

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**NEELAM:** This is NEELAM KHANNA. Today is December 20, 2002. I am at Ms. Ila Shah's house in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, and accompanying me is Dr. Bharti Palhkiwala, the current president of AA, New Jersey. We are here interviewing Ms. Ila Shah for the oral history project about her experiences in the 70's, both as an artist and an immigrant. A good morning ladies. Ms. Ila Shah is an Indian-American contemporary artist and a sculpture whose work has been exhibited in various galleries both here and in India.

**ILA SHAH:** And Museums.

**NEELAM:** And museums.

**ILA SHAH:** Mostly nonprofit things.

**NEELAM:** Okay.

**ILA SHAH:** It's okay. Go ahead.

**NEELAM:** I want to ask you when did you first come to the United States?

**ILA SHAH:** 1972.

**NEELAM:** In 1972.

**ILA SHAH:** Right.

**NEELAM:** Okay. Where did you come from in India?

**ILA SHAH:** From Bombay.

**NEELAM:** From Bombay. That is where you grew up?

**ILA SHAH:** No, I was born and brought up in Bombay.

**NEELAM:** Okay.

**ILA SHAH:** And then I was married in Ahmedabad. I was married when I was 17.

**NEELAM:** Oh well!

**ILA SHAH:** Then we were in Ahmedabad. Then we went to Cambay, in a small town, and after that we came here. We were to Cambay for seven years.

**NEELAM:** Okay.

## **INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH**

**NEELAM:** When did you come to United States and why did you come here?

**ILA** I followed my husband in 1972.

**NEELAM:** And why did he come here?

**ILA** For more cultural experience and more about education and all that. We were well-off in India. We didn't have to come here, but he were always wandering.

**NEELAM:** You wanted to explore.

**ILA** Right.

**NEELAM:** We are the side you know

**ILA** Right other side of the world.

**NEELAM:** Okay, and what does he do?

**ILA** He is a physician.

**NEELAM:** So then he came here to do further studies here or decided to do that later on.

**ILA** No he studied further here.

**NEELAM:** Okay, and when you first came to United States where did you first come, to New Jersey or some other place?

**ILA** To Paramus, New Jersey, and then Bergen Pines Hospital, I think Bharti was their today.

**NEELAM:** Okay, so you have been in New Jersey

**ILA** For all my life

**NEELAM:** All your life

**ILA** Yeah.

**NEELAM:** You probably have lots to tell us about the experience of being an immigrant person at that time.

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**ILA** When we came here we were in like two rooms near the hospital where we lived. But I have always painted and I remember painting like a eight foot mural sitting on the dining table in that 12 x 20 room or whatever. So dozens must be precious memories.

**NEELAM:** Okay, tell us about yourself as a child growing in India.

**ILA**

We were five brother and sisters. I was the fourth one it was just nice. I had good parents, loving parents.

**NEELAM:** How did your interest in art begin?

**ILA** I am painting since I was a little girl, like when are five sisters, you fight and whatever happen. I would go in a corner and do my artwork and would never talk, but that helps me always to. I always communicated with myself through art.

**NEELAM:** So what are your earliest memories as an artist.

**ILA** At Four-five years.

**NEELAM:** That's sitting in a corner, drawing your

**ILA** Yeah. I still have all those paintings.

**NEELAM:** You do.

**ILA** Yeah.

**NEELAM:** What were you painting at that time?

**ILA** That time we used to like copy things from the magazines and all that

**NEELAM:** No comic books

**ILA** Something comic book.

**NEELAM:** Indian comic books. Like Chanda Mama and stuff.

**ILA** Yeah.

**NEELAM:** So I guess when did you officially decide you were going to be an artist? Was it primarily then?

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**ILA** Primarily that is it, I think I must be meant to be or I don't know. I wanted to be a doctor because I wanted to help people and all that but I got married so I didn't get chance to study.

It was like hard in India when I got married. I wanted to go art school and my mother-in-law would say that you rather learn how to make papads and all that, instead of going to art school.

