

INTERVIEW OF MR. VED CHAUDHARY

MALA: Good morning.

VED: Good morning.

MALA: Today is June 20, 2002. But in any case, we will start off talking about your name, your age, education, and just the basic things, and I hope this will pick up the sound properly. All right, here we go.

VED: I am Ved Chaudhary. I have stopped calling my middle name. My full name is Ved Prakash Chaudhary. To Indian people that makes more sense to have my full name, but here I have sort of dropped my middle name. I was born in January 1942, in U.P. i.e. Uttar Pradesh in India, and I came here to United States in 1965 to Rutgers University as a graduate student. I am very proud of being a Rutgers student and have lived in this area for a long time now. I am only 10 miles from Rutgers. So I have lived in this general area for most of my life here in the United States.

MALA: Oho. We will go over that in a second, but I wanted to record right now is the date and time and your name and the time period that you came in that is important for us. My name is Mala Ganapathy and I am recording this first interview with Dr. Ved Chaudhary on behalf of AIA, New Jersey chapter and this is indeed a pleasure and honor to record history of Indian immigrants who came here during the formative years for the Indian community. Now you told me over the phone that you are from Etawah.

VED: Yeah.

MALA: Tell me where exactly Etawah is?

VED: Etawah is in U.P. that is Uttar Pradesh in India. It is almost a central district in U.P. It is between Agra and Kanpur. I think Agra is about 75 to 80 miles to the west and Kanpur is about the same about 80 miles to the east.

MALA: Would it be considered a small town or a large town.

VED: Very small, unknown town, until recently.

MALA: Yes, until recently. Until we get to know Dr. Chaudhary. What kind of a social background did you come from?

VED: Okay, I actually come from a village community in Etawah. Etawah is the district town and I am about eight miles from the district town in a village community, very small village of about maybe 100 families, and basically a Brahmin village. We are Chaudhary. I grew up - even though with modest means- but as someone who had everything that we needed. Even more than everything we needed - because my father was always interested in helping everybody else in the village. My father was the most educated person in the village. He was a school teacher. Actually, he was the

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headmaster in a middle school that he started with the help of some of the people, who owned an orchard, which had a small parcel of land and property, a small building with a well, etc. So he was seen both as a community leader in the sense of education and the stuff and also helping people.

MALA: Is your family a wealthy land owning family?

VED: I cannot say wealthy. No we were not wealthy, but we were well off. It was a happy medium. There was nothing that we did not have that we needed, but we were not wealthy. We did not have a lot of land, but we had a lot of prestige, like, you know, one of my father's uncle - of course in India you just say grandfather- was seriously into politics. He was the only person in the village who represented the congress party and he was called Netaji – a political leader - in the village and another of my father's uncle was a sadhu, actually people called him Swami ji. In India sadhu meant saint. So I had the spectrum of one grand uncle being Swami ji, another being Netaji, and my father being the most educated person and the middle school headmaster. I think I tried to absorb all of that in me. By the way, I did not see my real grandfather, he had died before I was born, but my grandmother was a person who everybody in the village respected and listened to. I had a deep respect for her. I learnt a lot from her. In my personal view, I always think that women in India get a lot of respect, because, in my own experience, my grandmother was the most respected person in the village, and everybody would listen to her. She had the wisdom, virtues and values that will make people come to her when they had a problem.

MALA: So did you know about joint family situation.

VED: Of course I know.

MALA: So tell me about your mom and dad or parents.

VED: Okay. I started telling about my father. The best I know of him as the headmaster in a Junior High School, a very disciplined man, a follower of Mahatma Gandhi, as well as he was an Arya Samaji which meant that he did not believe in image worship, or in a particular form of God, but said that you can pray to god in any form you want. _____
07:20. So he was Arya Samaji and he gave me a lot of literature to read from Dayanand Saraswati. That is one aspect of him. My mother was an ordinary housewife with six children. I am the second oldest. There is one sister who is older than me. Actually the Indian tradition being so, my elder sister and myself were raised by my grandmother. She said to my mother: "Okay, I have raised two of your children. Now, they are like the model to follow, and if you can do as good with the rest of your children, I'll be happy". I feel very privileged and fortunate to have had her – my grandmother- as the senior mom to have taken care of and raised us. She was the best of human beings. My elder sister also emulated her.

MALA: Tell me about your siblings.

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VED: I have two brothers and three sisters, a total of six, including myself. My elder sister and I had the nicest of all sibling relationships. We never knew to fight about anything. We loved each other very much. She got married at an early age according to Indian tradition and she lives in India, in Vidisha which is in M.P. I did not have as much interaction with other brothers and sisters because they were little when I left home and went to college.

MALA: I just wanted to be sure that it is taping and that is all. Every now and then I get a little anxious about that 08:56. It is recording, but at the same, I do not know whether this mic should stood up on top of something or not, but we will just leave that.

VED: So she is living in India. She got married of course into a Brahmin family. She was quite religious to begin with and having married into an orthodox Brahmin family, she became even more religious. She is a very sharp- intelligent- person. Two of us were raised like a good model of brother and sister. I mean people gave examples of us, like a brother and sister should be like these two children and gave credit to my grandmother for raising us. I have a younger sister, Siya, and then two brothers, Om and Jai, and then we have the youngest sister, Mamta. Now both of my brothers and two sisters, Siya and Mamta, are here. Jai lives only two blocks away from here.

MALA: I was going to ask this question later on, but good that you brought it just right away.

VED: Om lives in Connecticut. 09:56 and in that way we have good family contacts. My mother sometimes lives with us, or she goes to live with Jay, or Om who lives in Connecticut, which is not far. So we meet often and our children have grown up like having this feeling of having many cousins 09:56 Its always good to have cousins around.

MALA: Right. What about your sister?

VED: My youngest sister Mamta lives in Florida. Okay. Both of my brothers came here after I finished my Ph.D. I told them as they finished BSc in India they can come here for graduate studies and they did. I told the same to my sister Mamata. So she also came after she finished her degree in India and she is now living in Florida. The sister oldest to me never came here and the sister younger to me, Siya, is also here now. Her husband also came here right after I had finished Ph.D. and he was working here for a while, but then he went back to India and spent all his career there. He recently retired. His son is here on an H1B visa, so he and my sister are also here living with their son now.

MALA: Oh that is wonderful.

VED: So except for one sister, who is in Vidisha, M.P. in India, everybody is here.

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MALA: Oh that is good, that is wonderful. So what language do you speak at home.

VED: We speak in Hindi. My mother is from Agra, Mathura area. So she is kind of Brij bhasha speaking. Lot of things that Surdas wrote were Brij, so knowing Brij from my mother came handy to me.

MALA: Surdas is one of the wonderful poet, early poets of India, poet saint of India. Brij is more like an old language or old Hindi, right.

VED: Yes.

MALA: Right. Tell me about your grade school experiences.

VED: There was a grade school right in my village. The teachers knew my father well. They were friends. So they used to be like uncles coming around and sitting around our front porch, talking to my father all the time, or going for 12:06. So I had special privileges. I was one of the four top students in the elementary school - that is one of the things I remember. We - the four of us - were like together through the whole grade school as well as through the middle school. The four of us stayed in the same class and we four were at the top all the time. Then we went to high school and things changed, but up to the middle school we were all together. My sister was also going to the same school. I remember going to the first grade, and stuff, that she was like my mentor and protector. I depended on her at every step.

MALA: So that is good, so you have had a happy experience.

VED: Yeah, very much so.

MALA: Was it good that your dad was a school teacher when you were in grade school or it was not so good when all the teachers came to your house and things like that?

VED: Actually it was good that everybody felt that I was special and everybody knew that I was Pandit Baburam's son. The only bad part is that everybody had very high expectations of me and I had to maintain those high expectations. So that was a stress factor all along, but I enjoyed a lot.

MALA: But at that time, I do not think it was a stress for you. Or was it?

VED: It was a stress actually. As I said my father was a strict disciplinarian and he had very high expectations of me. So it was a stress.

MALA: Because I have never heard of great schooling - kids going through stress in a small town village school.

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VED: My father was teaching me even before I was registered in a school. I had been able to do like up to 3rd grade stuff at home before going to school. I mean I finished my BS at the age of 19, so I was rushed, rushed, rushed, so there was stress. Yes, there definitely was stress.

MALA: What was your past time as a child. What did you like doing best?

VED: Well, I grew up on the farm, so any free time I had was spent in the fields. Although my parents directly did not do any farming, they would help around on the farm, but we were always out there in the fields. Like taking food or snacks to feed the workers when its time to take food, or snacks, or helping in someway or another with lights or lamps, lanterns, or whatever you have. So most of the time it was just helping around and as you know, in the village community, it is not only that you help when your own work is going on. You help neighbors too, and neighbors help you. So it is always a very active life.

We were also a family where we were well known and respected in the surrounding villages 15:00 and people knew us from long distances in the whole area because of my grandfather, who was the Netaji, the leader, and my father who was a teacher. We had guests in our house always - like unbelievable. Our house was on the main thorough fare. So, in the monsoon season, there will be a lot of people who will be just passing by, but if it was late at night, they will come to stay with us. We'll feed them and give them a bed to sleep for the night.

The one experience that I will always remember is that the first time when I went to a restaurant in Etawah with a friend. After having finished eating, he started paying, and I was very surprised that we had to pay because we ate there. It was the most surprising thing to me, because at my house, dozens of people ate free -every week. I never thought that when you feed somebody, that they have to pay. Its like if somebody comes to your house and has a drink water, you dont ask him to pay. So that is the kind of environment that I grew up in.

MALA: What did your father grow in his farm. What did he?

VED: Well, he was very smart. He did not grow wheat, which is what many people did. He said he could make more money by growing peas - this is some of my recollections - and then take it to Etawah to sell and on the return trip buy wheat and other stuff we need and bring it home. There is less danger of pest damage to peas and it takes less irrigation than wheat and you can sell it at a higher price than wheat. He had figured out all these things, being an educated man, so he grew things that will give him more cash so that he can buy what he wants.

MALA: So did you play any games? What was your favorite game to play at that time?

VED: That was one of the restrictions. I had a health problem when I was growing up. So I had somewhat limitations of playing, but as you know in India, kabaddi is one of the games that we play in the village, that all kids play, you know.

