it there, or like if there is, say, some day like you want to do something for the house, chanting pooja or

something, then they will have the priest come in and do the pooja at home, but nothing done at home.

Hampapur

Okay. Were there any special religious holidays or any big events like that?

Veeragoudar

They have the Mahavir Jayanti, that's the big holiday they give for Jain, Jain people. I mean, for everybody it's closed, everything is closed, bank holiday and all that for Mahavir Jayanti.

Hampapur

And how did your family celebrate that?

Veeragoudar

That we celebrated like cooking food, going to the temple. That is the time we also went to the temple. And then, of course, we celebrated other festivals also, like Diwali and Dasara and all that, and during those times also just like how Hindus do, similar, similar way. We just used to go to the temple.

Hampapur

Were there any big celebrations for Diwali or Dasara, like you mentioned, since many people celebrated those?

Veeragoudar

Yes, same way like Hindus do. Yes. It was a big, big celebration.

Hampapur

Was it just at the temple, or did the town do anything?

Veeragoudar

No, everybody did in their own home, but just like once a year at least you go to the temple, so we used to go like for big festivals.

Hampapur

I see. Okay. And the neighbors that you grew up with, were they Jain as well, or what religion?

Veeragoudar

No. Most of them were Brahmins, or in Maharashtra they're called Marathas, yes, but they're Hindus.

Hampapur

Were people familiar with Jains?

Veeragoudar

Yes, they were. Yes, they were familiar.

Hampapur

Did you have to follow a special diet?

Veeragoudar

We really didn't follow, but Jainism, they say not to eat onions, garlic, things like that, but we really didn't follow that. Only like my mom will follow in the

Shravan Mas, the four months, Chaturmas, she'll follow that, but we didn't really follow anything.

Hampapur

And when you were growing up, did you ever go visit your parents' original town or have visitors?

Veeragoudar

Yes. We used to go to see my uncle and my cousins. That I used to enjoy, going and seeing the cousins, yes.

Hampapur

So how often would you visit them?

Veeragoudar

Maybe once in three, four months, or if there is any occasion, you know, weddings and things like that. Then we'll go a couple of days ahead. Or in summertime go and spend some time.

Hampapur

And how did you travel there?

Veeragoudar

Mostly by car. Yes, car or sometimes bus too.

Hampapur

And what kinds of things would you do when you went and visited your family?

Veeragoudar

My uncle had a farm, so we used to go to farm and then just play out there with cousins. That's about it.

Hampapur

The same types of games that you--

Veeragoudar

Same types of games, card games or the carrom, carrom board, or just go for a walk, those things.

Hampapur

What kind of farm did your uncle have?

Veeragoudar

He used to grow--I think he had wheat, rice, and things like that, and also he had that corn-flakes factory. He used to make corn flakes, or the poha. Yes, he used to make that, and then he had grapes and things like that.

Hampapur

Had you visited any of his factories, or seen around the farm?

Veeragoudar

Yes, his factory, it was right on the farm, so we used to go there, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. And what was that like?

Veeragoudar

It was a small place. They used to just make the corn flakes, and then he used to make the poha, t_____ poha. That's about it.

Hampapur

It sounds like you grew up knowing a lot about different agriculture, with your dad and the sugar.

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. Well, you had mentioned schooling a little bit earlier, so going back to that, can you tell me about your elementary schools? Do you have any memory from those days?

Veeragoudar

Elementary school was a small place. They were up to fourth grade, whoever the kids in the area. Even like kids of officers or the laborers, they all used to go to the same school, so we all used to together play, and I remember some teachers.

Hampapur

So all the neighborhood children, then, went to the same school.

Veeragoudar

Went to the same school, yes.

Hampapur

Can you describe what the school looked like?

Veeragoudar

It was single-story school, just like straight and then there were classes for second, third, fourth grade. And also they used to teach us like academic as well as they used to teach dance, the folk dances and all that. So whenever in the sugar factory, they used to have the Ganpati Utsav, they used to celebrate grandly, so all for four or five days, they used to have drama, dance, everything, so they used to show our dances also there. And then as we started growing up, then we used to do a drama, practice a drama and do it there. They used to have different variety of programs. They used to invite people from outside, singers or they used to have big dramas, and then little people like us would be--all the kids used to do some too.

Hampapur

Was that something you looked forward to?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Yes. We used to have a lot of fun for four or five days.

Hampapur

Are there any dramas or dance performances that you did that stick out in your mind?

Veeragoudar

I can't remember. But we did folk dances. There was a dance with a song called "nacharay murao." It's about a peacock, peacock dance. So that I remember, because the big peacock feathers they had put on us and nice costume. That I remember.

Hampapur

That must have been exciting for you.

Veeragoudar

Oh, very much, very much.

Hampapur

And so there were Maharashtrian folk dances?

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

Okay. And who taught them?

Veeragoudar

He was a Kathak teacher. His name was Mr. Mirajkar, I think, and then he used to have a school, a dance school in the city. But he used to come specially and teach the kids dance there.

Hampapur

Okay. And then for the dramas, who used to like write those?

Veeragoudar

Well, they'll get a book and from that some dramas are written. Some people write dramas. From that they will produce, yes. So whoever the elderly person there who has interest in that, they will teach us the acting, what to say and how to do it.

Hampapur

Okay. And so were the dramas that you performed well known stories, or just you picked something from--

Veeragoudar

Some picked stories.

Hampapur

And so your school was coed then, boys and girls were together?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes, until elementary. Actually, then the fifth and sixth grade also was coed, and then I went to girls' school when I went to high school. I went to girls' school.

Hampapur

And what language was the instruction in in grade school?

Veeragoudar

In Marathi. They used to teach us English also, but mostly Marathi. Everything was in Marathi otherwise.

Hampapur

Oh, that's right. You mentioned you saw the English movies, so I guess you'd have to understand.

Veeragoudar

Yes, basically, basic English.

Hampapur

Okay. And then for fifth and sixth grade, where did you go to school?

Veeragoudar

I went to English medium school, which was also close by there, near the city. I stayed there two years and then actually from there I went to stay with my older sister in Mumbai one year. I stayed with her.

Hampapur

And that was in seventh grade?

Veeragoudar

Seventh grade.

Hampapur

Okay. And why did you go to Bombay?

Veeragoudar

Just my father wanted me to go. He said, "No, you should go." He used to think that I'm too stubborn, I need somebody to, what do you call them, somebody to straighten me up. [laughter] And my sister's husband, he was very strict, so that's why he wanted me to go there.

Hampapur

Right.

Veeragoudar

I stayed one year, and then I stayed in Pune one year. I think at that time I was in seventh grade, maybe, or eighth grade, in Pune.

Hampapur

Who did you stay with in Pune?

Veeragoudar

I stayed in a boarding school one year. And then from there, then I didn't like the boarding school, so I have one year I stayed there, and then I went back to-- that's the time I went to all-girls' school in Marathi medium.

Hampapur

Okay. And then what did you think of Bombay? Do you have any memories from that year?

Veeragoudar

Yes, I have a little bit. I had to walk quite a bit to go to school, but I used to walk with the neighbors, my sister's neighbors' daughter, which was good,

because in Bombay how you had to go through the [unclear], so we used to walk together. I remember a little bit of that. But it was quite far.

Hampapur

Was Bombay much bigger than your home city?

Veeragoudar

Oh, yes, yes. My home city, it's a small town, small city, small-industry city.

Hampapur

So was that an adjustment or kind of a surprise for you, going to such a big city?

Veeragoudar

Yes, it was kind of adjustment. But my sister was there, and my older sister is like my mother, so she was taking good care of me.

Hampapur

Okay. Then how did you end up at boarding school for eighth grade?

Veeragoudar

My dad thought maybe that will be good there, and so he said, "Try that," because the education in Pune used to be very good. So he said--and that special school was for all-girls' school, and it was good, a good school. But I just couldn't stay away from the family. So I told my dad when I came back in summer, I said, "I'm not going to go back there." So he said, "That's okay." Then I stayed back in Kolhapur and went to all-girls' school there.

Hampapur

Do you have any memories from your high school in Kolhapur?

Veeragoudar

That school is still there, and a little bit I remember the playground and how we used to play there, and then the lunchtime, all we friends used to get together and we'll always share lunch. If somebody has not brought lunch, then we'll say, "Oh, take it from here," sharing and all. It was fun until high school.

Hampapur

So you used to pack lunch from home?

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

What types of food did people bring to school?