And it was so difficult but my husband was very supportive, he told everybody that she is going to learn how to stitch clothes and all that and he put me to art classes and that's how I learnt, without family support.

But as long as I remember I wanted either medicine or art. But medicine didn't work out and he was a doctor so I was happy that I helped him in his career. We went seven years to Cambay where he was a physician. When we came here we had only 70 dollars in the pocket. We didn't mind, but I helped like I think he wouldn't have done without me. So it was nice, he worked, like helping people and all that up to end. My daughter had a snake bite there in Cambay so we decided to leave and just then we thought it's time for us to get more for our own family and go further in life. We did our part. Being an artist I am always. Done art I have an art.

**NEELAM:** Yeah.

**ILA** I have done art, so like my mother died just two years ago, and the same day I have painted. I had a daughter when I was 18 and when she was one year old then she died of heart disease. So I painted at that time too like whenever something happens in my life I just go to my sketch board then I do something. It helps me to survive.

**NEELAM:** I guess that goes back to same things as a child even or whenever you express, you want to sketch pad and you draw.

**ILA** Anything. After coming here more, also because we are dislocated from your culture and traditions and all that so I art always helped me to. It didn't take away the loneliness or whatever, but it helped me to cope with lot of

**NEELAM:** It was a companion.

**ILA** Right.

**NEELAM:** So can you explain like how your parents felt about you pursuing this unconventional field.

**ILA** My parents, they didn't mind. My father was an artist at heart so he let me do what I wanted to. When he came here once and he was saying me struggling. He said your husband is a doctor and why do you have to do all these. Just relax and have fun.

**NEELAM:** Go shopping.



## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**ILA** Yeah whatever. Lot of people didn't understand why I do art because I didn't need money. It wasn't for the money but I had to do it otherwise I thought I would go crazy. That was my passion.

**NEELAM:** It's like air.

**ILA** Yeah.

**NEELAM:** As important as the air.

**ILA** Right.

**NEELAM:** Can you share some interesting stories from your childhood.

**ILA** From childhood.

**NEELAM:** They don't have to be big you know, just something maybe memories of your family or sisters or your friends.

**ILA** We had a great family, five sisters, we all love each other, and we fight with each other. They are all here. We hang upon each other and get mad and then we call after two minutes. So I have loving family. So I have no complaints.

**NEELAM:** Okay that must be really nice to really have everyone here.

**ILA** Yeah.

✓ **BHARTI:** Anybody else an artist in the family.

**ILA** My sister is Art therapist.

**NEELAM:** What does an Art therapists do?

**ILA** She goes to nursing home there she teaches Art for the people who are there and she goes to lots of place.

**NEELAM:** As part of occupational therapy.

**ILA** Helping people to go through real difficult time, expressing self. She is an artist. My daughter and she are like artist.

**NEELAM:** What does your daughter do?

**ILA** My daughter is a physician now.

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**NEELAM:** Okay

**ILA** She took all the art courses and she was going to be artist, but then suddenly she decided that she does not want to be because it is a very lonely process. You are sitting and just communicate with your art don't talk to people, and she is a people person and money-wise I don't think she went to medicine for money. She is still artist when she gets time she just paints. They encourage me a lot when they were young like it was funny when I came to here.

**NEELAM:** How many kids do you have?

**ILA** Two, one son and one daughter.

**NEELAM:** Okay.

**ILA** They both are great kids. So when you come here you feel Oh my god you see all these women liberated, and you think, I wish I didn't have kids or I didn't have responsibility of family, I could be a Picasso or whatever. Like you get that air in your head, so I went through a little phase like that. I am completely out of. It's a quality maybe more because I think that I gave births to them, it was my responsibility to bring them up. They are my first sculptures and they are good kids and I am so happy about it. Other things come later.

**NEELAM:** Yeah you are a proud mother. Okay, tell us about yourself as a child growing in India.

**ILA** My priority was my children. Okay also that is the case.

**NEELAM:** What were some of the important things you brought with yourself from India? Did you bring pieces of art, photographs, just memories or what?