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MALA: How do you play kabaddi?

VED: You know there are two teams, in a field, and there is a line in the middle. One person from one team goes across the middle line to the other team and the point is that when you go to challenge that team, you are supposed to hit or touch one of them or their boundary line, and not get caught. If you can do that, then you win a point. But, of course if you get caught, then you are out. So it is pretty simple. When you go across the middle line to the other side, the whole team on the other side is ganging up on you to make sure that you are not able to touch any one of them, or their line, and they try to grab hold of you, so they'd win. But if you can get out without getting caught, then you win.

MALA: So you do not need a lot of equipment to play that.

VED: Actually no. It is just your body that is all you need, there is no equipment. But we also played volleyball. People of my younger uncle's age used to play volleyball. Later on I also played badminton. I think badminton was not so popular in those days, but the volleyball was quite popular. I also liked to go jogging, hiking and long walks. We had a canal near our house and I had a best friend who lived near by, Madan Gupta. So we used to have walking and running competition and things like that.

MALA: So you did not jump into the canal and swim over it? Did you?

VED: Unfortunately, that's just one thing I missed, I never learnt swimming. I was too much protected. My father did not let me do that. My father was very concerned. He was too safety conscious. So I did not have a wild life, like what you would think of somebody living in the village. I did not have that kind of life. Living in the village I know all about farming and all that, but I lived a more protected city life, even while living in a village.

MALA: As a child did you get to travel a lot?

VED: No, not really. Up to high school, I had not traveled anywhere farther than 20 miles or so.

MALA: Did you ever dreamt about traveling to far away places even back then?

VED: Oh yes, I recall in winters when I studied late at night and when I will finally go to sleep, I will come out of my room and look up at the sky and see the stars. Somehow, I felt like I got a lot of inspiration from looking at the stars that maybe someday I will go to USA. This was when I was in the middle school and high school. I used to say that it is cold in the house in winter, but I also knew that it was very cold- much much colder- in America, so that was a big concern. But I definitely knew that I will go for my college education somewhere. My father had studied at Agra University in Agra for teacher'

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training program. So I knew I will go somewhere for education at college level, or even beyond. So I had entertained all those thoughts even at very early age.

MALA: And you knew about America even back then?

VED: Yeah, because there were couple of people who were from my area, not my village, but from my area, from neighboring villages, from two Chaudhary families, who had come here. So I had heard about America.

MALA: So even prior to the 60s they had come here. Vow. In high school?

VED: One of my distant cousins has just retired, Professor Dr. Ram Chaudhari. He is several years senior to me. He is 10 or 15 years senior to me and he had come here well before me and because he is Chaudhari from the next village, I knew of him. Now we have a very close relationship with him because he lives here in Oswego, NY. His son married my wife's sister. We have a huge big extended family here now with my brothers and sisters, as I told you; similarly my wife's brothers and sisters are here and then Dr. Ram Chaudhari, his family is also here, so we have a very large extended family.

MALA: Lovely.

VED: We recreated India here in terms of the extended family system.

MALA: In high school were you a serious student?

VED: Yeah, I always was. I was one of the top four students in elementary school, middle school and high school. The other three must have changed in high school because the other three- who were my competitors up to middle school- did not go to the same high school. I don't recall if they did -- but let me think - actually two of them went. But I do not know what happened, that in high school, the other two who went, did not shine up to be in the top, they faded away. On the other hand, even though I had the helping hand of my father when I was in middle school, and all the teachers knew me and everything, when I got to high school, none or may be just some of the teachers knew my father. But I did very well, as a matter of fact, in high school. I was the top student in high school 10th grade, so I outdistanced everyone else and was well known in the school. Actually, the principal Mr. D.S. Bajpai liked me very much. I was like his best student. He took so much personal interest in me during junior and senior years. It is just unbelievable - the kind of things that were done for me, the way I was treated in the high school. Every one admired Mr Bajpai. But I think of him with much reverence, as a real Guru, a messenger of God, who inspired me to be someone. I have even emulated his style of signature.

MALA: Was it in the same village?

VED: No it was about 8 miles from my village and I used to go to school on a bicycle everyday with my friend Madan Gupta, 16 miles roundtrip everyday. I have some of the

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fondest memories of the high school times and what my relationship was with my teachers. That is the best of my memories of all time.

MALA: So 8 mile was a long trek.

VED: Yeah, long trek and I guess that is the secret of both my good health and my height because, after all, riding on a bicycle was a very good exercise. One hour both morning and evening in a kind of rough terrain. I did that four years in a stretch and I think that is the secret of both, good height and good health I have enjoyed.

MALA: What do you remember to boast about your high school years?

VED: Two things. There was a student parliament. My principal did not want a student union. He wanted a representative government, so there was a student government parliament and I was the Prime Minister of the student government. I had a lot of visibility. Matter of fact, all the people in the surrounding towns knew me. There were two towns, one called Lukhna and another called Bakewar 25:14. Many people knew me because when we held our functions of student government outdoors, people came from the towns to see the program. I was the main speaker. I was the Prime Minister. That is one thing. And the second thing of pride is, ofcourse, that I was the one student who would be asked to comment on candidate teachers who came for job interviews. Of course, the principal will interview him and the department head will interview him and then the teacher will be sent to a class to teach and he normally will be sent to a class to teach where I was the student and then they will ask me what I thought of the teacher.

MALA: So you evaluated the teachers.

VED: I evaluated teachers. I also evaluated the books for the library. Occasionally, my principal gave me book samples to read, saying he will like me to review them and suggest if he should order the book for the library. I feel I had a very privileged position in the school. I was treated like a member of the faculty even though I was a student.

MALA: Oh well. That is something that we can emulate here. What was your favorite subject in high school?

VED: That is a good question. My favorite subjects were mathematics and physics, and - I was just thinking- now my son is doing Ph.D. in mathematics! No one knows the future. I was interested in math when I was in high school. So yeah math simply was the most interesting subject.

MALA: So then you were off to college. At what age did you set off to college.

VED: I was 16 when I went to college. I had a tough time deciding about college because - you see- after middle school, my father had decided to send me to the agricultural high school rather than science, because those days the Community Planning Development had

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just started in India and there were many jobs for positions called BDO, Block Development Officers, that were gazetted positions and there were lots of jobs in that area. So my father being an educated person – who actually liked to call himself budhi-jivi - someone who lives a life of intellect—He thought that it is best for me that I should try to go into the agriculture field - rather than trying for IAS (Indian Administrative Service) and the stuff.

So he got me admission to do high school in agriculture and I did go through high school and intermediate with agriculture as the major subject, but I found agriculture to be too boring and easy - simple. I did not have to study anything about agriculture. I was just spending my time studying math and science and physics. So I said I do not want to do BS in agriculture. I wanted to do BS in Engineering, but that door was closed for me. I could not have done BS in engineering because I had done high school in agriculture. So the only option available to me was to do BS in Agricultural Engineering, which there was just one college of 28:17 engineering.

There was this best little institute called Allahabad Agricultural Institute or Naini College in Allahabad. They were extremely selective. They used to take only 25 students from both India and outside - some students came from other countries: Africa, middle east, south-east asia in that college, but only 25 students in the engineering class. I applied and I was soooooooooo thrilled when I got the admission.

So I went to the Naini College and luckily it turned out that the way the agricultural engineering curriculum was set up- you got to learn all fields of engineering: civil engineering, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering, with emphasis on automobile engineering and thermodynamics, because you know that was the proper training in mechanical side for large scale farming with tractors, and irrigation with wells and canals. So it turned out to be a very good, broad based, engineering background. I did not know at that time what I might be able to do with that training in India. Basically I started with jobs that were suited for my training. But I have been changing my direction ever since. My father put me into agriculture with his best intentions and his best knowledge at that point in time, but I have been changing the course of my career ever since, because I basically wanted to do something that relates to mathematics, physics, engineering, and not agriculture.

MALA: Strangely enough you did not study botany in order to do agriculture there was no botany.

VED: Actually, the agriculture curriculum in high school is set up that you study all the four sciences: physics, chemistry, zoology, and botany. So I had all four, but my favorite was physics and second favorite was zoology. A medical student who had to drop out because of financial conditions taught me zoology and I was very interested. I could have gone into medical, but again because of doing high school in agriculture that door was also closed for me. It limited my choices very much by having gone to that particular program.

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MALA: So was it difficult for you to go away from home at that period of time like from home to Naini?

VED: No, I was very excited leaving home. Actually, I have been so lucky in my life. When I went to Naini College, I had friends there from my high school. So I did not miss at all when I left home. I know my parents were crying when I left but I was just happy and I just left and I quickly settled in college. I settled like, this was my home, when I was in college.

MALA: So you adjusted very well in the college.

VED: Not a slightest of 31:22 dislocation for me when I left the village and was in the college, which was a very posh, sophisticated college. My colleagues, they never thought I came from a village. They had definite views of the people who are from the village and I wasn't like a village boy.

MALA: So what was the language of instruction?

VED: English, of course. When you get to college, it is all English. Allahabad Agriculture Institute is a Christian Missionary school. Every one in the faculty, practically everyone, had their training in USA. So when you are in Naini College, you are like in an American college. Being an American funded Missionary college, even the buildings and the layout of the campus was like an American college.

After we got married, I took my wife to see my college. She said, wow, this looks like any American college campus.

MALA: So the adjustment was very easy for you.

VED: Yeah, that helped me to make adjustment here also.

MALA: So you have lived in some of the most beautiful places in India, particularly Nainital and U.P. foothills like that.

VED: Actually this is Naini, not Nainital. People normally get confused. Naini is near Allahabad, and Allahabad is at the Sangam.

MALA: The confluence.

VED: The confluence of Ganga and Jamuna, and this college is on the banks of Jamuna on the other side of Allahabad. So you cross a bridge over the Jamuna and you are into Naini. I consider Naini is famous for this college. So I had the pleasure of having spent my college days in Allahabad, which is a great city, with the U.P. High Court and the Allahabad University.

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MALA: No but from your resume, I also read up on you and that tells me about you having lived in the foothill of U.P Himalayas, so describe all those beautiful places.