Veeragoudar

Mostly we used to bring chapati bhaji, mostly chapati bhaji.

Hampapur

Did you have any extracurricular activities or things you used to do in high school?

Veeragoudar

I didn't really. At that time, it wasn't really a thing to do, like learning dance or anything. It wasn't that popular. Rarely people will be learning music or dance, so I really didn't do any.

Hampapur

Okay. And what language was the high school in?

Veeragoudar

It was in Marathi.

Hampapur

Marathi, okay. Did you continue to study English?

Veeragoudar

Yes. They did teach English, yes.

Hampapur

How important was it to your parents that you did well in school? Was that something they emphasized?

Veeragoudar

Oh, yes. It was very important, very important, because they wanted us to go to college or study further and do something good.

Hampapur

So did you grow up with that expectation, that you would go to college someday?

Veeragoudar

Oh, yes, yes. All my sisters went, so, yes, that was a must. Yes.

Hampapur

Had your parents gone to college?

Veeragoudar

My dad did, yes. He had a bachelor's in agriculture.

Hampapur

That's right, you mentioned that.

Veeragoudar

Yes, so it was very important for us to go, because my older sisters, all, they went to college. One has a bachelor's and then B.A. The other one, I think she finished bachelor's, and then third one, she has bachelor's and master's, so she was a professor of economics and sociology. And my younger sister also has bachelor's in commerce.

Hampapur

And in school, did your teachers encourage you to go to college and do well?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Yes.

Hampapur

So did most of the kids in your neighborhood end up attending college?

Veeragoudar

Yes, most of them did. Actually, later on when I was sixteen, my father passed away. Then we moved--he had built a house, so we moved over there, which was about another few miles away from the sugar factory. So me, my mom, and my younger sister used to live there in the house, and so from there I used to go to college then. That's when--after high school, we moved there.

Hampapur

And do you think at that time girls were equally encouraged as boys to pursue further education?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes, they did, very much.

Hampapur

And when you were in high school, were you on a specific track, or was it all general subjects?

Veeragoudar

Mostly general subjects. After high school, then you can choose if you want to go to science or like arts, meaning sociology, economics, and all those things, political science or whatever you want to do, but there were like arts and science at that time, so you either choose arts or science, whatever you--I chose arts, and I did in sociology.

Hampapur

And how did you enjoy that?

Veeragoudar

I enjoyed it very much, sociology. I used to like sociology.

Veeragoudar

So was it similar to high school, where you would travel to the city by bus?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes, same way, because we used to live in the suburbs, so even for college we had to take a bus and go.

Hampapur

And was your college an all-women's college, or coed?

Veeragoudar

No, it was coed.

Hampapur

Was it mostly people from Kolhapur, or did people from outside also come?

Veeragoudar

Well, Kolhapur and adjacent areas, little villages, from there all the kids used to come.

Hampapur

Are there any events or projects or anything that sticks out to you from college, any special memories?

Veeragoudar

Special memories. We went to take part in drama in college, and my mom did not allow me to do that, because it was different. At that time, talking to boys and all was not that common, was not allowed. They didn't want us to take part in those dramas and things like that, because people might say something, so my mom didn't want me to take part. And I had signed up for drama, because I used to love to act. I loved it, but she said, "No, you can't."

Hampapur

You must have been upset.

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes. My sister and my mom said no, because then when you have the program, then the boys, they create problems, so she said no.

Hampapur

Were there any other activities that you were involved with in college that you could do?

Veeragoudar

Not really, no. It wasn't common, that common to have any other activities in college, or you go and do some social work or something. Other than that, at that time--just you go to college, come home. I mean, we were allowed a little bit. My mom wasn't that strict. I used to go to my friends' house. We would just sit and chat and listen to the music or something, but otherwise there was nothing, really, going on.

Hampapur

Did you have any chores or responsibilities at home that you had to do?

Veeragoudar

Yes. After like when we finished dinner or like lunch, cleaning up afterwards, those things. My sister had to do some and I had to do some. And mostly cooking and cleaning, we used to have servants cleaning at home, but if there is anything extra needed, my mom will tell us to do, or like washing outgoing clothes and things like that we used to do ourselves. [unclear]

Hampapur

What kinds of things did the servants do?

Veeragoudar

They did the cleaning, the sweeping, mopping, and washing clothes and pots, and they did all the dishwashing.

Hampapur

And so who did the cooking at home?

Veeragoudar

Most of the time my mom did. Once in a while, we used to have somebody coming and doing the cooking also. These people, this family, they always lived with us. It's like brothers. What they used to do, sugar factory used to have a season. During the season, they'll get the work in the sugar factory, so

they'll work during their like night shift or day shift, and when they were there not working, they'll cook for us, and they'll stay in our house. They used to--

Hampapur

Right. So that way they can work all year.

Veeragoudar

They can work, yes, during the season, and then when they're not working, they used to go back to their town. And when they used to be there, they'll help my mom, cooking and all that.

Hampapur

What was the sugar season, do you remember?

Veeragoudar

It used to be from, I think, mostly from November, November to January or February, something like that.

Hampapur

Okay, so it was pretty short, then.

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes, yes. When the sugar cane grows, then they take the--I mean, people bring it by bullock carts or by trucks, and then they weigh, and then they pay them accordingly, so at that time there will be work.

Hampapur

Okay. But that didn't affect your father.

Veeragoudar

No, no. His work was all the time. These were just the labor type of work, where people had to--they'll hire seasonal workers.

Hampapur

Right, the manual labor. I see. Did you have a refrigerator at home?

Veeragoudar

Not when I was very little, but like maybe about I was maybe thirteen years old or something like that. At that time we had a refrigerator.

Hampapur

So did food shopping have to be done on a daily basis?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Yes.

Hampapur

And who used to do that?

Veeragoudar

My mom mostly. Once in a while, we'll help her, but she used to do it.

Hampapur

Okay. And when you got to high school, college age, what kinds of things did you like to do for fun?

Veeragoudar

Mostly going to the movies or going for a walk. I used to love playing badminton. Yes, that was my favorite thing. So we had a place, like a gym where--well, it was a big hall where they used to have all entertainment. There was a stage and everything, and then when there's nothing going on, at that time they had a badminton court also, so we used to go and play indoor badminton.

Hampapur

Was that for like a community center?

Veeragoudar

Yes, it was like for all people living in the sugar-factory complex.

Hampapur

Was that provided by the company as well?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes.

Hampapur

And did you ever go there for the other entertainment you mentioned?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Whenever they used to have, yes, especially in Ganpati Utsav.

Hampapur

And what types of other entertainment did they have besides that?

Veeragoudar

Besides that, sometimes they used to have music, a classical music program and all. We didn't understand, but we used to go and sit there and listen. Or sometimes some good dramas or something, or if somebody has come from some other state, Hindustani music and all that. They used to have a lot of that.

Hampapur

So it sounds like dramas were pretty popular [unclear].

Veeragoudar

Oh, yes, they are very popular in Kolhapur and all that area, Maharashtra area.

Hampapur

Did you ever see any professional dramas?

Veeragoudar

Yes. We used to go--there was a theater where we used to go once in a while, when there was a good drama or something, my dad used to take us.

Hampapur

And it sounds like you had quite an interest in dramas. When did that develop?

Veeragoudar

Because since we were little, we used to always watch, right, every Ganpati Utsav there was a drama going on, or entertainment activities going on, so we used to always--that's why I was very interested in it. Even my sisters used to take part, so we all were interested in that.

Hampapur

Yes, it sounds like fun.

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

Did you have any patriotic activities in school or in your community while growing up?

Veeragoudar

Patriotic, only for thirteenth of August. They used to have in the morning the flag salutation and all that, yes. That was in the sugar factory, in the factory place. They used to invite everybody, and we all used to go in the morning, and they used to have jain da vandan, which is flag salutation. And then they used to sing the anthem. That's what mostly we did.

Hampapur

And while you were growing up, did your family ever go on any trips or anything besides visiting family?

Veeragoudar

Yes. One year I remember we went--my dad was going to Delhi for some kind of meeting, so then we went to Delhi, Agra and a Northern India tour, like Delhi, Agra, Fatepur Sikri and all that, Girnar, where there is another temple of Jain people, so we went there. And in Delhi, my cousin used to be there, so we stayed with her for a few days, and then she showed us around.

Hampapur

How old were you then?

Veeragoudar

I was about twelve years old, I think, eleven, twelve years old.

Hampapur

That must have been exciting.