**ILA** Just memories.

**NEELAM:** Those were the most important things.

**ILA** Right right. Nothing else I left, I had house like we have our own house so many material things. We didn't bring anything just with two suitcases, but I go every year sometime and then get all the things.

**NEELAM:** As an artist how did the move to America affect you and your art?

**ILA** A lot, when I came here I used to do Indian miniatures style painting that's how I learnt in India and I like people will give me once in a while commission do this that and I would make money too, but when I went to college like after coming here I had a

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

cultural shock kind of thing and my mother-in-law was with me. She was like 78 something and she was completely bedridden. I took care of her and life was really very difficult and lonely because your husband works all the time and you have to take care of little kids and house and everything and fit in this culture and in this new society and so that's it.

**NEELAM:** Basically you are trying to I guess explain how you were able to adapt and with a new surroundings.

**ILA** Yeah so went to college and I wanted to do my master and when I went to the college I took my slides and showed them my work.

**NEELAM:** Fine arts.

**ILA** Yeah and everybody loved. For the whole committee and all loved it and they all said very good very good, but one professor came and told me which century you live in. This artwork is all like 18<sup>th</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century and I started crying and from that day I realized that you have to be with your time too. You can't just go on painting old things and for me art was just to find out that you are and so I went to college for like a year and half I did nothing, I just went there and came home. It was so bad, I had cultural shock and I was going crazy but then after this when I started my first course in sculpture, it changed my life and started doing people living in the sewage pipe in India and those people they stay in the pipe.

**NEELAM:** OK

**ILA** A part of my initial work is about that like how I was feeling lonely here

**NEELAM:** Isolated.

**ILA** Yeah I could feel for them and I could understand their agony like I have a sculpture, which is called Even in the Land of Plenty, like a child is gazing through cabinet, in India, they look for sweets and all those good things. But here children are lonely and they are looking through the cupboard for someone. This is like a sculpture. But children are deprived of love and when children come home alone and all that. So it is all about loneliness and those kinds of sculptures I did. I did a sculpture so you want to know.

**NEELAM:** Get the artist's experience.

**ILA** Both so much important to me.

**NEELAM:** It is.

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**ILA** That helped me to deal with the pain and loneliness so I am telling you that I didn't know that my daughter would die. So I made little, little footprints, dolls footprints and then burnt them and put gauze around them, and sculptures is like that. People don't understand that, but they are the most important sculptures, and that helped me a lot to go through all that what I was going through and then after.

**NEELAM:** So basically coming here I mean, it was not necessary a hindrance. It was also an opportunity for you to explore.

**ILA** It was, but I was missing home a lot, my parents, and just whole India.

**NEELAM:** Whole Indian experience.

**ILA** You can be at home like here I went to take courses in the college but like people would laugh at me and in those days there were no Indians there and it was very difficult, like I will make my footprints when I was doing all that. My professors don't understand what art is. Art is more about not finding yourself who you are, so but the girls would look from the window and they would laugh at me that this crazy lady what is she doing.

**NEELAM:** How does being a woman, a minority especially an Asian artist in America affect your work?

**ILA** When I did my art, after I did it, its hard because people don't understand. There is lot of Indian things in it like cultural thing.

**NEELAM:** Right.

**ILA** Like artists do understand.

**NEELAM:** Yeah.

**ILA** Because for general public it was difficult and for me to show in the galleries with other artist it was difficult because most of them had themes, like whatever and I would never fit in there, because.

**NEELAM:** African or may be oriental and.

**ILA** No, oriental is now. African is also, but the time when we came it was like more modern and abstract and blah, blah. So I would never fit in. So I didn't have a lot of shows and all that. But of now that I have lot of friends who are very supportive and then I got grants from this New Jersey State Council on the arts and all that.

**NEELAM:** Right in 1999.

**ILA** Yes, so it helped me a lot all there.

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**NEELAM:** Is it? Can you tell us a little about your family here?