VED: Yes, that is the most beautiful place where I spent a part of my life right after graduating from college. I had the privilege of getting an appointment letter sent to my house without I ever applying for the job, or going to an interview. Because I graduated from this special engineering program where there were only 25 students admitted and only 20 graduated. So I was one of the 20 –and out of them, I was one of the top four, there was an appointment letter sent right to my house for the job when I graduated. I didn't even know that there was an appointment letter waiting for me at the house. A director of Agriculture of UP visited me at the Talkatora workshop where I was doing an internship and announced to me that I was selected for a job and I had the freedom of picking any place I wanted to work in U.P. This was for the U.P. Soil Conservation Services.

MALA: Talk about luck.

VED: Yes, I have been very lucky. The hill towns of U.P. are where people go for summer just to spend two or three months. There is a place called Ranikhet. It's not a big city, but it is the most beautiful little place between Nainital and Almora. Those two places are better known and more touristic. Ranikhet at that time was like idyllic and beautiful place and it will always remain my fondest memory of those days. My office as an engineer in Ranikhet was fabulous where I liked this window 35:18 facing my desk from where sitting I could look out and see the snow clad peaks of Himalayas round the year.

MALA: Wow!

VED: I used to go for inspection tours in a jeep. I was staying in Inspection houses on hilltops and would just see and experience snow clad mountains everywhere. Ranikhet was the most beautiful place I have stayed. Though, they used to say that no matter where I go, I will come back 35:45. I probably should go back there.

MALA: So how long has it been since you came to the U.S.?

VED: Well, I came here in 1965, so that makes it 36 or 37 years ago.

MALA: How old were you when you came to the U.S.?

VED: I came here in 1965 so that it makes me 23 at that time.

MALA: Was your family ready to send you?

VED: Well, that was a very ranching decision, I guess, for my parents, but again my father was somebody I admire. He had tremendous control over me up to the time of

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middle school. Because, of course, I was a very dependable child, he started giving me more freedom when I got to high school, especially when he realized that I was doing well in high school and that my principal was so much appreciative of me. He started giving me more freedom and then when I got admission in Allahabad, he basically left me open. Actually, his finances were strained to send me to college. Even though, sitting here one can say that there is nothing to the cost of college education in India, but to him that was a financial strain. Once he sent me to Allahabad, that was like - I was gone! I only went home during summer, and maybe once in the year, while I was in college. And then I worked for four years in India. So my family was accustomed to me being away and only coming home for once or twice a year at the most. But going to U.S.A. meant that I will not be back for two, three, four, or five years, but my father was supportive. There was never a thought or discussion about whether or not I should go. He had high ambitions for me and a lot of confidence in me. Even for my marriage, he left it up to me, who I wanted to marry, when I wanted to marry, and what I wanted to do. The whole thing was left up to me. I was given a lot of freedom. .

MALA: So you financed your own trip to the U.S.?

VED: I had made a deal with my father when I went to college that if he financed my college education, I will take care of the rest of our family, which I did. So I made sure that before I go to USA, I arranged and performed the wedding of my younger sister Siya. That is when after her wedding in 1964 I announced that next year I will go to U.S.A. and I did. So, I had a plan for my life - even when I graduated from college - for everything.

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MALA: So, can you remember your first day in USA?

VED: Yes, rather well. My coming to USA was a very complex business, really, as it turned out to be. Normally, it is simple to board a plane and to land here. But, in my case, when I was leaving India, which was September of 1965, there was this India-Pakistan war going on.

MALA: Oho.

VED: I came to Delhi along with my family. I had reserved two rooms at the Nirula Hotel, just so everybody who came to see me off, my relatives and friends, can meet me there. I thought, you know, that everybody will see me off and then leave. So I had the rooms for a day or two, or something like that. But just when I got to Delhi, my travel agent told me that, now they are going to close down the Delhi Airport because of the war. So we stayed there,... stayed two, three, four days, and after that I actually said goodbye to my parents and friends and relatives and said that, "now you go home" and when my flight takes off, I will go to US, but don't know when. So, I saw everybody off, rather than everybody seeing me off.

MALA: Oho.

VED: I stayed in Delhi for a week or 10 days, and the airport was still closed. Then I heard that the international flights were going through Bombay, so it is better to fly to Bombay, and then take an international flight from there.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: So then I flew to Bombay. When I got to Bombay, they said, well, the flights are too full, so you cannot get a seat; you have to wait for a week or something before you can get a seat. But by that time, they said that, well, now they have closed Bombay airport also; international flights are not going through Bombay, but through Colombo, Sri Lanka.

MALA: Oho.

VED: So it took me 20 days between Delhi and Bombay, waiting.

MALA: Oho.

VED: When Bombay airport opened again for international flights, I used to go to the airport every day and put my name on the waiting list. Finally, one day I got a seat on a flight and I came here. But I had not informed anybody here. My plan was that I had a friend here Mr P. B. Singh who I would inform, and he will come to pick me up, and everything will be fine. But when I came here, nobody knew, because I just took a flight when a seat was available. Being on the waiting list 02:32 not even knowing

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when I would get a seat, I could not even inform the college that I am coming late or whatever at 02:39 the Rutgers University.

MALA: Okay.

VED: Luckily, I had the company of one friend, Parashu Ram, who was coming with me, so we were always together at Delhi and Bombay and we came here together. So when I reached here at the JFK airport -- we reached very late in the night and I could not contact my friend Mr. P.B. Singh. So we had to find a place to stay in a hotel in New York, but we did not have enough money to pay for the hotel room because we had only eight dollars each for coming here.

MALA: That's right. That was one of my questions how much money did you bring with you?

VED: Eight dollars, but then I had a good friend in India Mr Anmol Singh who had given me a 50-dollar traveller's cheque. So I had that 50 dollars, plus eight dollars of two of us. We also had another friend we had met in Delhi, who was not known to us before at that time, but he was also coming here with the same flight. He was with us in Delhi and Bombay, and so in those periods we became friends. So we stayed in one hotel room and paid for the room with collective money we all had. The next day after the breakfast, I called my friend Mr P.B. Singh. He gave me directions to take a bus to New Brunswick. We took a bus to New Brunswick and he picked me up from the New Brunswick bus station, which is remarkable now thinking that we made it all the way. Once I was here with Mr.&Mrs. P.B. Singh, again I felt like being home. I am always so lucky! He was a very good friend of mine and he is a very good man - a family friend. Once we were here, it was like we were in family again. After that they took care of us like anything in every way.

MALA: That's wonderful.

VED: Absolutely, so my recollections of coming here are not like going to any hardship, any difficulty, or anything whatsoever. The only difficulty or hardship that I had was for less than 24 hours before I could contact my friend Mr Singh. 04.36.

MALA: What kind of visa did you come in ?

VED: A student visa F1.

MALA: Hmm, hmm. How were you viewed by your professor at that time and who was?

VED: Professor?

MALA: going to guide you ?

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VED: Yes, well, since coming here required that I have a financial assistantship, that was all lined up. I had a professor Nathan as the professor. Mr. P.B. Singh, who was my friend, was also in the same department. He was a graduate student in that department so everybody knew him and he took me around. Now the big problem facing my good professor was what he is going to do with me because I was too late to register for the fall semester.

MALA: What time of the year did you come?

VED: Towards the end of September, the late part of September. The classes had begun already, may be 10th of September, and the late registration was also over. It was over by September 15th or 20th or something, and I had reached here after that. So then he talked with the chairman of the department and the chairman talked with the Dean of the college to give us special dispensation, so he could register two of us - me and my friend Parashu Ram _____ 05:59 Luckily the Dean said, well, go ahead and register. So we started classes one or two weeks late. That was a little hassle there for a while, but they had assured me that even if I did not register for any classes, they will give us the research assistantship and we will help the professor with the research work, because we needed money to stay here! Not only that, they were so good that I not only had a research assistantship, I also had a cottage to live in on the campus. Because this was Rutgers _____ 06:41 University, Agricultural Engineering Department.

MALA: Was it good college at that time ?

VED: The cottage was on Farm road, at the intersection of Farm road with the Route 1 south. The Squibb Pharmaceutical company _____ 06:54 was on the other side also and there was like a little forest and wooded area and there were many other cottages there. The department gave me an additional responsibility to be the watchman for the area and therefore they also gave us a cottage to live in.

MALA: Oho.

VED: God sake, can you believe to live in a free cottage, right on the campus, not needing a car.

MALA: Right, as a foreign student.

VED: As a foreign student and having a place to live. The cottage was shared by two other graduate students, one from England and one from China. So four of us made such an international community there. It was wonderful, the best memories of having lived here.

MALA: So what kind of a course did you had at that time ?

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VED: We were taking 12 credit hours, four courses, plus, you know, our research assistantship required having some research work. Initially that was good to just have that load of 12 credit hours for me, because I had graduated in India say in the March of 1961, and this was now September of 1965. During those four-and-a-half years, I was a field engineer, had read no text book or anything, especially math. The last courses I had taken in math were in 1959, the first year of my engineering college. So when I came here, they said that you need more math, and good marks. Even though I was good in math when I was in college, or in High School I was best in math, but 08:30 to take a math course after having had such a long gap - it was tough here.

MALA: How were the Indians viewed at that time ?

VED: There were very few Indians here to begin with, although there was like a little Indian Association 08:52 at that time. The couple of thoughts that I have - I remember when some of us will go to a restaurant --somebody told me this, it did not happen to me-- India was in those days going through the problem of shortage of food. Those were the days, if you remember, if you were in India, that people were saying that okay they will have a fast one day every week 09:22 because there was a food shortage in India and that was a big problem. People knew about that here too, so when some of my friends went to a restaurant, the owner said, well you are from India; we will give you free food.

MALA: 09:35 days in Lal Bahadur Shastri's time there was food shortage in India.

VED: Yeah, Yeah, Yeah, because Jawaharlal Nehru died in 1964, in June of 1964. So it was Lal Bahadur Shastri at that time. There was never a cultural shock to me of any kind, having had my college education at Naini college, where everybody had come from here. So I had a complete picture of what this place was like. In general, yeah, in those days, people thought of Indians who were here, like we were engineers and some scientists, or doctors, and just a few of us. All of us who had come here, we had advanced degrees in something or other, graduate students, so the professional reputation was very high. On the other hand, there were essential differences, like people thought we were weird that we were eating vegetables, that we did not eat meat. People were concerned about our health that if we did not eat meat, we are going to die at an early age. that was the perception in this country that you cannot have a long life, if you eat vegetables (laughs ...).