Veeragoudar

Yes. We all went, actually. All my sisters also joined, my sisters, their husbands. My older sister and, yes, two sisters had kids, so we all went, by train.

Hampapur

Was that your first time going on a train?

Veeragoudar

That long trip, yes. We went by train before to Mumbai and all, but this was a long trip, so it was fun.

Hampapur

Did people talk to each other on the trains, or was it private compartments?

Veeragoudar

It was a private compartment, because we were so many people, so it was a private compartment.

Hampapur

Okay. And do you have any special memories from that trip, or a place that you really liked?

Veeragoudar

Yes. I had liked Abu, Abu Pahad and Abu mountain.

Hampapur

I'm not familiar.

Veeragoudar

No? It's between Rajasthan and Gujarat. I think it's a border kind of, and it's like a mountainous place, and again, they have a Jain temple there, which is where c_____, I forgot the name. Recently I had been there too. It's beautiful there, very.

Hampapur

So do people go hiking?

Veeragoudar

Well, just sightseeing. You can see hiking. People might be going hiking also.

Hampapur

And people go see the temple?

Veeragoudar

Temple, Dilwara Temple it's called, Dilwara Temple. Beautiful carving in there. That's the main attraction there.

Hampapur

Okay. And when you were traveling in the North, did your family speak Hindi?

Veeragoudar

Yes, we speak Hindi a little bit. My brother-in-law spoke Hindi.

Hampapur

Had you grown up learning Hindi as well?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes. We had special classes. I mean, in school also they used to teach Hindi, but also they used to give some exams, like special classes they used to have. Number one, number two, they used to teach Hindi, and then they had the state exams which you give. I did that, I think, two of them.

Hampapur

Was that required?

Veeragoudar

It wasn't required. It's if you want to do it. We used to do it for extracurricular activity.

Hampapur

Right, right. Okay, so you grew up speaking three languages then.

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

So you said you were studying sociology in college. How did your family feel about that?

Veeragoudar

My mom was okay with that. She didn't mind. And then I thought I'll do sociology, maybe if I can, I'll do the master's later on if I had to, but I got married before I graduated. So what I did was I went back to school after I got married. I had to finish two years. After I finished two years, then I stayed with my mom while doing that, and then my husband, at that time he was in Bombay, so then after finishing that, then I joined him in Bombay. We stayed there for five years, and then he decided to emigrate to USA, so he came ahead and I came after one year and joined him.

Hampapur

Okay, so just to make sure I have this timeline straight, you were in college for a while, then you got married during college, and then you were staying with your mother while you finished your degree.

Veeragoudar

Right.

Hampapur

I see. Okay. Why did you decide to get married at that time?

Veeragoudar

Well, it's arranged marriage, and so when they say you'll get married, you get married, that's it. So then my husband and my mom, they all decided that I should finish, because I was eighteen years old, eighteen or nineteen years old at that time, so they said, "Just finish your degree. It's good to have." So I finished it.

Hampapur

Were your friends getting married at that time as well?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Yes, some of them. One of them got married, just she got married after me, after me but around then, one or two of them, yes. But they also finished college, both of them.

Hampapur

Where did you get married?

Veeragoudar

I got married in Kolhapur, same place where I was born.

Hampapur

Where did it take place, at home or in a temple?

Veeragoudar

No. It took place in--it's called Jain Bording. There was a temple there. That's where I got married.

Hampapur

And how long was the wedding?

Veeragoudar

The wedding was two days, two days, because some ceremonies were day before and then the main ceremony, so two days.

Hampapur

Okay. And was there a reception also?

Veeragoudar

No, no reception. At that time, they didn't do much of that reception separate. Wedding time, they used to invite everybody, and actual wedding took place in--it didn't take in Jain Bording. It did take place in--there was a movie theater. That's where it took place, the wedding.

Hampapur

Oh, wow. [laughter]

Veeragoudar

They used to rent movie theaters at that time or big halls, but mostly the movie theaters and things like that, and that's where the wedding happened. So they invite everybody at that time and then they invite for lunch also, so the lunch was in the Jain Bording there, yes. So no reception separate.

Hampapur

Okay. I guess a movie theater would be good, because of all that seating.

Veeragoudar

Yes, the seating is there, and then everybody comes and wishes you and gives gift right there, so they didn't have receptions at that time. There was no fashion of having a reception.

Hampapur

So it was mostly the--

Veeragoudar

Mostly the wedding time. They invite everybody for lunch and after the wedding, there's a lunch. That's it.

Hampapur

And how did you and all your friends feel about getting married?

Veeragoudar

Well, I didn't want to get married really, so what I did was I went and bought my admission first, so I thought I can avoid, because I'm taking admission to college, next year's admission. But my mom said, "No, no. Even if you get married, you will go to school, back to school, so don't worry about it." So since my dad was not alive, my uncle felt that he's responsible. My mom felt that she's responsible, so they wanted me to get married.

Hampapur

Right, so you're taken care of. Okay. Was it important to you to finish your degree?

Veeragoudar

Yes. I felt like finishing, yes, and at least I should have, because all my sisters had, so I said, at least I have to have bachelor's, whether I make use of it or not, but I should have it.

Hampapur

Right. Did your sisters do the same thing, get married and finish off their degrees?

Veeragoudar

No. They finished their degree first and then they got married, because my dad was like, "First education, then the marriage, and then if your husband wants, you guys can work, but you don't have to work when you're with me." That's how that time the attitude was, like you don't get degree just to work. Get degree, but work later on if your husbands wants to.

Hampapur

So the option to work was there.

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. And then so you moved to Bombay after you finished your degree?

Veeragoudar

Yes. I just was a housewife, because it was very hard to find a job at that time, and I was kind of scared to go to this big city and look for a job. I didn't even know how to do that, so I just didn't do anything. I just stayed home, and then we used to, of course, take care of my father-in-law, who was sick, so he used to often visit us to see the doctors and treatment. So there was a lot to do at home, so I just stayed home.

Hampapur

What part of Bombay were you living in?

Veeragoudar

In Bandra, Bandra East, government colony.

Hampapur

And so your husband had a government job?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Yes, he used to work at Kohina project.

Hampapur

What is that?

Veeragoudar

That's the Kohina Dam project, water dam.

Hampapur

Okay. And what was his position?

Veeragoudar

He was an engineer, designing.

Hampapur

How did you like living in Bombay?

Veeragoudar

It was fun. I made friends there, and there was a ladies' club, so we all used to get together and have some festivals and things like that. Then my neighbor was a very nice lady, so I used to go sit there, talk with her, or she'll come knock at the door and come. Then I had some friends from Kolhapur living there, so once in a while I'll go visit them or they'll come to my house. And then also in government colony there were about three, four buildings, like a square, and in the middle there was open ground, so kids used to play, or the adults will play badminton again, so I joined them to play badminton, so we used to have fun in the evening. Everybody used to play badminton, or we had a group where we used to collect some money to buy the shuttles and things like that.

Hampapur

You mentioned your ladies' club, so what kind of club was that? Who would join the club?

Veeragoudar

Ladies who stay at home. It wasn't nothing, really. They didn't do much anything. We just used to get together, that's it, have fun. [laughs]

Hampapur

It sounds like you had a lot of fun [unclear].

Veeragoudar

Yes, I had fun, yes.

Hampapur

Was Bombay very different at that time from now, would you say?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Now it's very busy. At that time it was busy too, but not that bad, yes. But since we lived, again, in the government colony, everything was close by there. So really, if I want to go to the movies or something, we'll go, take a bus and go, but otherwise everything was close by, so walking, we will do everything walking. Shopping and grocery shopping, everything was within the colony. It's a very big colony.

Hampapur

Would you go to the beach?

Veeragoudar

Once in a while, not that often.

Hampapur

Was Kolhapur a coastal town too?

Veeragoudar

No. It's a little bit away from coast.

Hampapur

Did you see your relatives much after you moved to Bombay?

Veeragoudar

Well, yes. Every year like in one month I used to go and stay with my mom. At that time, I'll go and visit my uncle, my aunties, I'll go and visit them.

Hampapur

Were they living in Kolhapur too at that time?

Veeragoudar

In Sangli, Sangli mostly.

Hampapur

Oh, the same uncle that had the farm.

Veeragoudar

Yes, about thirty miles away from there.

Hampapur

Was your husband's family in Bombay, from Bombay?

Veeragoudar

No. They are from Belgaum. So at the same time when I used to visit there in Kolhapur, I will go there also and stay there eight, ten days, and visit everybody, his aunties and everybody in Belgaum.