**ILA** My family here? My own family?

**NEELAM:** Yeah.

**ILA** Like my yeah, my sisters and my children, they are all very supportive. My daughter wrote a paper on me when she was young and I still remember they are like, when I say that first when they were young, they would say, " Mom you talk funny" because I do not go out. I had learnt Gujarati. After I came here I went to college, so I never learnt, in art you don't go to English courses, you don't have your everything, like pronunciation wise I was very bad. But now they say let's just say what you are saying. It's so cute, we like it that way. And I feel what will happen if I die, I have so much art in the home, so I get worried. So they say, 'don't worry, we will have a museum for you mom. So they encourage me really and my art. If they didn't support me I think that I would not be that happy. Now I am very happy. I am settled. When I go to India, I feel I am not an Indian, when I am here I don't feel American or it's like all we go through, all of us go through that.

**NEELAM:** Right.

**ILA** I think that this stage in my life I am very satisfied, so the colors came back. Just like I was before I came here and started to.

**NEELAM:** Looking at it you have, a lot of vivid colors.

**ILA** Now lot of colors came back.

**NEELAM:** In your paintings.

**ILA** In my paintings.

**NEELAM:** Yeah. Well, I have seen some of your works, we will have to put some pictures and because they are different. They cannot be you know, explained in words.

**ILA** Yeah. All my paintings have stories and they go back to our culture, like whatever I have learnt or it is now new work is more combination of my experience in America as an immigrant. Like the women are wearing boots and they are playing tennis and their head is covered, like how I went through. Like when we came here, I was wearing just in India. I was just wearing chappals or sandals. I didn't have 10 kinds of shoes. Here you need sneakers, you need boots, and you need so many, such a materialistic thing. Then when I came I was really shocked and I would go in the snow, when we were in Bergen Pine with my just sandals out to shop and people would laugh at me, but I didn't care. Then coming to neighborhood, people thought my husband is a doctor and I was today

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

morning thinking we had an old neighbor and she called me to her home and she said your husband is a doctor, you can't move like this. You should curl your hair and she showed me how to curl my hair and all that. So but otherwise they were also wondering what is this crazy lady doing, things like that, because art and especially sculpture is the most difficult thing. One sculpture is like 20-40 paintings. I was thinking instead of doing sculpture, if I do just paintings, I would have liked. Sculpture is a lot of physical work.

**NEELAM:** As your children grew up, what kinds of pressure did you face? Were there any cultural conflicts you faced?

**ILA** Not really, I think I have brought them up as an Indian and they must have gone through a lot but I think all they need that was love and just reassurance that we were all with them and do not know how but.

**NEELAM:** You never had to deal with because we are Indian we do not do this or that.

**ILA** No, no, no. I let them do whatever they wanted to do. I never said no, we are not eating meat or anything, but if they wanted to eat I never stopped them. They found out for themselves. I think, children learn from whatever they see mostly instead of telling them what to do. One day, my daughter came home drunk when she was 14 or 15, and she was throwing up in the bathroom at night and then I went there and she said don't tell Daddy, don't tell Daddy. I tell her that okay I won't tell Daddy but I did not mad at her and nothing. She understood that it is not good for her. I do not know, if just your relationship with them, she just saw that I am not drinking and I think they just become their parents eventually.

**NEELAM:** That I think may be wiser than most, you know, there is lot of conflict that I see and know with the Indian culture and the American culture and then it is really amazing you flew by it by being the way you are. I think as an artist.

**ILA** Like my daughter's husband is half-Jamaican and half-Indian. People said Oh, he is black and this, that but I do not care as long he is a good human being. I must have done mistake I do not know, but I tried to just understand them and communicate with them.

**NEELAM:** Life like that is really beautiful.

**ILA** Just to be proud of what they are and who they are. And I feel a lot of confidence in everything. Like they know that whatever culture is they have bad things about it and good things about it too and we are trying to get the best before both the worlds and so I have learnt and I think they have learnt too.

**NEELAM:** When you first came here were you actively involved in any political, social, or religious activity?

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**ILA** No, none.