MALA: I was coming to that question later on but I am glad that you brought on the topic.

VED: Also I remember some perceptions. I mean this is the cultural thing. Having lived in India, I thought that when I was given a responsibility, that I had to take personal responsibility for it. Once my professor asked me to get something built in the workshop and he gave me this specification for whatever that is to be built. I went and talked to the head person in the workshop there 11:39 and he said there is no problem, he can do it. But when he was building it, I was kind of checking to make sure the dimensions are correct and this and that, and this guy did not

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like that at all. Because he was a senior man, he thought that I should not be checking on him _ 11:56 to see whether the sample was built according to specifications and he made some snide remark about you Indians or something. I do not remember the remark, but I was very offended, but now I realize that it was the way here. He was right and I laugh at it.

MALA: Are you ready?

TAPE 3

VED: Yes.

MALA: So you went off to Nebraska from New Jersey, and you did not find the transition traumatic either, so it was a smooth transition between New Jersey which had a large Indo-American population to Nebraska, which was like 00:27.

VED: Well, the big difference was just in adjusting to the new surroundings in a new town. I had here my friend Mr. Singh and his family, and I had also developed a circle of friends. Then in Nebraska I had to recreate it again. But I have been very lucky. I have had no problems. I meet people, I make friends, and then I move on.

However, there was a very big change in orientation for me, because after I came to New Brunswick, I went to New York many times during the summer by bus, and saw signs saying "welcome to this town", and when leaving this town and where the next town starts, there were similar signs, so you will think that there is one town after another all the way from here to New York. So I had this idea that all of the USA was like that. So when I flew from New York to Omaha, I thought I would take a bus from Omaha to Lincoln, Nebraska and see all the towns I would pass through -- same way as it happened between New York and New Brunswick. But, I found that as soon as I got on the bus and passed through Omaha in three minutes, there was nothing to see but farms and cows. That was a big jolt to my thinking of how America was, and how these two states were so completely different.

But once I got to the city of Lincoln and to my department, I felt at more ease there than here in New Brunswick. Somehow Lincoln is a small town, it is a University town and a government town, but dominated basically by the university. People were very nice to foreign students, because there were very few foreigners, all of them were faculties or students. The foreign students were welcome and respected, same for the faculty. Everything was small, so it was more personal compared to New Brunswick even at that time. The university building itself reminded me of being in Allahabad. It was a building with old structure, so I just felt more at home at Nebraska than here at New Brunswick.

03:09, Then I met one of the graduate students, Mr Gaur, and you know he treated me like he was an elder brother to me because he was older to me, and he was from Agra, that's close to Etawah, where I come from. There were also 50-60 other Indian students there, but I was not much involved, as I was doing Ph.D. there, which took most of my time, but I felt at ease.

MALA: When did you go to India next.?

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VED: I came here in September 1965, stayed here in New Brunswick up to January 1967, and then went to Lincoln, Nebraska to start my PhD. I finished my PhD in three years, actually in two and a half years. I got the degree in my hand in January of 1970, but I had finished the PhD thesis in 1969 and had started working full time in fall of 69, so I had worked for six, seven months. I had always wanted to go to India but could not afford. You know I am like some one who budgets my time and resources, money, everything, so I knew I could only go to India after I finish my PhD. I started working in September of 1969, and by March of 1970, I had accumulated some money to travel to India. In fact, even when I was a student, I sent money home to my parents, because I had promised to my father that I will take care of the whole family after I get my BS degree, if I was sent to the college of my choice. So I sent them money because that was my own expectation. Also when I was in India, I payed for my sister's wedding and everything in India before I came to US. If I had lived in India, I would have supported my parents. This was another of my own responsibility that I had taken, that when my parents grow old they would be taken care of by me because I am the eldest son. So I was sending the money - not that they needed it, but I sent it so that they know that I am keeping the contact and the promise.

So on April 07 of 1970, I went back to India. It was so hot when I landed in Delhi. I thought that since I was going in April, the weather would be nicer, not so hot, but the whole perception changed. In April, it was like being in an oven in Delhi. I had taken three months leave, so I will have time to spend with my family and relatives. Because I knew that once I started working, I will not get much vacation. I had a job offer in April. I had a dream job-- with Bell Laboratories. I told them that I had not taken a vacation for a long time, so I need three months vacation but I will come back and join on July 1st. Give me this time, and they said no problem, take your time, and join on July 1st. They had no problem, because I had finished my PhD earlier and they did not expect people to join before June.

I had three months. I spent a lot of time in Delhi. I have another pal Dr. Radhey Lal in Delhi. We were chums from college days. Radhey Lal was the college topper – the top student of my class. We were best friends and I was corresponding with him that hey, its time to get married, guy - do something. He said "I am waiting for you to come here" so when I reached there, Radhey Lal had lined up some prospects. My father had left it up to me - to whomever I wanted to marry, he would not interfere. So I said to Radhey Lal - you are not the only one who is going to get married. You are in India, so find me a girl and I will marry too. So Radhey Lal and I had a great time in those two months. We went around to see many girls, contacted or corresponded with parents, met people, relatives, this and that, as you know in India. One day, in the evening we went to a place near Indian Council of Scientific Research, where Rajni's brother was working and had a place to live. Radhey Lal knew him. We went there and met her family. Rajni brought the tea, and all that stuff, and later on the same evening, we went to another place and met another family that Radhey Lal was interested in. We decided that night that these are the two girls we are going to marry, and in the next one month we got married, both of us. I had an

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arranged marriage, that was arranged by my friend. I did not have a big say about it, it is that way in India. I had a regret that I did not have that much time that normally I would have given the privilege to my elder sister to have a say in who I was going to marry, as we were so close. She felt very bad that I just ignored her. About my father, I think he did not feel so bad, as he had given me the freedom to decide whoever I wanted to marry, although he preferred some proposals from very high class families, and about my mom, she did not have any problem with whatever I had decided.

MALA: When and where did you get married?.

VED: I had set the date for marriage on June 1st because I had to come back to US by June 30, so I told Radhey Lal, and on June 1st 1970 I was married in New Delhi.

MALA: Was your wife from the same community as you, was she a professional too?

VED: I did not have any expectation. Having my own family background that way, I did not want a doctor or engineer. I wanted somebody who is educated, but I basically wanted somebody who will be good to live with; who has the same family background as I have, that is very important. And I found now - after 32 years of marriage- that is very important - the family background. I wanted a girl whom my parents will feel comfortable to live with, so one day when they are old, they will live with us. I did not want to marry some girl who will not want to take care of my parents. Of course everybody wants to take care of their parents. You get married, have children, and want to take care of the children, but I had the added responsibility to take care of my parents, who will live with me, and I got to have a family with whom my parents will feel comfortable. On the other hand, I will have to live in USA. So, as I was taking the time off, and was considering several marriage proposals, I had taken all this into consideration. Rajni's father is like my father, he had the same values, that's why I picked this family, hoping that she is also that kind of person.

MALA: How long after that did you have children and how soon did she join you?.

VED: On those days, there was not a problem. I got married on June 1st, and although I had to come back here on June 29th, or something, so I could report to work on July 1st, all the paper work -passport, Visa, etc.- was done and Rajni was here in August along with my brother Om. Because my brother had done BSc in physics by that time and my friend Shyam Gupta was able to secure admission for him at Nebraska, where I had done PhD, Om got admission for Master's in the same department. So two of them, Rajni and Om, came together in August, and he joined Nebraska Univ. in September.

MALA: Where were you at that time when you were working?

VED: I started working in Bell Laboratories in Union, New Jersey, which was a branch of their headquarters in Murray Hill. It was a project that required a building with a very long corridor to set up an experimentation. They did not have such a facility in Murray Hill so they rented the facility in Union. 12:16 I reported to work in that

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building and I found an apartment in Plainfield, and got a furnished apartment, of a scientist who was leaving for Australia for six months, or a year. It was a very well furnished apartment, so I told him that I will take good care of your furnished apartment.

MALA: How long after that did you have children?

VED: Suneal was born on September 13, 1973.

MALA: Did you have any help when your wife gave birth to the first one? Anyone from India?

VED: My wife's younger sister Suman. Poor girl, she came here all alone by herself. She came here and she stayed here with us for four months, and went back on the Christmas day of that year. So Rajni had both help and company, which was very good. We also had friends in the area. Singh family was not close by, they still lived in New Brunswick area. I had moved to Bell Laboratories at Whippany, in Morris county which is an hour's drive from New Brunswick, so Singh's family was not that close at that point, but I had friends in that Morris county area.

MALA: So, she had her prescribed time and recuperations.

VED: I hope so. She is not very demanding and was very young and energetic and she was in good health. She really did not demand for anything, no complaints, and her sister was here so what else could she ask for. There was no stress on me whatsoever, and I hope, not much on her either.

MALA: At that time did you go for Indian groceries?.

VED: Oh! Do not tell me about that, the Indian groceries! We were living in Morris Plains _____ 14:43, we used to go to the Canal Street and also to the China Town. Yeah, we used to go there when we needed Indian groceries - nothing else. What a change, what a difference!

MALA: Did you cook Indian food frequently at that time?.

VED: Rajni actually cooked Indian food all the time.

MALA: With the local, other than the Indian food or grocery that she went into get from China Town, but with the local produce and everything that was available from Supermarket, she was able to cook?

VED: Basically, you know you'd get vegetables from the stores but pulses, garlic and exotic things like mooli and dhania and stuff, china town was good for that. In China Town, you'd get most things that you get in the Indian sabzi mandis.

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MALA: When did you buy your first home?

VED: Suneal was born on September 13, 1973 and we were living in an apartment at that time in Morris Plains, but soon we were looking for houses, and soon after that, we bought a house in Randolph township. Suman went back to India in December, Christmas day actually, and so we were in the apartment up to that point, and I think within a next couple of months we bought a house in Randolph.

That was a nice man from whom we bought the house. I bought a model house, that was a good thing, with a lot of property in the back. One thing - having lived in Ranikhet - one thing that I had in the back of my mind was the pleasure of living in nature. Woods inspired me. So, I had a huge woods - vegetation in the backyard, also a pond in the backyard. I recall one evening - when we had just bought the house - sitting in the porch, and listening to the first rain drops coming down and listening to the rustle of leaves on the trees, I used to enjoy that very much.