Hampapur

And how far was that from Kolhapur?

Veeragoudar

That is about seventy miles south.

Hampapur

So there's some distance there. Okay. So you mentioned after five years, your husband decided to come to the U.S., and so why did he decide to?

Veeragoudar

He just wanted to emigrate here and make some money. You know, better opportunities here. And also he wanted to go to school. He did go to school here, part-time, so he just wanted to come here, more opportunity here.

Hampapur

Was it common at that time for people to--

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes. A lot of his friends came, so that's how he came to know how to apply and all that, so he decided to come.

Hampapur

Okay. Were most people going to the U.S. at that time, or England, or?

Veeragoudar

There are people going to U.S., yes. I think a lot of people were coming to U.S. England, not that many, mostly U.S.

Hampapur

And had you heard anything about America while growing up?

Veeragoudar

We used to hear about President Kennedy and how he died and all that. It used to come in the news. Or on the radio we used to hear, that's about it, not much really.

Hampapur

Okay. So did you have any expectations of what you thought it would be like?

Veeragoudar

No, I didn't know what to expect here. Yes, I knew that it's cold, because we landed in New York, actually, so I knew that it's very cold and it snows; so didn't know what to expect.

Hampapur

How did you feel about coming here?

Veeragoudar

I didn't want to leave my family and come. I wasn't really ready. I was telling my husband that, "I will also work here. We'll be better off here," in India. But, no, he had made up his mind, so then I said, oh, well, let's see how it is. For a while, at least, we can go and see. And we stayed here.

Hampapur

So when you and your husband were first thinking about it, it wasn't like a permanent settling.

Veeragoudar

He wanted to stay permanent. I was thinking, oh, maybe a few years and then we can go back. Yes.

Hampapur

And did you know anyone in the U.S. besides--

Veeragoudar

No. He knew one of the friends, but that's about it. I didn't know anybody. I had a distant cousin, but I had never seen her much, because there was a lot of age difference, so I had never seen her. But later on we got acquainted, and then we've become real good friends. But I didn't know anybody otherwise.

Hampapur

How did your family feel about you moving?

Veeragoudar

Oh, they were telling my husband too not to go also, because at that time when he came, I think the unemployment was high, and especially in the engineering

and all, so they didn't want him to come. They were saying, "Don't go. We hear all these things." But he had made up his mind, so he didn't listen to anybody.

Hampapur

And what year was it then?

Veeragoudar

I think in '71, 1971.

Hampapur

Okay. What kind of process did he have to go through to immigrate here?

Veeragoudar

He had to apply for immigration visa, first apply and then they call you for interview, and then you provide different types of papers and things like that, and then within I think a couple of months, he got visa. It didn't take too long. At that time it was very easy to get the immigration visa.

Hampapur

Was he already admitted to a school, or did he do that after?

Veeragoudar

He had taken admission to Stevens Institute in Hoboken, New Jersey. Yes, he had taken admission already there, but he came as an immigrant, not as a student. And then later on he started taking part-time classes. Once he got a job and all that, then he started taking them.

Hampapur

Was there a gap between when he came and when you came?

Veeragoudar

About a year, one year.

Hampapur

And so what did you do in that year?

Veeragoudar

I just learned--went to typing school, learned typing and all that, and just spent my time with my mother.

Hampapur

Okay, so did you go back to Kolhapur then?

Veeragoudar

Yes, I stayed in Kolhapur with my mother.

Hampapur

And why did you decide to do the typing course?

Veeragoudar

I thought to get a job it will be easy here, so I just learned. It was a manual typewriter there. At that time, electric were not there, so I learned manual typewriting.

Hampapur

Were there any other plans you made in that year to help adjust to the U.S., or for your move, anything you did?

Veeragoudar

Nothing really. That's about it, learning typing. Give typing exams, they used to have, again, the state exams. You go in the hall, sit in a big hall and then they tell you, "Start typing." Then you start typing and then they'll measure your speed according to how much you did.

Hampapur

Okay. And how did you keep in touch with your husband?

Veeragoudar

With letters, with letters.

Hampapur

Was that the way that people--

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes. Phone wasn't common, because not everybody had phone also there, so just with the letters.

Hampapur

Why did you go a year later, after him?

Veeragoudar

For him to get settled, because you had to have a job. He has to support me till I find something, so he came with a thousand dollars, with a thousand dollars, and so he had to find a job, and it was quite hard to find a job in the beginning. You had to do any kind of jobs you find, clerical, whatever it is, shipping clerk, so that's why I decided once he gets settled, then I can come.

Hampapur

Okay. And what kind of process did you have to go through for immigration?

Veeragoudar

Oh, he had to send me the support documentation and everything, and then I still again I had to go provide all the paperwork and then go for a visa interview. I had to go to Mumbai.

Hampapur

What did they interview you about?

Veeragoudar

Just why are you going, similar questions, why are you going. Then they checked all the papers. If something was missing, then they said, "Oh, you have to come again," next day or something. "We need copy of this," so we had to go and get the copy of that. Then they said they'll mail the visa to me, so what we did was we made a copy, and one of my husband's friends was helping me. So he said he will give it to them, and he will pick up--no. They said somebody can come and pick up the visa, so he said he'll come and pick up the visa. So then I went home to Kolhapur.

Hampapur

At that time, was there any concern about not getting your paperwork, or was it just a matter of you have to turn in all the paperwork, do the interview, and it's guaranteed you'll get the visa?

Veeragoudar

Yes. It was guaranteed. Once you gave everything, the visa was guaranteed. There was no problem at all.

Hampapur

Okay. So it sounds like it was pretty--

Veeragoudar

Yes, because he had already come over here.

Hampapur

Right. Okay.[End of interview]

1.2. Session 2 (August 3, 2010)

Hampapur

This is Veena Hampapur here again with Hema. So last time we left off talking about your upcoming migration to the United States, and I wanted to ask you, what types of things did you pack and bring with you from India?

Veeragoudar

Since I was coming to New York and I was coming in January, so I had bought a winter jacket, a long coat, and, of course, I didn't buy any outfits there. I don't think they used to sell at that time, so I just used to wear saris for a while, so that's the main thing I bought. I brought some spices and things like that to start off with. That's about it, and the clothing, regular like saris and the jacket, and they used to say you need a blanket in the airplane, so the blanket and things like that.

Hampapur

Okay. You had mentioned last time that you didn't know too much about America. Had your husband told you anything in his letters after he had been there for one year?

Veeragoudar

Yes. He used to tell me how he's looking for a job and what is happening here, wherever he is going, and he used to go New York by taking a train to look for a job, and what he used to eat, like a pizza was the cheapest thing to eat at that time, so pizza and soda or something like that. He used to tell different things about America [unclear]. Mostly I remember that, how he used to go look for a job and how he was sharing an apartment with five different people, from India, of course, and then they used to share cooking also. One day each person will do some cooking, so different types of food.

Hampapur

Okay. So it sounds like you had kind of the idea of the day-to-day sort of.

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

Where exactly was your husband living?

Veeragoudar

He used to live in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Hampapur

And he was attending school as well?

Veeragoudar

No, he had not started yet. He started later on, after a year or so.

Hampapur

What airline did you take to come to the U.S.?

Veeragoudar

At that time I think I took Pan Am Airline. That was the popular airline, I guess, at that time, so I took Pan Am and landed in, I think, in JFK in New York.

Hampapur

Was that your first time on an airplane?

Veeragoudar

Yes. That was my first time on the plane, and so my husband and his friend came to pick me up, and I really didn't know what to expect, how the roads and things were. And then also it was snowing that time, so that was the first time seeing snowing, so it was exciting.

Hampapur

Wow. Very different from where you were coming from. Do you remember your initial impressions of New York?

Veeragoudar

I mean, it looked kind of huge. I mean, I stated, but the roads and all are really amazing to me, the freeways and the roads.

Hampapur

So you went straight to Hoboken?

Veeragoudar

No. In the meantime, he had moved to Jersey City. He had taken an apartment, so we came to Jersey City, to our first apartment there.

Hampapur

And that was just you and your husband at that point?

Veeragoudar

Yes, me and my husband.

Hampapur

Can you describe to me your neighborhood, what Jersey City was like back then?

Veeragoudar

Jersey City was mostly all apartment buildings there, older apartment buildings, which may have about six apartments each building, around there. I think there was a few houses around there also, and in our building also there were mostly Indians. There were two American older ladies living there, but otherwise-- there were six apartments, and in that two were American older ladies and the other were Indian.