**NEELAM:** None.

**ILA** I was just a housewife taking care of the kids.

**NEELAM:** Nothing doing.

**ILA** When I say I am a housewife they get mad. They say you are an art expert and as an artist I could not do a lot of things like go to the galleries and sell my work and promote myself. Now as they are big, I am going to, I am trying to go more out and do all that stuffs, but at that time I did not do all. My priority was just then whatever time extra I got I did that.

**NEELAM:** Has it been more difficult as an Asian artist to survive commercially?

**ILA** Very much. Like when I used to call galleries and I would ask them can I show my work? Do you see slides? So they would say we only show American artists. Because my pronunciations were like that and so they knew I am not American or I do not what. So galleries forget and it was very difficult even in Indian galleries now a days they are open I think they bring artists from India. There are like all famous artists Hussain and all that. So they just bring them and they do not want to show. And people think India is like more of antics and that contemporary Indian artists do not exist. And unfortunately, I had very bad experience with community also and with everything. No one is there to support you.

**NEELAM:** Very sad. When did you make your first sale?

**ILA** First sale? That was like years ago when we were in Bergen Pines I told you.

**NEELAM:** So at that time. We did. Okay we did do that, but after those have you made any commercial sales to a gallery or any museum or some things like that?

**ILA** Oh, yes, yes.

**NEELAM:** You have.

**ILA** Yeah, yeah.

**NEELAM:** Okay.

**ILA** But more or less than what I would like to but I have. Especially museums display a lot of my work and they have it and not many private collections. It is funny that there were people I would not say Indian or what ever. They would come and say Oh! How long did you take you to do this? It is like half an hour or one hour painting like. I said

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

no, it took me like 40 or 50 whatever years. Because nothing comes overnight. They do not realize. I am not making even 10 cents in hour. Because if it were just for money, I would rather do something else than going into a department store I will make more money. Because hours I am spending on the art it is hard to tell people it really breaks my heart. People won't understand, like nothing comes overnight.

**NEELAM:** Do you prefer to work in a particular medium.

**ILA** I like to learn new thing all the time. Like I was doing paintings in India then in India we are going watercolor, but after coming here, I did like oil colors and all those different media. That wasn't enough I started doing sculpturing bronze and ceramics and I always like to learnt new things and then I started cutting wood and all that because it is more independent when you do bronze, it is very difficult because casting bronze I did it myself. I casted in the College, but it is so heavy and it is such a laborious process that I hurt my back and afterward I decide to go to the foundry and get it casted but in foundry when you go you will get a 12 inches piece. It is like \$2000 even more and if you want to sell it for even \$3000 nobody would buy it. So it is very difficult to do bronze. So I thought I have to be independent and I have to do just sitting in a home and do it, but how to tell my stories whatever I want to say. So I started the new medium wood and now I have metal cutter and so I cut metals because I got a grant Dodge Foundation and I went one month to Vermont and I learnt cutting metals and I love it for outdoor sculptures. So I always like to learn new things. But now the computer has come, so last one month I have been working on it.

**NEELAM:** Oh!, what kind of graphical art?

**ILA** No, like I am just right now I am doing Photoshop and all that.

**NEELAM:** Photoshop.

**ILA** I want to turn on the side. Because I think as an artist or whose ever you have to go on.

**BHARTI:** What about this Dodge Foundation the grant you got? How did you get it?

**ILA** How did I get it?

**BHARTI:** How you get it, and what happened, the process? Like what is a Dodge Foundation? Yeah, because you know, before that you said it was hard to get the support from. We in United States they are looking for American artists and they are looking for very much like that and now here you have got something.

**ILA** No famous I think.

**BHARTI:** Promise for coming year? People you said.



## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**ILA** That is the Indian galleries.

**BHARTI:** Indian galleries and so Indian galleries were not recognizing and American we had a conflict to.

**ILA** American galleries won't show, if it is a commercial gallery, because the bottom line is money. They crowd this and understand Indian art and they can't sell it. So commercial galleries I had always problems. But I had lot of good luck with nonprofit galleries. They do not care for money and they get grant. So they show what did by artist.