MALA: So, do you like orchards.

VED: I used to when I was in India.

MALA: I can sense that.

VED: From being a scientist or engineer and all that.

MALA: So, you know dichotomy One can enjoy nature and poetry as well.

VED: Yeah.

MALA: When did you get your citizenship?.

VED: The first opportunity to become a citizen comes around after five years of being an immigrant. So after four years I applied, sent an application, and got the citizenship after five years. I did not have the duality, like some people have: you are from India, you have got to keep your citizenship. I never had to think twice. Basically, it was just a mechanism of how my life is. I came here, did Ph.D, and got a job in Bell Laboratories. When I came to USA I never thought I would be working for Bell Laboratories and getting my immigration as easily as I did. Right after graduating, I got my immigration, and in the same way, on the first opportunity I got the citizenship.

MALA: How did your wife feel about becoming a US citizen?.

VED; I guess I had brain washed her, so she did not complain. She also got US citizenship after me. She had added advantage that she had her brothers and sisters who wanted to come here too, and she knew that if I am going to live here, she is not going to live in India or anything. She had no complaints, so she became a US citizen too.

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MALA: How did your family feel about that back in India, that is your mom and dad and her mom and dad.

VED: I suppose that her father was one who did not probably say it aloud to me, but he certainly felt bad, and we probably did not tell him; he may have heard it from others, about us becoming US citizens. He was a great patriot -- he was on the private staff of Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda. So you understand where he comes from - if you know Gulzari Lal Nanda. But on the other hand, he also knew that only as a US citizen, Rajni can bring her brothers and sisters to USA, and that was a good opportunity, so I did not hear him complaining. As I said before, my father had left everything up to me. What I wanted to do was fine with him. He never brought the subject of his wanting to live with us, but I always told him that, so it was not a major issue.

MALA: Was there any emotional experience for you becoming the US citizen.

VED: I cannot say it was an emotional experience. It was very normal. They say it was being naturalized citizen, but for me it was being a normalized citizen, because I always felt that, I lived here and I will live here. I work here, I pay taxes here. It is like the marriage in India -- where the bride goes away from the mother's family and live with the in-laws. Though my brothers and sisters have come here, except my older sister, I still have many friends in India, but this country -- USA -- is my place. India was my birthplace - Janm bhumi, and this is my Karm bhumi -- the land of my action/work/life. I live here and I should be proud of it. I never had this- you know- duality.

MALA: Tell us about your philosophy about raising children here.

VED: That's a very tough question. I have explained to you the way I was raised. My father was a very strict disciplinarian. He was a very devout Hindu, but not karm kandi. He did not believe in ritual, but did believe in God passionately and he was a very strict disciplinarian. He taught good habits to me that was very important, and good company. He made sure I kept good company. When I was growing up in the village, no body had gone on to college after high school, except me and my friend Madan Gupta, who was like adopted by my family. My father payed his fees for tuition and other things and said he was a good kid and if he wants to go to college, let him continue. My father had control over who I made friends with, such and so.

I had a very sheltered, protected life, and I was trying to duplicate it here for my children. It was tough on both of us, and on the children, and especially on Suneal, because he was the first one. There were not many Indian families back then in the neighborhood - not as many as we have now. For me and Rajni, the family friends that we had were enough, but not for a child. Somebody has to be there everyday to play with a child, always there to play with. The families we had in our neighborhood were not Indian, but I had no problem with him to grow up like an American. He was a born citizen. That was not the concern. He grew up playing with all the kids on the street. He went to the local school, but I also wanted him to

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learn something about Hinduism, our culture, and about developing good habits. Lots of concern, and lots of discipline. I had a big struggle, and Suneal also had to endure a big struggle putting up with me. That was probably the biggest challenge that I had in my life. Because I had no challenge coming here, or finding a job, working professionally, earning money, or being a part of this society. Coming here was no different for me than getting a job in Calcutta, Madras, or any place outside UP. The biggest challenge was just raising my children here, and it was a huge challenge, and something that I feel I did not do too well. I thank God that both my children are doing really well. Suneal is doing very well; a real gentle soul, he is doing PhD in Mathematics at UCLA, but as a child, he suffered a lot of unhappiness due to my own strict upbringing background and my attitude about strict discipline. Raising my first child in US in a correct (Indian) way was the hardest challenge for me in my life. With this experience, I learnt better and dealt much more leniently with my daughter, Raneel, who is now in college.

MALA; Were you able to give him a good dose of Indian culture?.

VED: yes, I tried to, like my father did. I gave him books on Ramayan and Mahabharat. I talked with him, but he did not seem to pay attention to that. He seemed to pay attention to me only when I talked to him about science. In fact, when he was very little, I used to put him to bed to sleep. I will tell him stories, and those stories will be about science, not about religion, or anything, and he took great interest. I knew then that Suneal had a great intellect or super brain. This boy of three-four-five year old, would understand and remember concepts and things about science, and ask me good questions. It was just sheer joy -- I was thrilled, to see his curiosity and intellect.

Some how at that time when he was very young, I did not teach him about Ramayana, or any of the Hindu stories, or any king and queen stories. I was a scientist, and I could make things interesting for a four year old. I think some credit goes to me for that. But then when he was in middle school, I thought now its time for him to learn about Hinduism, but he did not pay attention to that. So luckily, when I got transferred from Whippany _____ 27:48 to Bell Laboratories in Holmdel and we moved here to Marlboro in August 1982, I met other Indian people here who were working in Bell Laboratories. One night we talked about, hey, why dont we do something - like we can all meet at Ved Mandir, and have our kids come there and then we teach our kids about Indian religion, along with Indian culture, history, geography, etc, all subjects. So I took the lead in that, along with a friend of mine, Ramesh Paliwal, who lives near by, and his wife Pratibha, who has a Master's in child psychology, to support each other because she is a child psychologist and I have no expertise in child education or anything.

I was kind of feeling failed as not been able to help Suneal grow up understanding my culture, or having any Indian values. I thought that with my background, I could make him more of a composite of two great cultures and values, both Indian and American cultures. I felt that there are very good values here, that's why I am living here. I also thought there are some very good values from Indian culture that he should inherit but I was not being successful. I wanted to do that as a personal responsibility to teach my kids

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what I had inherited from a 10,000 year old civilization. I had a burning desire to impart the culture that I was so proudly raised with by my parents and my grandmother. So Pratibha, Ramesh Paliwal, Rajni and I started a Sunday school in Ved Mandir in East Brunswick, teaching our children. We made a class of about 10 or 12 kids, and - oh boy - once we made a class, these kids were so enthusiastic about learning and I was so enthusiastic about teaching. We taught about Hinduism and Hindi, and they took a lot of interest, all the kids.

MALA: Was it once a week?

VED: Not once in a week. I think once in two weeks or something. We were not able to meet once a week. One memorable thing that gives us a feeling of accomplishment happened at the end of the first year of my holding this class. Rajni and Pratibha were teaching Hindi for an hour, and I was teaching about Hinduism for an hour, so we spent two hours with the kids. At the end of the semester, I said to the students: guys, I want you to do something that will show your parents what you have learnt. I talked about some ideas, suggestions, that you can recite prayers in Hindi, or you can do translations of prayers, and sing prayers, etc. One of the ideas I gave was that -- not this year -- but next year, I will like you to do a drama which is called Ramlila in India, which is based on the story of Ram. Take one little passage from Ramayan, and do it as a drama or pantomime or something for an hour. I let the students discuss among themselves for 15 minutes. After the discussions, they came back, and said they wanted to do Ramlila, and I said no, no, no! not this year! we will do it next year. But they insisted -- no, they would like to do it this year. I said no way and tried to discourage them, but finally I said, okay, if you have made up your mind, then let's get down to work on it. I wrote the play script myself, and wrote it in Hindi and roman (Hindi script in English alphabet) and we did a lot of rehearsals, and finally Ramlila was done. My God! it was wonderful. I have got the video of that. It was an event that all the parents will remember. They were thrilled. It was like wow! - my kid doing Ramlila and speaking in Hindi and playing a character in this drama! How wonderful!

MALA: And they spoke in Hindi.

VED: Sure.

MALA: Okay then. Okay, the people like come down and then goes off that is good. Tell me about your children, both your son and daughter.

VED: Great, so I had started talking about, when you asked about raising children, about our son, Suneal, and you know, having gone through a lot of challenge in raising him as our first child. One thing I must say that, of course, he was brilliant, he surpassed my imagination-- I had never imagined any boy being as brilliant as Suneal is. On the other hand, he is also very strong willed - someone, who is very, what should I say, a driven personality from childhood. He will do what he wants to do. Not listen to any one. He is a very good person; he's turn out to be a really fine young man. I am so proud of him,

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like 1:08 he is following in the footsteps of mine, or my father, or something, because he is doing Ph.D. and going into teaching or academic line, so what can I say. And he is like being a depository of good values and things, so that makes me feel very happy - like 1:20 being in the middle generation: what I had taken from my father, I was trying to give a little bit to my son - Suneal, and looks like that he is turning out to be like my father, except that he is a very humble person. My son, Suneal, he is a very humble and gentle person. Diametrically opposite to my father who was a Leo sign, with a very strong personality and a disciplinarian 1:39 that is what they expected of a headmaster in India.

Mala: Hmm, hmm.