Hampapur

Okay. So it sounds like you were close to a lot of Indians from the beginning.

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Veeragoudar

And were there Indians in other parts of Jersey City too? Was it common to see Indians?

Veeragoudar

Yes. There were a lot of Indians in Jersey City, because there was a train connection to New York, and the apartments were nicer and cheaper also, so a lot of people used to live in that area.

Hampapur

Did you see any other immigrants besides Indians in Jersey City? Or was it mostly white?

Veeragoudar

Mostly white people, mostly white.

Hampapur

Were there any new skills or things you had to learn that were new after coming to the U.S. that you didn't have in India?

Veeragoudar

Well, what I did was I had to work, so again I went to some business school where they used to teach electric typewriting, how to do filing, so after a month or so after I came to U.S., after a month or so I went to that school, which was in Jersey City itself, but I had to take a bus and go. So I went there for about a month or two to learn that, and once I got my speed and all, once the course was over, then they referred me to state employment agency, and from there I went over there and then the state employment agency found me a job in the bank, Chase Manhattan Bank in New York. So first time, I took a bus and I went to New York by myself, and I just got lost. So I walked from Canal Street to near Statue of Liberty, Water Street. I walked from there, because I didn't know which bus I need to take. So I just walked and somehow I reached around three o'clock there, to the bank, and I went to the human resources and they

said that, "Oh, we are closing now, but what you can do is come on Monday again." So I said, "Oh, my god." Somehow I--then they said, "Take the application and then fill it and come back on Monday." So I said, "Oh, my god, I'm not going to come here, because I don't know, it's too far." So somehow I found my way back to the bus and went home and told my husband that I am not going to go there, because I got lost and it's too far and all that. So he said, "No, don't worry. We'll take a train. I'll show you how to go." It was a weekend, so I went on the train and he showed me how to get to that New York Plaza, and so I made it on Monday, and that was the first time I got my job, and so they took the test and everything, typing test and all. So I was working in a correspondence department, the securities correspondence department. I was a typist there. I used to do all the letters, forms, whatever they needed for me to do, so that was my first job. I started working there.

Hampapur

So just kind of an odd question. In those times, how did you figure out which bus or train or whatever to take? Like nowadays people look it up online, so how did you figure it out?

Veeragoudar

No, my husband knew a little bit about it, because he used to come to New York, so he told me which bus to take and all that. You know, take the train and then walk down or take a bus. He's the one who taught that.

Hampapur

And did you have to make any changes in the way you dressed?

Veeragoudar

Yes. I used to wear mostly saris, so I had to go buy some slacks and shirts, tops, so I had to change the way I used to dress. I started doing that when I started going to school. In the beginning, we went and bought some clothes, a couple of pairs, so that I don't have to wear a sari. But I still sometimes wore sari to work also, and they didn't mind, so I kept wearing for a while, and then I'll wear outfits also. They sell outfits.

Hampapur

That's nice. Do you remember what stores were popular then, to go shopping?

Veeragoudar

There was I think the store called Two Guys or something in New Jersey. That's where mostly we used to go do shopping, or go to the mall, and then there was Bloomingdale's and some other small stores.

Hampapur

Was it difficult to be vegetarian after coming?

Veeragoudar

Yes. Mostly I could eat was pizza. I got used to eating pizza. But when I was working, we couldn't take our lunch, because they had cafeteria and we had to

eat there, but you cannot take your own lunch from home and eat there. Because during winter, since we couldn't sit out and eat, so I had to eat cheese sandwich, every day cheese sandwich. So everybody--there were nice people around where I used to work, and they used to take me to lunch with them in the cafeteria, so they said, "Aren't you tired of eating cheese sandwich? Put some ketchup or something and eat." [laughter] But later on they started having salads, and then sometimes they'll have rice and beans there, but then we had to tell them that, "Don't mix the spoons." And then they'll give rice and peas or something, and sandwiches.

Hampapur

So you got by.

Veeragoudar

Got by.

Hampapur

Were people familiar with vegetarians?

Veeragoudar

Not that much. Not like now. Now everywhere you go, you find something vegetarian. Not that much.

Hampapur

What about Indians; did people ask you questions about India or anything like that?

Veeragoudar

Yes, they did, they did. Where you are from and about the family in India.

Hampapur

How did you make friends after moving to Jersey City?

Veeragoudar

Jersey City? Well, there were some Indians in our building, so one of the ladies became a good friend of mine, so she used to take me everywhere. Like when I was home, first few months I didn't work, so I was home, so she used to come and take me for shopping. We used to walk around. There was a main shopping area, so we used to walk around and she'll show me where are the vegetables and what to buy. And usually in the afternoon most of the time, she had a little daughter, so I used to sit at her home until three, four o'clock and then go upstairs. So we used to watch soaps together, TV or the shows. She used to tell me what is happening, what is going to happen and all that.

Hampapur

What shows were popular then?

Veeragoudar

All the soaps, you know, "General Hospital" and "One Life to Live," "All My Children," and then "Lucy" show I used to watch, and some shows, "Three's Company" and all those shows were popular.

Hampapur

Okay. Had you seen those in India?

Veeragoudar

No, no, here.

Hampapur

Okay. You had mentioned in India you liked going to the movies. Did you go to the movies after moving?

Veeragoudar

After moving to New Jersey, no. For a long time we didn't go to the movies. We used to just watch on TV. But we used to go a lot--like in summertime, we'll go picnicking. Mostly my husband's favorite place was Belmont Park. I can't even remember how--it was quite far, I think twenty-five miles or something, but every weekend we used to go there, go picnic or go to New York. No, actually, we did go to New York and watch some movies and things like that, or walk around in New York.

Hampapur

And would you spend time with your friends on the weekends and things like that, like for these outings?

Veeragoudar

Sometimes, sometimes, yes. Later on, one of my husband's friends from India moved to New York. He stayed with us for a few days, a week or two, and then he got his apartment after he got a job and all. He was in Elmhurst, New York, and then after his family came, then once a month we used to get together. Either they'll come or we will go, and they had made another friend, and that friend also used to go to school with my husband, college with my husband, so we all used to get together once a month at anybody's house. Like sometimes they'll come to our house, spend all day.

Hampapur

Did you have a car, or did you always take public transportation?

Veeragoudar

I used to take public transportation. We had one car. My husband, later on he started working in Jersey City, Westinghouse, so he used to drive, and then he'll drop me to the train station, and then I used to take the train to go to New York.

Hampapur

Okay. How long was your commute?

Veeragoudar

Maybe about half an hour--

Hampapur

Okay, so very close.

Veeragoudar

--total half an hour. Get down and then walk to the office.

Hampapur

Were you homesick at all after you first moved?

Veeragoudar

Yes, I was very homesick every day. In the afternoon, especially a few weeks, first few weeks I used to cry, "Why did I come here?" So I really wanted to go back right away. Yes, I used to cry every day.

Hampapur

What did you miss about India?

Veeragoudar

My mom, my sisters, my nieces, her niece.

Veeragoudar

How did you keep in touch with them?

Veeragoudar

Just by letters at that time. So I had to write at least once a month a letter to my mom. Otherwise, she used to be worried, so I used to write her a letter.

Hampapur

I know you mentioned there were Indians in the area. Were there Indian shops and restaurants and things like that at that time?

Veeragoudar

There was one shop in Hoboken, New Jersey, grocery store, small grocery store, and that's where we used to go and buy some groceries and things like that, mostly like dals. They never sold any wheat flour or anything, so we had to buy from the other stores, but other type of like m_____ and things they sold.

Hampapur

Okay, so the basic things.

Veeragoudar

Basic.

Hampapur

Were there any restaurants at that time?

Veeragoudar

Restaurants, they were in mostly New York. There were Indian and Bangladeshi restaurants, Indian there, so once in a while we used to go there.

Hampapur

I see. Did you participate in any--were there any Indian associations or cultural activities, anything like that at that time?

Veeragoudar

At that time, I don't think there were any Indian associations, so cultural activities, I had never seen any there at that time. But like my husband had a friend, and he had some friends, so they through the church or something, they

used to go to strawberry picking or something like that. We used to go with them, but that's about it. I don't think that they had any cultural activities at that time. For thirty-nine years back, so not much.

Hampapur

Were there any American events or holidays or anything new that you started to celebrate after moving here?

Veeragoudar

Well, later on, like when the kids were born, we started celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas, but before that, nothing. Just regular Indian food and that's about it.