**BHARTI:** Now, you are getting support, right?

**ILA** Right, right. Lots of support. Now, I have lot of support. Because I got that grant. I must have applied for 10 years in New Jersey State Council and at last I got it. People are getting more familiar with different culture like when I used to have show, people would just show interest and just passed by but now they stopped and they say Oh! This is Ganesh. What is that? This is god of blah blah. Whatever they want to ask questions. They want to ask questions. So people are more aware now.

**BHARTI:** That is good.

**ILA** It helps.

**BHARTI:** Makes us feel good.

**ILA** Right. Because that is my goal too nowadays, that to pass our culture.

**BHARTI:** Because this is project actually to pass our experience to our children and the next generation they concerned for whatever it is. So it is good for that to hear what is the conflict and how people are getting really familiar with the different culture and this is affecting them and admiring it and making interested in it also.

**ILA** I have a good story for that and I always tell whenever I go for lecture. Like, there was some eastern person. He was putting rice near his ancestor's grave. So when westerns are passed by and he said what are you doing? When are your ancestors going to come and eat this rice? He was laughing. So, the eastern says when your ancestors will come and smell the roses, at that time. So like we all different cultures. So, I thought I am trying to understand what is modern art, what is abstract art, and what is minimal art, I do all that so they are to know what is ancient art too. Like what we come from? So it is mutual. So one of my goal Lot of people told me if you do abstract art, you are to tell more why do you to do go and doing the same thing in Indian, but I am Indian, I am mother, lot of my work is about mother and children and all that. But I will

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

do what I am. I don't want to just copy and do what they are doing. Now it is time for them to understand what we are. That is what I think.

**NEELAM:** Good. Who were the Indian artists you are mostly influenced by?

**ILA** All the time, when I was young.

**NEELAM:** And who were the western artist that you are mostly influenced by?

**ILA** It is for me I like even children art. I learnt so much from them. I just love to go to museums and galleries and I learnt from everybody everything.

**NEELAM:** But no one in particular stands out.

**ILA** I love it.

**NEELAM:** Okay.

**ILA** I just love art.

**NEELAM:** Okay, any different particular style?

**ILA** No.

**NEELAM:** Impressionist or cubist?

**ILA** Just anything what helps to find oneself I like it.

**NEELAM:** How do you exactly describe your art. I am looking at some of your sculptures and your wood art and on paper. These are nice combination as you were saying, like you know as a mother I see you have mom there and they all kind of like they look like levels different levels. I am looking at like four, five things and they are all set at different levels. What are those levels?

**ILA** I searched myself through art and it helps me to survive I have told you. But most of them nowadays are about faith like having faith in your work. So I don't care if these sells or don't sell I just do them, like what was said in Gita I think that is where my experience comes. That you do what you have to do you are supposed to do in life without worrying about the results. So I don't worry about anything. Whatever comes in my mind I just do that and most of them is about faith like. If you don't keep faith I can't survive it is such an important part. So, faith is sometimes becoming hope too. there is lot of my.

**NEELAM:** You are taking something.

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**ILA** It is more about faith. Faith is oneself. These new sculptures which I like towers. They look like temples but they are not temples because temples are all horizontal. This is more influenced of western art like even churches and there are Islamic arches and they are all different. They have graffiti like American and so it is mixture of all the cultures. There are structures of faith I like structures of faith.

**NEELAM:** I like it. Its make a lot more sense.

**ILA** And I think we all need faith in these.

**SPEAKER1:** Great.

**ILA** Although my art is like postmodern contemporary whatever you say.

**NEELAM:** Indian-American contemporary art.

**ILA** Right. Ha, ha, ha. But I don't like to be told that I am a woman artist or Asian artist or this or that. They make it so, but I am an artist.

**NEELAM:** Art first.

**ILA** Because lot of people would take me in the show and then they will have to write oh, we have an artist from all over we have an Indian artist and they would put a label and I do not like that label somehow.