VED: 1:39. Then my daughter came along much later when Suneal was 7 years old. Ranee was born in 1980. By that time, the Indian community in this area had grown quite a bit. Because of my affiliation with this temple, Ved mandir, and because this group had developed, which we now call SRI, Self-Realization International. By the way, this name was given to our group by the Acharya at Ved mandir, Arun Bhai Tripathi ji, because we said that we will teach our children ourselves, rather than sending them to some temple, or sunday school or anything. We said that we all know about Hinduism and that is the kind of Hinduism we want to teach our children. Children do not pay as much attention when sadhus, sanyasis, sacred people speak, because the language they speak is for us, people from India, who already have some background. To children it makes very little sense. So we being scientists, engineers, and being Indians from India, we can teach our children the way we perceive the religion, and they will understand it better. And that came out to be true. Children were very interested, all the children that have gone through our group, SRI group, they all are at least very positive about our religion. They have all taken courses in Hinduism, or Sanskrit, or whatever that they found in their colleges, and I know they still love to come to the temple. So Ranee grew up in that milieu and thus it just turned out that I had no problem with Ranee growing up when she was little, until she went to high school. Ha ha, ha, ha.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: That became a different saga altogether because I had not gone through that experience with Suneal. Suneal had become, by the time he went to high school, a very studious person. He went to a special program for the gifted in high school. He never really finished high school, because he got admission in Cal Tech 4:14 before he finished high school, after two years of high school.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: in the middle of the third year, so he did complete the third year. By that time PC computers were around. Suneal got interested in computers and he used to sit in my study room with computers, and stuff, and had friends with other students of his class, mostly Asian students, in the gifted program in science and engineering class.

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MALA: Well.

VED: Other Asian students,

MALA: Well.

VED: Some Indians, some other Chinese, Korean,

MALA: Hmm, hmm.

VED: and other students

MALA: Well.

VED: So I had this different problem with Suneal. I wanted him to have more friends, and go out, and be more social.

MALA: Hmm, hmm.

VED: With Ranee, it turned out to be different, being a girl. The way I was raised in my family, my father spent a lot of time with me, and my mother took care of girls in the family. And I kind of followed 5:18 the same model. I wanted to spend a lot of time with Suneal and train him in my model and shape him like myself or what have you.

MALA: Hmm, hmm.

VED: And I wanted Rajni to take care of Ranee. So Ranee 5:30 had an easy life, like Rajni had when she grew up.

MALA: Hmm, hmm.

VED: No pressures, no expectations, except - grow up like a nice Indian girl ...

MALA: Hmm, hmm.

VED: and have those values of gentleness, and calmness, and serenity, and no pressure for achieving in life, like you know, that we have for girls. Then Ranee took a lot of interest in this temple activity, and dances, and all the Indian cultural things like wearing the newest clothes that come from India, and demanding in a polite or joking way "Hey, you are going to India, so why don't you bring me a lehenga, or jewellery or something". (laugh) So she became like you know the daughter, we all like to have, anybody would love to have, very sweet and gentle and loving in nature. Until she reached high school. And then, the other dimensions started. We did not want her to go out dating in high

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school and here, even in middle school, that is allowed. Luckily she was somebody who, you know, joined in good school programs which is against drugs and all these activities.

MALA: Hmm, hmm.

VED: So, I knew she is a good kid. She was not that much studious as Suneal was, but that was not any kind of disappointment to me. We just left her be, we let Suneal also be. He was just that kind of a person, very intelligent, very studious, and Ranee is more social, very social, so, and we let that be.

MALA: That is a good balance.

VED: Good balance

MALA: Hmm.

VED: But in high school we had much, much problem with Ranee. We had let her go out with other Indian boys and girls but we disliked her coming home late at night and all that stuff. It was just very painstaking and also that was very scary thoughts – we were afraid of her well being. 7:29.

MALA: Now you go to your happy days or we get on to you for 7:35.

VED: Oh yes.

MALA: What did you most as an NTF at 7:43 and the culture of 7:45 at that time?

VED: Yeah. See, all my life I feel, I came up with - going uphill - up the mountain. This is the way I can put it. I grew up in the village with the elementary school with four other kids who were at the top, up to the secondary school. In the High school I went to, I was in a section of class that was for the best students. 8:11 But I was not the top student in the class when I joined. So it bothered me how can that be. But I struggled and I became the best student in the second year exam of high school. Then I went to college and in my college there were only twenty five students from all of India and they included the who is who of top students - like No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, top ranked students from UP who had graduated from high school. There were some students who had already done BSc. in Physics and then came to Engineering. That is a tradition in India, as you know. You could do BSc. and then register in Engineering college for a BE degree. There were all these students who were fluently English speaking. There were many students who spoke English at home, all the time, and I did not. So, actually I had to struggle very hard in college when I reached there. But I finished college in three years and in the second year of the college, I was the top student.

MALA: Hmm. hmm.

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VED: But I could not maintain that. In the final year, I was no. 4. No. 1, 2, 3, were the same guys who were No. 1,2,3, in the first year.

So, when I joined the Bell Laboratories, I felt I was in the same race again.

MALA: Hmm hmm hmm.

VED: I am climbing the mountain again. Here there were people from MIT and Stanford 9:24 and there was no body from Lincoln, Nebraska, 9:28 you know. It was like I was distinct –I stood out- by saying I am from the University of Nebraska. 9:31. Tremendous pressure, and then I found it was not only as much pressure in technical matters, as there was in my ability to express myself. My command of English language, both in writing and in speaking, was lacking. Matter of fact, my supervisor suggested that I take ESL classes at NYU in English writing. So I went to NYU to register in an English course for the foreign students.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: But when I took the placement test, the instructor said that, well, you are 10:12 beyond what we teach. We teach here those students who had just come from India, or other foreign countries, and need some practice in English speaking or writing, or whatever, you know, that they need. So that was not helpful to me. So there was really no course for me. I had to learn all by myself.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: I struggled very hard too, because you see, in India, language teaching was never a high priority in Engineering. When you go to an Engineering college, languages fall by the way side. Its only math and engineering, that is 10:43 all you learn.

MALA: Right, 10:44.

VED: From 10:45 you can write equations, that's all. It is true with the whole engineering program. Same thing here too. When you go to engineering college, or graduate school, it is the same. 10:54 there was not much writing involved, besides equations. It was only Thesis writing for Ph.D. where I had to write something in English. And again, these were simple sentences, full of equations and doing computer simulation, or similar things, like that.

When I joined Bell Labs, then I realized that you have to write ofcourse and you have to speak with people who always spoke good English, like my professor did 11:15 either reports or 11:19.

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The people at the laboratories were like in an ivory tower. 11:23. It was like in high places of academic environment. There were continuous exchanges between MIT and Bell Labs. 11:29. There were people going back and forth, like in a fraternity of some kind. 11:34 the challenge was tremendous. Again, not in technical area, but in the communication area. I struggled very hard. I studied myself to develop English writing and speaking proficiency - to bring myself up to that level, that I can be taken as a serious 11:53 professional. But I found pretty quickly -- actually I joined in 1970, and by 1972, I moved to Bell Labs Whippany. 12:02. -- that within 1973, or something, I was ranked as the top member of technical staff in my laboratory. My department head 12:13 was a German and, you know, he respected me very much.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Based on my technical contributions.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Unfortunately, I had a Supervisor who was not a very good writer either. So we had a lot of problem with him. But this department head again took me in his wings after he realized that situation. He taught me how to write good technical Reports..... we should continue,

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: And I liked him because he was a German immigrant. I found all through my career that people who had come here from other countries, they gave me more credit, because they did not look at my deficiency in English as being a major problem, or major obstacle. They had themselves probably gone through the same experience. They saw behind the deficiency, the depth or profoundness of ideas that I had, that could 13:17 or bring the results. Similarly, you know, the Chair and Professor of Mechanics 13:23 who gave me admission for Ph.D. - Professor Marmo 13:28 he is an Italian immigrant, with his wife who 13:34.

MALA: Hmm hmm hmm hmm.

VED: He still had the feeling that he is an immigrant from Italy

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: And the guy who hired me at Bell laboratories 13:43 even though he is not an immigrant, he is a Jewish person who felt the same thing like Professor Marmo. 13:50 a Jewish person. Many Jewish people, I feel, they give more credit to the new immigrant or minority people, that 14:00 language or accent

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14:02 does not matter; if you can perform the job, you are the right guy. They will hire or promote you.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: Everyone having

MALA: Hmm.

VED: So this department head was great, he gave me so much encouragement. He launched my carrier and I learnt to write the way he writes.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: He gave me pointers and you know he Elapse 14:22 up. On the other hand, he also gave me something, which worked against my carrier. He himself being an immigrant did not mix well in the Bell Labs milieu.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: So even though, because of his technical profoundness, he became the department head, he was under mostly not well adjusted and I learnt 14:54 some of the tricks of the trade from him and 14:56 knowing that was the way to behave here, by forceful assertion - kind of thing - but that hurt my carrier. It took me many years to realize that it is not the way to do things here 15:06 There was nobody else here for me to sit down with, and discuss things, and figure out how to culturally behave in this corporate environment or society.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: So, that's what took place.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: It was a 15:22 it's a tremendous story.

MALA: Hmm. You said you went for the refresher course for English, and then here you have such of 15:34 publication, tell us about your of list of publications, and some of your notes or papers.

VED: Well, as I said, I struggled to learn English, both to write, and to speak well. So in 1980 I found a place in the New York city for speech or accent correction.

MALA: Hmm hmm hmm.

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VED: And I went there and that _____ 16:08 made a tremendous difference in correcting my accent and gave me a lot more confidence to speak.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: I was able to correct my accent, or change, I don't know what to say about correct accent.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Indians speak Indian dialect, which is correct in India,

MALA: Right.

VED: But here people have difficulty understanding Indian accent, or find it inferior

MALA: You mean accent correction.

VED: Accent correction.

MALA: Hmm hmm hmm.

VED: So I took some courses. I used to go to New York for an hour for the speech training.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: That helped. But, anyway, I was able to get a patent very early _____ 16:46 like 1975, or something, on the work I was doing at that time – for a mechanical device. I also published papers on the subject. Later on, I worked on another project – about routing of telephone traffic - and got patents. I also helped get patents for a lot of people under me who worked for me. I mean the environment that you are in _____ 17:09 is right, you know. In fact, research work requires right people working together with you in the right environment. Many times you are working with other bright people. So, you have the support in various disciplines, and you constantly learn new things. And then when I became a supervisor and later on _____ 17:28, a lot of technical papers will come through our team of scientists and engineers that I had to look at , review, edit, comment, approve, ...

MALA: Hmm.

VED: And you get to depend on people, look out for people who are good writers. You get their help. You send your drafts to them, and you learn, and you work together, so it is a continuous learning experience. That is the other thing, with the laboratories, I had a learning experience all my life. I enjoyed, because you know, finally, when after hard

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work you succeed, then you enjoy. So in any sense, it has been a very enjoyable learning experience, and a very rewarding carrier here.