Hampapur

Right. Were there any other Jains that you knew who had come?

Veeragoudar

Not in New Jersey, no, no. After we--from New Jersey, later on when we moved to Texas, at that time we found one family who was a North Indian Jain family, but not in Jersey.

Hampapur

In Jersey City at that time, were most Indians from one particular part of India, or was it from all over?

Veeragoudar

They were from all over. I knew--there was one lady who was from Punjab. Then my friend Mala Srinivasan, she was from Mumbai, but she was South Indian. Then there was another couple, they were also South Indian, in our building, and then there was another Gujarati, then one Maharashtrian which I knew her. She was [unclear] lady also. I came to know her later on. And, yes, that's about it, all over, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. And did they come for similar reasons as you and your husband?

Veeragoudar

Not with us, but later on--later on they started showing Hindi movies in Jersey City, so at that time I had my first daughter, so my husband didn't go, but me and my friend used to go. Sometimes we'll--she also had a daughter, so we'll leave them either with my husband or her husband, and then we used to go to the movies.

Hampapur

That sounds nice.

Veeragoudar

Yes. They didn't want to go to the movies, so we used to go to the movies.

Hampapur

And that played at an Indian theater?

Veeragoudar

No, it played in American theater, yes, in Jersey.

Hampapur

Were there any other Indian things that came after you'd been living there for some time?

Veeragoudar

No, they just started showing movies, not like now how the musicians and all come. But once in a while they used to show, also in New York, I remember, they were showing a movie. I had another friend who was a Gujarati, and she used to work with me, so we became good friends, so sometimes weekend we'll go to their house, or they'll come to our house. Sometimes we used to go and stay there also. And then in New York, sometimes they used to show, again, Indian movies, so I remember going with them and then the actor Dilip Kumar had come.

Hampapur

Oh, wow. [laughs]

Veeragoudar

It was so exciting to see him.

Hampapur

Wow. So after your initial homesickness passed, did you start to like Jersey City, New York, or did--

Veeragoudar

Yes, I started liking--I started liking my work, and I was enjoying. We used to go here, there, go shopping in New York or go for picnic, and then I came to know my distant cousin, so we used to go and visit her weekends, or she will come to our house.

Hampapur

Where did she live?

Veeragoudar

She lived in Totowa, New Jersey, also, which is about twenty, twenty-five miles away from us. So we used to go and visit her, stay there.

Hampapur

Did you do any traveling outside of New York or New Jersey at that time?

Veeragoudar

No, not much. Yes, later on we went to Niagara Falls and Atlantic City. Yes, we did those, but not out of state, like Canada to see Niagara Falls.

Hampapur

Did you get any visitors from India?

Veeragoudar

At that time, no, no, none. Long time, nobody. It wasn't that easy to get a visa and all that.

Hampapur

Were you able to visit home when you were living in Jersey City?

Veeragoudar

You mean India?

Hampapur

Yes.

Veeragoudar

I did, after a year or so. My sister was getting married, so I went and visited for one month, four weeks. I took a leave and went and stayed one month.

Hampapur

You must have been excited.

Veeragoudar

Yes, I was very excited, and I didn't feel like coming back, but I had to come for work.

Hampapur

Right. Did you enjoy your job that you were working?

Veeragoudar

Yes, I did. That was my first job in life and so I was enjoying it. I had made some friends at that school also. I think one lady was Punjabi and one was Bengali, and so we used to discuss about work, I mean who found job or who didn't find job. We used to sometimes go and look for a job together, in the beginning when we were looking for--so we used to get so scared too. We wouldn't cross the street. We used to wait for light to turn. Otherwise, somebody will come and take our green card. We used to joke, "They may come and take our green card." [laughter] It was fun. We went looking for job and all that. Like they used to praise you so much. "Oh, you're so good in this and that," and next time you see them, "Oh, no, we cannot give you, because you have a degree. You're overqualified," or something, they'll always say.

Hampapur

How long were you living in New Jersey?

Veeragoudar

We lived there five years.

Hampapur

Okay, and that was 1971 to--

Veeragoudar

I came in '72, so '72 to 1978, I think.

Hampapur

And was there any, like, discrimination or anything like that against Indians at that time?

Veeragoudar

I didn't feel anything like that. I really didn't feel, because we had a lot of Puerto Rican people in there, so I didn't feel anything. I mean, people I worked

with, my supervisor and all, they were very nice. At first was, in the beginning we had a Chinese supervisor, and she was very strict, but she was okay with me. She was like we had to start--when she said, "Start the work," we had to start doing the work, and like around--we used to leave at four-thirty, so like she'll say, "Pack up, girls," so we had to pack up all our work and keep it aside and then wait till her to say, "Goodnight." It was very strict in that time. The timing, going to work on time and leaving on time was very important. They were very strict. If you're late a few times, then they used to let you go.

Hampapur

Oh, wow.

Veeragoudar

Yes. Because one girl, she used to be late all the time, "Oh, I missed my train," or something happened. They told her, even though her work was good, they told her, "You cannot do that, so we have to let you go." So they let her go. So they were very strict. So I used to always go fifteen minutes early and wait outside, outside the building and sit there.

Hampapur

I know you had mentioned when you had first planned to move to the U.S., you were thinking, oh, maybe we can just stay for a few years and go back home. Did you still have that idea in your mind when you were living in New Jersey, or did that start to change?

Veeragoudar

It started changing, yes, because I saw that it's impossible to go right away. I mean in a few years it was impossible, because also we were helping my husband's family by sending money, so it was impossible to go back.

Hampapur

Okay, so economically, it made more sense to stay.

Veeragoudar

Yes, to stay there.

Hampapur

How many years had you been living here when your older daughter was born?

Veeragoudar

About a year and a half. Yes, she was born in '75, so two years I would say.

Hampapur

So did she start school in New Jersey, or was it after--

Veeragoudar

No, here in California. We had moved to California, so she was like--when we left New Jersey, she was about three years old, three, three and a half. So then we moved to Texas. That's where my husband found a job, engineering job, and so he decided to move to Texas. And it used to snow a lot in New Jersey.

One year it snowed so much that we were tired of it and decided to move to Texas, but we didn't stay too long in Texas. We stayed about two years.

Hampapur

What part of Texas were you in?

Veeragoudar

Near Dallas and Fort Worth, between Dallas and Fort Worth.

Hampapur

Okay. So you moved because you wanted a climate change?

Veeragoudar

Climate change and then my husband found a good engineering job, so that's why we decided to move.

Hampapur

Okay. And can you describe what your town looked like in Texas?

Veeragoudar

Texas, we stayed in [unclear]. We used to stay and live in an apartment at that time. It was nice. There were lots of kids, so my daughter got lots of friends there, and so she used to enjoy that, playing outside and all that. There were [unclear]--you can play outside. You don't have to watch them all the time. They were able to play outside, and there were mostly apartment buildings around there. But the first time when I went there, I didn't start looking for a job right away. We took the apartment and all. Then I went to India again and stayed there three months, since I wasn't working, so I thought my daughter will get used to my family over there. So I went and stayed there, and then my husband came and joined me, and then we came back after a month or so.

Hampapur

So that was your first time your relatives saw your daughter.

Veeragoudar

Yes, my daughter, oldest daughter. So then after we came back, then she started going to daycare, which was just across the street from the apartment. I mean, it was like a daycare school and preschool, and then I started looking for a job.

Hampapur

Were you driving at that time?

Veeragoudar

I started driving there. I got license in New Jersey, but I never drove there. I was always scared to drive. But after coming to Texas, since there's not much public transportation, I had to start driving.

Hampapur

How did you feel about that?

Veeragoudar

Oh, it was terrible, because when we came back from India, my daughter really got sick. She had typhoid, so then we were in the hospital all the time, so I was

just stuck there, because since I wasn't driving, I had to stay in the hospital with my daughter all the time. So then my husband--after we got her home, then we had to visit the doctor, so he said, "Oh, you take a taxi and go," because he couldn't take time off. So at that time I decided I should start driving. So I had practiced a little bit. Every day I used to practice. But then I started driving and then took her to the doctor, and it was okay. I was okay. I felt confident.

Hampapur

You got used to it.

Veeragoudar

And then I started driving, looking for a job. We went and bought another car.

Hampapur

And did you work while you were there?

Veeragoudar

Yes. I worked in a small company. It was, I think, like some appliance-parts company. So since I knew a little bit of data entry and all, so they hired me there to do data entry, and I worked there for almost a year or so.