**NEELAM:** But you know you are very specific to that said region. I mean it is.

**ILA** Not really. It is a human experience.

**NEELAM:** Okay.

**ILA** I think it is whatever woman things I do, lot of women understanding this. Like I had the sculpture something like one man fell down from the scaffolding and he died and nobody came to help him. The sculpture's name was "Nobody Came." So one girl when she saw it in the gallery she cried. I didn't tell her anything, but she did. It is universal experience. I am talking today so much but usually when people ask me I say it's a visual experience not verbal. So my art is not just Indian and I am sure that all you are.

**NEELAM:** People who came to American they are the major \_\_\_\_.

**ILA** You came from Calcutta and you are from India and much Indian your god is \_\_\_\_\_ Indian.

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**SPEAKER3:** But in overall what are you trying to say. I am trying to summarize you, even you are an Indian even you came to American, and we are talking about the human experience.

**ILA** Right.

**BHARTI:** That was the kind of putting your art.

**ILA** Right. It is universal. I think lot of women can relate to it. Like I have a lot of super mom like she is running with a poor six hands and one is caring this and one is taking children to school and all that. All women here they know the truth.

**BHARTI:** Afterward this we would like you describes a little for our interest.

**ILA** Okay.

**BHARTI:** And may be you know if we need to do something more about that in that our project will do that. I see there is one picture here that shows the Statue of Liberty and women is an Indian god. Can you able to tell little bit about this picture? We are going to tell for this a little bit so.

**ILA** Okay. I call this 'Best of both worlds' to tell you this. I think she has the kite, Indian Kite and that is Kali Ma there and she is stepping on Liberty Statue there is that bridge or whatever. Though it she has come to the new culture she is coming out of an envelope, you can see, there is an envelope in the back. She came out of the envelope. So she is in a different culture and she is going to write both best for herself and a good life for herself or hanging there you cannot leave India we are with that.

**BHARTI:** You are hanging on to that Indian culture.

**ILA** She is hanging like a Kite.

**BHARTI:** Now which is our kite where you come from the kite is very much significant of India. Kite is also significant for freedom flying in the sky.

**ILA** That is interesting.

**NEELAM:** That is what I thought of and Kali Ma is strength?

**ILA** Yes, Kali Ma is the strength.

**BHARTI:** I like to interpret.

**ILA** I like it because you know lot of times I tell that it is your experience more than mine. I learnt something from them.

## INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH

**BHARTI:** But you know, you said there is always some significant. A woman coming from India, coming out of an envelope to the freedom stepping in a different world, Statue of Liberty and there is a bridge and so it is courageous thing it is the strength and you know it is a new experience and it is the case really a kind of very solid experience that is stepping out Statue of Liberty and bridge are all these big obstacles that she has to cross and at the same time we are trying to adopt them you like to get into that and whatever we get it is a very perfect project with immigration experience.

**ILA** Right.

**BHARTI:** Right?

**ILA** Yeah.

**BHARTI:** This is I think too shows whether Ela Shah has really told everything about her immigration experience in this picture that is what I looked at it.

**ILA** That is my art. I do not have.

**BHARTI:** This is what I learnt like this.

**ILA** I have so many paintings like that.

**NEELAM:** This one is like you know with the \_\_\_\_\_ of the city.

**ILA** Really, no there is.

**NEELAM:** The first thing I walk in here I looked at the wall.

**ILA** Okay.

**NEELAM:** Okay, is there if you know if you have to give a message or say something to the next generation what exactly would you like to say?

**ILA** It is a difficult question. Ha, ha, ha. To Indian generation?

**NEELAM:** Yeah. I mean the Indian-American kids who are growing up over here they are going to read this article. 100 years from now when they read this article, what is the message they should get?

**ILA** They should know their weakness and their strength like our culture has a lot of weaknesses too and strength too. They should get the best and be a good human being that is more important to me.

## **INTERVIEW OF MRS. ILA SHAH**

**NEELAM:** I really would like to thank you very much for this opportunity I thoroughly enjoyed it. Thank you.