Now this is about the technical side, but also, while at the laboratories, I got involved-- based on my background from India--into extracurricular

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Ha ha ha ----- activities

MALA: You mean the 4A.

VED: 18:27

MALA: Yeah, we can talk about that, although go to that part, since we are in that 18:35 of things, let us talk of it. Are you going to talk about the 4A?

VED: Yeah.

MALA: O.K. I am aware of that. So tell us about your activities at 4A.

VED: When I was in India, having lived in the village, and having had a father who was very supportive with the people who needed help, I have ingrained in myself an attitude to help the community--not for my good--but just to help people who may need help. When I went to college, I had friends who were from lower castes. Practically, everyone. I did not have any friend who was from the upper castes. 19:14. And now that I am looking back at these things, at all the friends I made who, wherever they may be now, but we got along so well. 19:23, As you know, in high school, or college, when you make friends, they are more dear to you than your brothers and sisters. Those days there were only brothers -- ha ha ha -- There was no girl in our class in Engineering.

So when I came here and joined the laboratories which was part of the AT&T, I found out, quickly after I joined-- I joined in 1970-- that AT&T had this big anti-trust 19:58 case in which, you see, the Equal Employment Opportunity

MALA: Employment opportunity, hmm, hmm.

VED: Opportunity Commission played a big part in regard to AT&T agreeing to some kind of a decree where they will have to support minorities and women, bring them up into the upper management, and pay their lost wages, and things like that. Then, I realized that, in AT&T, there had been many men who had started out as lineman, people who come to your house to install the telephone. They went to college taking courses paid by AT&T, and then they got promoted - some of them became even Presidents of telephone companies 20:45

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MALA: Hmm, fine.

VED: They were in 20:48 state

MALA: Hmm, hmm.

VED: May be, then, some of them even became the Chairman of AT&T, you know, the giant national company. But, on the other side, of women, they hired high school girls to become operators. And then, they never got promoted - not one of them even became the Supervisor of operators. It was always a man who will become the Supervisor of operators. That was such an egregious disparity.

I felt the same way when my wife came here. She had a B.A. degree, she did not want to have a child right away, and she wanted to work

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Like many women in India do. Especially, because there is nothing to do here for a young newly wedded-- not even a big extended family so you have some company.

21:33. But wherever she would go to look for a job, they would ask: what is your typing speed ? And she said: well, you know, I do not type! I'd like to do some other work, anything you have, you know, like filing clerk, receptionist, or teaching, I have a degree, I know somethings. This is my qualification. And they won't look at any qualifications. They only thought, if you were a woman, all you could do is either type, or not type.

MALA: Hmm hmm.****

VED: So I talked to my room mate in the laboratories and asked him: what will you do in this situation? This means a woman cannot get any job, except as a secretary. Then he told me that he is an American, he lives here, and he grew up here. He is a Jewish man and his wife had a Law degree. But when she went to look for a job, they asked her what was her typing speed!

MALA: Ho ho ho gosh!

Ved: Ha ha ha, that was 1970 - USA !!

MALA: Hmm.

VED: Where a woman could only be -- I guess, if you could go through the teaching curriculum then you could become a teacher--otherwise you'd be a clerk or a secretary. That's all you could do. There was no question of you being a scientist, or engineer, or whatever; you could only be a secretary. So I felt that's very wrong, and then I got involved with some Asian people at the laboratories.

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MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Many scientists, at that time, and engineers worked at AT&T, but we found that all of them were members of technical staff; not one of them was a supervisor, or department head, or anything, and I again felt that was wrong. And having been the Prime Minister of the Student Parliament in my college, and having been a Chaudhary, and having had the training of my grand mother,

MALA: Hmm.

VED: That when you see injustice, you speak up.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: I said, I got to do that. So I became a part of 4A - the organization was called Asian Americans for Affirmative 23:31 Action, or 4A. I took a lot of interest. From there, my extracurricular activities were launched, and I spent a lot of time doing that.

MALA: Next we go to your wonderful travels. You have traveled so much through your life, tell us about your experiences in detail.

VED: Yeah, I took a job in Belgium, because I thought I was young and more mobile at that 24:05 time. Suneal was only 4 years old. I had this opportunity to work in ITT at Brussels, Belgium, which is a big city to be in, but in a sense, language was not that big a problem,

MALA: Right.

VED: But if you were in Paris, and did not know French, that would be a problem. And being in England for a short while was like a dreamland, after living in USA. So Brussels was a really good place 24:33. Again, Rajni being very young at that time when we went there -- I just cannot imagine she being so young -- But she had no protest, no complains; we adjusted very well, while neither of us were speaking French.

MALA: 24:53.

VED: Trying 24:53 trying to just get by with English. We bought -- no rented- a house in a place called Waterloo. It is about 10 miles 25:05 off Brussels

MALA: Hmm.

VED: Waterloo is where English speaking people live, no Belgians! ha ha ha ha ha

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MALA: Hmm.

VED: But that was a tremendous experience. We were able to see all of Europe. We bought a Peugeot car

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: And an Audi

MALA: Hmm.

VED: Brussels is what a lovely town. I can not imagine how easily one can get to the center of Brussels there any time of the day or evening. To give you an example, Ravi Shanker once came there to perform on Sitar at the Place de la Beaux Art--it is like - here we have Lincoln Center for Performing Arts in New York. It is in down town Brussels. It is 25:43

MALA: Hmm.

VED: So now my being an Indian American, we said we got to go to see this performance and we got to leave early because 25:58 I did not know about parking in the town and there will be a mad rush at 6PM 26:02. I did not know how to go into the town at this time. I just thought we should have plenty of time; all the things I used to do when going into New York city.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: From Waterloo.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: We said okay let us go. So, we drove in. To my surprise, there was no rush going into Brussels downtown-- that was such a surprise!

MALA: Hmm.

VED: Even when I got to the Place de la Beaux Art 26:25. I found that I could park right at the place and put, you know, money in the parking meter. I thought that something must be wrong there. So I asked some one if I was there on the right date and time and place for this program, or not.

MALA: Hmm hmm hmm hmm.

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VED: But he said "No this is the right time. We are at the right time and place. Then we found out the reason why there were no cars there: "Everybody comes here by train!"
26:45

MALA: Aha.

VED: That was a big culture shock to me. 26:53 a real culture shock.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: But the memories of the places in Europe are just wonderful. Another thing I noticed, they have really nice Parks. 26:59 When you come to USA and they say, lets go to a park; Park means just an open field, kind of stuff, with benches. But over there, park means like in India: There are flowers, and beautiful trees, and walks, well tended by a gardener

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: And as we stroll around in the park, we found that people came in the park best dressed. What a difference! People came, you know, 27:22 in expensive boots,

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Dressed in fur coats and all, and they came for a walk in the park! So it was a big change. We used to go out every weekend somewhere, any where 27:34 The moment we had nothing to do, we'd just go right into the downtown Brussels and there will be something going on.

MALA: The 27:42.

VED: And on weekends we drove 100 miles in any direction to go to France or Germany or Holland. In New Jersey, you drive 100 miles to go to Atlantic city 27:50 or to New York city. Over there if you go 100 miles, you are into another country. You go to France, you go to Germany. Or we went to England, or to Netherlands, the four adjoining countries to Belgium, on weekends. And once actually I drove all the way through France, all the way to the, you know, South of France, then along the Mediterranean, South of France, to places like Nice 28:18 and

MALA: Monte Carlo.

VED: Monte Carlo, and over to Italy, all the way to Rome by car.

MALA: Wow!

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VED: Again, as the Americans, you would think its, you know, better to drive.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: But that country is not suited for driving. It is better if you would take a train.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: And land right in the downtown where there is all the facilities _____ 28:44 everywhere.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: Beautiful memories of those travel incidents, and it was one of the best trips we had taken _____ 28:52

MALA: What a great opportunity for you.

VED: Great opportunity for us.

MALA: Hmm. So you took your family with you. That was my question to ask.

VED: Oh yes.

MALA: Yes. So what was your professional experience and your comparison _____ 29:05 to America?

VED: It was very different actually. It became so diametrically opposite that--here in the laboratories, most of my work was technical, very technical, and working with other technical people. Also I worked with other people, like managers from telephone companies from all the States. So I traveled a lot. I used to go to even Canada. Bell Canada used to be a part of the AT&T, Bell System. Bell Canada was part of AT&T, and all the way to California, and all over USA, the phone company was the monopoly of AT&T _____ 29:40 at that time.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: But, when I got to ITT, the job was quite different. I used my technical knowledge, but I was working with ITT's companies in Europe. ITT had a subsidiary company in every country in Europe: in Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, UK, even USA.

MALA: Hmm hmm. Africa and Middle East.

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VED: Yes.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: There was the possibility for the division of ITT that I was in, there was the possibility to get more business for ITT in Africa and Middle East. Explore new territories, sort of thing.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: And I was providing sort of technical support and technical management.

MALA: What exactly this ITT stand for?

VED: Oh, International Telephone and Telegraph Company.

MALA: Hmm right 30:29.

VED Which is not affiliated with AT&T at all, even though the names are so similar. So I did take a kind of break in service going to ITT and Europe. But, that's a very different culture. Very different culture. It was good for what they do. They treated us royally. Traveling in first class to Africa, Egypt, and within Europe everywhere, being able to see all of Europe. And working with many different ITT managers, and being at a higher position to have attended top level monthly meetings with the top brass--executives from New York --that was the headquarters--they came and held large meetings at the huge executive conference room at the top floor of the building. Ginine Harold (not sure of spelling) used to be the Chairman of ITT. I attended meetings with him. He was the man who had put together this huge conglomerate 31:29 called ITT at that time.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: So I had known how business is run at ITT which was a huge enterprise --the word "conglomerate" was coined for ITT.

MALA: Hmm hmm.

VED: I worked in an international arena, so it was very different work.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: Very 31:48

MALA: Okay. Ah, then did you like living there better than US.?

VED: Yeah. I mean Rajni would have liked to live there for ever.

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MALA: Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha.

VED: Yes.

MALA: Hmm.

VED: Yes, yes, indeed. It was somehow a good mix between India and US. It was -- in a sense, and I was thinking about it - in that sense.

MALA: Good morning, Mr. Ved Chaudhary. We are back again.