Hampapur

In Texas at that time, were you aware of were there other Indians around?

Veeragoudar

We came to know one family, which their last name also was Jain from northern part of India, and there was another Punjabi from Punjab. He was married to an Irish lady, so that's how slowly we came to know, through them. Then we came to know another two, couple South Indian family, two of them, so we made a few friends there.

Hampapur

But it sounds like less Indians than you would see in Jersey City.

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

Okay. Were there Indian stores where you could get your groceries and things like that?

Veeragoudar

There were some stores in Dallas, yes, and there was also in Arlington, or Dallas we used to go to, to do the grocery, Indian grocery.

Hampapur

And in Texas, was there any Indian association or anything like that then?

Veeragoudar

No, not that I know. No. I don't think they had any movies also there. We didn't see any movies. I think it was probably because it was spread out a little bit.

Hampapur

How did you like living in Texas?

Veeragoudar

We really didn't like the weather later on, because it started getting hot, and then my daughter started having a lot of allergies there, so we wanted to go back after--we bought a house in the meantime. We were living in the house, but she was getting so many allergies, so we thought we will go back to New Jersey. So my husband had found job in New Jersey, and then he also got an offer here in California, so then he said, oh, might as well go to California and see how it is instead. So he cancelled there. He told them he's not taking the job, and we moved here. In the meantime, my brother-in-law and my mother-in-law also had moved to--they were living with us in Texas. They had come from India. They had immigrated here. My husband sponsored them. So it would have been easier for my brother-in-law also to look for a job here, because a lot of public transportation, so we decided we all will move here. So he found a job, so we moved to--actually, we were living in Redondo Beach.

Hampapur

And how long were you there in Redondo Beach?

Veeragoudar

Redondo Beach, maybe for one year or so, and then moved to--we bought a townhouse in Hawthorne, and we stayed there about twelve, thirteen years in Hawthorne.

Hampapur

Okay. So you came to the L.A. area when you moved to California.

Veeragoudar

L.A. area, yes.

Hampapur

And what were your impressions of California?

Veeragoudar

We liked the weather very much. So my husband used to always tell my--"We are moving to sunny California." [laughter] So it was nice going out here, walking around. I liked it very much. It was a good impression. Then L.A. it was easier for my brother-in-law also to look for a job, and so we stayed in Redondo Beach for a year or so. Then I started looking for a job also, because since my mother-in-law was here and my daughter was staying with her, so I started looking for a job. I used to go to these agencies, employment agencies, and they'll send me here, there, so I got a job through them in an insurance company, Tyko title insurance company, and I worked there for a while.

Hampapur

How did you make friends after coming to the L.A. area?

Veeragoudar

After coming to the L.A. area, our first friend was--actually, we had met this family in New Jersey at my husband's friend's place, and so they used to live in

Costa Mesa, so that was the first family friend we came to know. And then we were given a number of your uncle and auntie, Keshavan, by his friend from Texas. At that time, they also had moved here, so we used to go to each other's house and slowly started knowing more people, yes. Then later on, when Minal grew up--no, in Hawthorne also there were other families. From Maharashtra there was a family. They had children. So we came to know through another family in Orange County, which she was from our hometown, and so we came to know them. So that's how slowly an increase. And then in the meantime, my sister-in-law came, so we used to have family also, so time used to go. We used to go to each other's house, or they'll come and watch--we used to rent movies and watch movies in our house, and the kids used to play, and since we were living in a townhouse, there was a swimming pool, so my sister-in-law's kids used to come, so time used to go. And then we had some friends also, we used to get together.

Hampapur

So it sounds like you met people through people.

Veeragoudar

Yes, came to know people through people, yes.

Hampapur

Okay. So was there a good amount of Indians here at that time when you moved?

Veeragoudar

Yes, there was. Slowly it started, when my daughter started taking bharatanatyam, we came to know a lot of Indians who became friends, and through that all South Indian group from Bangalore, I came to know them. That's how I met a lot of now the group which we have. Yes. Then we used to have, of course, picnic once a year, all South Bay people, used to have friends we knew, so we started having that.

Hampapur

So it sounds like Indians from different parts of India still were mixing with one another.

Veeragoudar

Yes. Yes.

Hampapur

You mentioned your daughter took bharatanatyam. Why did you decide to put her into dance classes?

Veeragoudar

Actually, I used to love bharatanatyam or kathak. I used to like dancing. So there was a program, so we took her there, and she said, yes, she wants to learn, and she was interested. She always liked music and dance, so that's why I

decided to put her in bharatanatyam, and she was also learning tap and ballet, mostly tap, tap dancing.

Hampapur

What did you like to do for fun when you weren't working?

Veeragoudar

When I was working, on the weekends? Mostly weekends, like my sister-in-law used to come. They used to go swimming, so we had to watch them there, or I'll go and just sit in the Jacuzzi there, or like we'll go take all the kids to the park to picnic. Most of the times we used to do the picnic, or sometimes like in the morning we'll go to the beach. We used to walk around. The kids will be playing, or sometimes if the kids don't come, we'll go for a walk. That's [unclear] mostly. And then once in a while we used to go to Indian movies also. They have to have somewhere in Pico, on Pico Boulevard there was a theater, Bombay Theater or some theater there that used to show Indian movies, so we will go to Indian movies.

Hampapur

Were there any other Indian cultural things that you could attend?

Veeragoudar

Indian cultural things, not right away. But later on, we started attending, we started going to Jain temple and [unclear], and then we sometimes Kannada Koota. Then there was a Maharashtra Mandal, we used to go with a friend. They also used to go, so we all used to go together.

Hampapur

And what kinds of things did they do there?

Veeragoudar

There they used to have some dramas and then Ganpati Utsav, they used to celebrate that, Ganesh Utsav, and some cultural programs they used to have, dramas and music and things like that.

Hampapur

Sounds like what you were saying in your school in your childhood, they used to celebrate that. And was there a Jain temple when you first moved, or did that come later?

Veeragoudar

After a while, I think. After a few years, we came to know that there was a Jain temple. They used to celebrate somewhere in one big hall. They had a big hall like they used to rent and do the pooja, or they used to have lectures and things like that, but later on they built a temple. Now it's a big one.

Hampapur

And were Californians familiar with Indians at that time, when you first came here?

Veeragoudar

Yes, but more than in New Jersey. Later on, I think, more they used to talk about India and all that.

Hampapur

Did people ask you any questions?

Veeragoudar

Yes. They used to talk about sari and why do you put the kumkum. Yes, they used to ask questions. They used to love the saris.

Hampapur

Right. Okay. So you mentioned you put Minal in bharatanatyam classes. Was there any other Indian cultural or religious type thing that you tried to teach her or your younger daughter, or language?

Veeragoudar

I didn't take her anywhere else. No, just through whatever, bharatanatyam, and the teacher was pretty good. She used to tell them to read about like Krishna and then tell the story. She used to teach little things like that too. I mean, I used to tell our prayers, how to say our prayer and all that, but nothing else. I mean, I didn't take them to any classes, because I was working, so there was no time to really take them anywhere else.

Hampapur

Okay. And in schools, were there other Indian children as well?

Veeragoudar

In Minal's school, no, except for my brother-in-law's kids. They used to go to the same school, so that's it. And she had a good friend whose father was Iranian and mother was American, so that's it. I didn't see any Indian kids there.

Hampapur

Was it ethnically diverse at that time, or were most people white?

Veeragoudar

It was diverse there, because in Hawthorne you find Mexicans, you find black and Indian, a few Indians probably, but I didn't know anybody in her classes; Chinese, there were some Chinese.

Hampapur

Okay. So it was diverse back then as well?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes.

Hampapur

Did you visit India after coming to California? Would you take Jeena and Minal?

Veeragoudar

Yes. We did go to India. Yes, we did go. A few times we went after coming to California. And then my mom visited. My mom and my aunt visited. Actually,

we went to India, and then we brought back my mom and my aunt with us, and they stayed for about two and a half months. Then they went back.

Hampapur

Are your sisters still in India?

Veeragoudar

They're still in India. They visited in '99 when Minal got married. They all were visiting. They stayed here for almost three months, and then we took them all over here, California, Colorado.

Hampapur

Did you do any traveling after you moved to California?

Veeragoudar

After, we used to go in Vegas and Arizona, Utah. We went there, a few places.

Hampapur

For sightseeing?

Veeragoudar

Sightseeing. And then from here we had gone to Vancouver also, in 1987, I think. There was an Expo, so we had gone to see Expo. We drove there.

Hampapur

Do you see any changes in what the L.A. area was like at that time and how it is today?

Veeragoudar

Oh, a lot of changes, a lot crowded now than before. It was easy to drive. We didn't feel like, oh, so much traffic and all that, but recently it seemed a lot of traffic increased, and I guess a lot of people moving here because of the nice weather and all.

Hampapur

Yes. When you first moved to L.A., were there any parts of L.A. that were more popular to visit?

Veeragoudar

I'd say Hollywood or downtown for shopping, the garment district and all that. We used to go there often, and we used to go to Grand Central Market, where you used to find cheap vegetables, breads, and things like that. And since my brother-in-law and that, we all used to live together, so once a week we'll go there and shop, because we had a lot of kids, three kids, little kids, and so we used to go and buy vegetables from there.

Hampapur

I see. So it sounds like you went to other parts of L.A. as well.

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes.

Hampapur

So you were living with your daughter, your husband, and then your brother-in-law's family as well?

Veeragoudar

Yes. And my mother-in-law.

Hampapur

Okay. How long were you all living together?

Veeragoudar

Almost a year, a year and a half. Then they took an apartment nearby. But we used to see them every day, because Minal and the kids used to go to the same school, so after school instead of Minal coming home, they all used to stay in their house, because the older son was a little bit older than Minal, so they all used to stay there in their house after school.

Hampapur

And did you stay at that same job that you were working?

Veeragoudar

Yes. I did stay in the same job, but I changed the department there, and instead of mid-Wilshire, I started working in downtown, like for a trust company. I got a job as a data-entry operator there, and so I worked there for a long time, and then the company got sold. I think I worked there twelve years and then the company got sold to another company, and then I continued there, but I was moved from there to accounting department and then from there to trust department, which is administration department, and I stayed there until I retired, actually. Again, the company got sold to Northern Trust Bank, and then I stayed there until I retired recently.

Hampapur

Okay. So it sounds like you had a little bit of a commute, if you were going to mid-Wilshire and then to downtown.

Veeragoudar

Yes. Mid-Wilshire was--yes. What I used to do was, in the beginning I took a bus instead of driving, because I didn't want to drive in L.A. So I took a bus going to Hollywood and then changed the bus on Wilshire Boulevard and took another bus to go to mid-Wilshire.

Hampapur

Wow.

Veeragoudar

Yes. And then later on, I found a lady who used to come from South Bay area, so she asked me if I want to carpool, so I used to carpool with her. I did carpool for I think almost six months with her. Then later on, when we moved to Hawthorne, then she said that she won't be able to pick me up, because she has to drop her kids to the daycare. So then I started driving to mid-Wilshire,

because it was easier than taking the bus, because the bus used to go from not a very good area, so I decided to drive.

Hampapur

That's where all the museums and things are, right? Is that where mid-Wilshire-

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Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

And Little Ethiopia, did they have that then too?

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes, yes.

Hampapur

Was it like that then as well, with all the museums and Ethiopian restaurants?

Veeragoudar

There was a museum close by, yes, yes. And we had a cafeteria there, so we could eat lunch there, or take your own lunch. Sometimes ladies from the department will go out; I used to go with them to eat. Then it was easier for me to drive than taking bus, so I started driving. Then I used to give carpool somebody. I used to give her a ride, so she'll come to my house and then-- actually, she used to live in P.V. [Palos Verdes] somewhere, P.V. East, I think. And then her boyfriend or her mom will drop her to my house and then--so I gave her a ride for a while, till she worked there. So it was the same job for twenty-nine years, about.

Hampapur

Wow. Then going back to your kids, you mentioned that you started celebrating American holidays and things after they were born, so what were some of the American traditions that you started celebrating?

Veeragoudar

Well, first we [unclear] Christmas. We used to bring Christmas tree, decorate and bring the gift for them. That's about, I would say; surprise them with the gifts and things like that.

Hampapur

And were there any Indian holidays or events that you celebrated with them?

Veeragoudar

We did. Diwali we'll make some things, like snack food, and sometimes we'll take them to the temple, yes. Mostly Diwali is a big celebration, because if something comes weekdays, we didn't really do anything, because I used to come home at around six o'clock, so it wasn't possible. But Diwali I used to try to do some things. At least on weekend we'll celebrate.

Hampapur

Okay. Then moving forward a little bit to your life after retirement, so what do you like to do for fun now that you're retired?

Veeragoudar

I mostly like to go to the gym. I enjoy it, because a lot of retired people come during the time when we go. A lot of people come. Then we are traveling these days. First in the beginning, I feel like when I'm going somewhere, oh, why am I going? I don't like to leave my house and go. But once I go, I enjoyed the trip, the Europe trip, when we went to Australia I enjoyed it, really enjoyed it, so now like I feel like going again somewhere. [laughter]

Hampapur

Well, I guess you have the time now.

Veeragoudar

Yes. I also want to do some volunteer work, and I tried a few places, but the timing wasn't right. So now I'm going to India in November, so after I come back, I'll try, because then later on we won't be going on long trips, just shorter trips, so then I can really start doing some volunteer work.

Hampapur

Okay. Has the Indian community here changed much since you first moved to L.A.?

Veeragoudar

All the kids are grown. Before, like when we used to have all the parties, all the kids used to come too. Now all are gone, and that's the change, main thing. All the kids are grown and married or gone out to work; change. And then we are all getting older. [laughs]

Hampapur

Do you foresee yourself staying in Los Angeles in the future?

Veeragoudar

Yes, because my kids are here. As long as they're here, we will stay here, or move where they move, maybe.

Hampapur

Right, and your grandkids now too.

Veeragoudar

Yes.

Hampapur

So is there any possibility you would think of moving back to India?

Veeragoudar

I don't think we'll do it permanently. We may go like stay two, three months, but that's about it, not permanent, because it's harder with the kids and all, since the kids are here, and then all the friends are here now. We've made new friends here. It will be very hard to go back and build again new friends. As

long as my sisters are there, it's okay for me, but later on, it's not going to be--I mean, it will be hard.

Hampapur

Is your family still in Kolhapur, or have they--

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes. I have three sisters in Kolhapur, and one is Belgaum. The older one is in Belgaum. So as long as they are there, I'm there, we're going, and as long as I can travel.

Hampapur

Right. So what do you like to do now when you visit India?

Veeragoudar

There we did travel a little bit. Last time when me and my husband went, he stayed three weeks, so we didn't go much. We just visited family. But then later on, I went with my sister to see Hampi, and then we went to Ajanta, Viru, Shirdi, traveled there. Otherwise, there also I joined the gym. Me and my sister used to go to the gym. Then I visited some friends, my high school friends, college friends. One of them had moved from other part of Maharashtra. She had moved back to Kolhapur after they retired, and one of them always stayed in Kolhapur, so I always visit her. So I visited them. We met a couple of times. And then I traveled back and forth to Belgaum and Kolhapur, just with my sister or my in-laws, my brother-in-law.

Hampapur

It sounds like you have some lifelong friends, then, if you're seeing your high school and college friends.

Veeragoudar

Yes, yes. There are a couple of them, they are still there.

Hampapur

I see. Do you think India has changed much since you were growing up there?

Veeragoudar

Lot crowded, yes. I mean, things which you think that they didn't have at that time, you see them having it easily, and you see girls are going doing further studies, and they just didn't want to get married anymore, like go work. Yes, a lot of changes.

Hampapur

At what point did living in the U.S. start to feel like you were at home?

Veeragoudar

After, I would say, ten years, started feeling, okay, now this is my house. I have to be here.

Hampapur

Right, when you had moved to California, then.

Veeragoudar

Right, yes. Once I bought my own house, yes, started feeling that I had to stay here.

Hampapur

And of all the places that you lived, is there a place that's your favorite?

Veeragoudar

Torrance. I love Torrance, because everything is so convenient and easy to--I can walk anywhere. If I want to go buy something, I can even just go walk, do my shopping.

Hampapur

That is nice.

Veeragoudar

Like I know where we used to live before, before this house, I used to sometimes walk to the bus stop to take the bus. Like it used to take maybe fifteen, twenty minutes. It was a nice, good walk.

Hampapur

That's interesting. I feel like a lot of people just only drive.

Veeragoudar

Yes. Once in a while I'll drive, but I still like to walk. It's easier than looking for parking. And then when we moved here, I was still working, so here like I just used to walk three, four blocks, and then I'd get the bus there. This was the most convenient place.

Hampapur

Yes.[End of interview]

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