VED: Good morning. Good morning.

MALA: Completing our interview today. Today is August 12, 2002 and we are picking up from where we left off regarding your future plans and your return back to New Jersey.

VED: Sure. Let us continue from there.

MALA: So the last time when we were talking, and you talked about your living in Europe for some time. So picking up on that at the last interview, was it hard coming back to New Jersey after such an opportunity?

VED: Well, I would not say that it was hard coming back. No, because in New Jersey we always had friends and relatives. Rajni had her sisters near where we lived before, and when we came back to USA, we came back to New Jersey to the same company that I was working in before, at the same place within New Jersey, and lived in the same town in Randolph, where we had lived before. So that was more like coming home. Being in Europe had been nice, you know, for two years, going away and enjoying living in Europe. We enjoyed very much living there, but coming back here was like coming home.

MALA: What was Bell Labs culture then and were the Indo-Americans prized at that time?

VED: See, when I had joined Bell Labs initially in 1970, there were just very very few Indian-Americans. In Whippany, Bell Labs had 4000 people, but there were probably five Indian-American people. Murray Hill, which was research center had more Indian people than this organization. Our work was appreciated. We were appreciated, -- absolutely true. I mean, this was a place where only the tops of various universities came and the working atmosphere always had been extremely pleasant and collegial. It was one of the best places to work, there is no doubt about it, both in the sense that the type of people you got to work with, it helps with your career, it helps with your own personal

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career goals, as well as just the collegiality. There is never that kind of thing that is found in other businesses where bosses dictate, or whatever. It is just absolutely gentlemanly, collegial, profoundly intellectual environment, and I can look back and say that they gave me an opportunity for tremendous personal and career growth.

MALA: Ya. Judging from your resume there has been tremendous growth in your career. So now, we will go to all your activities that you were involved in, why you were involved in the lab particularly the 4A organization and then we will go on to other particular organizations that you were involved in. So tell us a little about the 4A?

VED: Well, when I came back from Belgium, during those couple of years, something had happened that Bell Labs was quite a bit involved in. Not only Bell Labs, but the whole AT&T company was involved in looking back at their practices. All the while, there was very good working environment, but if you do a little bit more introspection of the culture, it seemed that both women and minorities were not moving up career wise. They had very satisfactory jobs, they did, but moving up was a different matter. It was kind of limited only to white men. Myself, having lived in India, and exposed to the caste and class distinction, and having always favored the people who found themselves in a less fortunate situation -- I had friends in India who came from much economic hardship situations, that my father supported them, and I always supported them. I drew the same spirit here that those people in the society who somehow were left behind, we should make every effort to make sure that we help them, and bring them along; especially those who are capable of being somebody, for getting out of their disadvantaged situations. So, I took part in the 4A from that perspective. There were, by that time--I am talking about early 80s--a very large number of Asian-American people working in Bell Labs and I felt very much at home working with all Asian-Americans, because I think we belong to the same culture. I very much identified with other Asian-Americans coming from China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, and what have you. In the culture that I have learned from India, I found that there was so much similarity with other Asian Americans, and that the obstacles that were holding us back, all of us, were about the same, because we were too respectful, we had, you know, such humility; we were not aggressive, and all of those things.

MALA: And at times that could be misunderstood.

VED: Exactly. And they were being misunderstood. You know, people here did not realize that the governments of India and China are run by Indian leaders and Chinese leaders. We did not need white men to run those countries even during the British colonial times. You know about the burden of white men, those stories. But people here still did not realize this. You know, they thought that only white men can run large corporations, or be supervisors, or managers, or directors, or what have you, and we wanted to change that. So we came together, started this organization called 4A, which was Asian-Americans for Affirmative Action. And we have been quite successful, because we learnt that it was necessary that we become more proactive and assertive.

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MALA: What exactly did the Steering Committee of the Asian-American Political coalition do?

VED: Asian-American Political coalition is the coalition within New Jersey of all the Asian-American communities, which is 13 or 14 communities: the Philipinos, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Korean, the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and we Indians, and others. As I mentioned, although some of us who have crossed those national boundaries feel that there is so much commonality amongst us. For example, all Asian-Americans are very strongly pro-education. They all want their children not to be satisfied just doing BS. Of course, no one will be satisfied by just having High School. Probably 90% will not be satisfied by their children just having a Bachelor's degree. They want their children to go to graduate school, do Masters, PhD, MBA, what have you, and excel in every step. So education is, you know, something which is very highly prized by all of us. Respect for our parents and authorities is another one, which is very common all across all Asian cultures because, basically, you know of the migration of Buddhism from India to all of those countries and perhaps their own original, even before Buddhism, had the same culture. Similarly, you know, the discipline for children, protection for children, there are so many things that we have in common. In the US categorization of minorities, Asian-Americans are one composite ethnic minority group. So that is another realization that is if we come together, then we can have self empowerment. _____

VED: Many of us, who had taken up leadership positions in various ethnic groups comprising the Asian-American diaspora, thought that we need to come together. Then, you know, four people got together, and then tried to include other people, to the point that now we have representation from all of the various 13 or so ethnic groups that comprise Asian Americans. It has been a very successful effort, I would say, just even to bring all those people together. The very last November 2001, when we had the gubernatorial election in New Jersey, these groups came together and invited both candidates running for the gubernatorial race. They both came and spoke with us. We had 39 chosen leaders from 13 communities and we made a decision as to who we should endorse, and urged the entire Asian-American community to vote for that candidate, Jim McGreevey, who now is the Governor of New Jersey, so we have been able to gain significant political clout.

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Ved: So, I think that at this point Asian American Community in New Jersey has made quite a bit of progress, although a lot more remains to be done. The leadership has come together, but in general population, I still do not see , you know , Indian community mixing with Chinese , or Korean , or other communities. If that can happen , that will give us the fruits of unity with in the Asian American community because we do have the same views on practically every issue, political issue s, cultural issue s, and social issue s. We have practically the same views. There is no diversion, so it is a very natural thing for all Asian Americans to come together .

Mala: Hmmhmm, so that takes me to the next question that you were part of the Leadership New Jersey program, and you were chosen by partnership for New Jersey. Tell me a little bit more about partnership for New Jersey and your experience with the Leadership New Jersey program.

Ved: Yes, that was a very very interesting and worthwhile experience. Let me first give you the background. Partnership for New Jersey is a partnership of government, business, and nonprofit organizations , formed to create a learning experience for emerging leaders in the State , without party politics, yet learning the issues that effect the state. Before participating in the Leadership New Jersey program , I was someone who was limited to the Indian American community , and later on to the Asian American community, but my involvement , up to that point , was limited to those communities issues only.

Leadership New Jersey gave me an opportunity to exp and, and understand all the issues ; whether they are related to education in the state , as to what are the problems of high school education, college education , the problems of environment, the problems of poverty, and welfare. The poverty and drug abuse, the problems of criminal justice system. We even went to the jail , the maximum security prison in Trenton, to meet the inmates and understand the issues , specially about the issues of the youth finding themselves in the criminal process. So that training experience extended to all over 02:46 and I got to see the whole of the state of the New Jersey in its various dimensions , and it gave us contacts with various people.

I participated in a group of 45 people who came from various backgrounds from government, from industry , and from nonprofit organizations. So we learnt from the sharing of experience s of 45 people. Another set of people we met , and learnt from, were those who came to speak to us at various occasions . They were senior political leaders, as well leaders from the minority communities, and labor or professional organizations, like NJEA (NJ Education Association) . It was immensely beneficial process for me and I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in participating in the society in any capacity.

Mala: Do you have to pay a fee for that?

Ved: It is a nominal fee and my company paid it. In most cases your employer pays, but if you are an individual who is not employed , or if you are working in a nonprofit organization that does not have the resources to pay for it, they will arrange somehow to

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have your finances taken care of. At that time, they were charging \$2500 or something and now \$3500, but it is not a large sum.

MALA: Now that you are retired, but you seem to busier than ever. Tell us about some of your current activities.

VED: In my current activities. I am dividing my time, I guess, into several distinct areas. One, of course, having being involved with the Indian American Forum for political education, I continue to be involved in the political activities. For example, before the gubernatorial election, as I mentioned to you, my involvement with the Asian American Political Coalition's "80-20 Initiative", leading up to an endorsement of one candidate, who is now Governor of New Jersey, Mr. McGreevey. 04:43 Following that, I was placed on the Governor's Transition Team for the Information Technology department. I served on that Team and following the completion of the Transition, a subset of the Transition Team has been working now, as sort of an advisory committee to the IT organization and I am supporting that committee.

More specifically, I am supporting efforts in the state government to provide more visibility at upper levels to Asian Americans and all other minorities. The state government at the present time has provided no such visibility to any Asian American. 05:24 This is the first time that Governor McGreevey 05:26 has appointed an Indian American lady, Seema Singh, to the cabinet, which is the position of the Public Advocate. This position currently does not exist, but the governor is trying to revive the position of the Public Advocate, which used to exist in the previous democratic administrations.

I am also involved with the US Commission on Civil Rights. I am currently the vice-chairman of the New Jersey Advisory Committee of this Commission. I am actually chairing a sub-committee that is looking into the disparities in the employment and upward mobility of Asian Americans in the state of New Jersey government as an employer. So this is in the political area. I am also involved here in the Monmouth 06:11 county Sheriff's Advisory Committee. I get involved with so many different political aspects.

Second aspect that I have taken on is that I am a Hindu American. I wanted to raise my children with a culture that I really am proud of. So ever since 1983, when Ved Mandir 06:36 temple in East Brunswick 06:37 was built, I along with some friends from Bell Labs and Rutgers 06:42 University formed a group. We started calling ourselves Self Realization International Group, SRI Group. The idea was that we will be self reliant in teaching our children about our culture and religion. 06:54 We will not invite people from outside to give lectures to us. We will not invite swamis, sanyasis, and sadhus to give lectures to us. We want to teach our children the Hinduism, the way we know it ourselves, and we felt that when we teach children about culture or religion, they pay more attention because we speak the language that they can relate to. When Swamis, Sadhus, sanyasis speak, children cannot understand at all what they are saying, that make no sense to them. So, I started that program and have been working with that for a long time. Luckily, I see the fruits of that effort. Many of the children of our friends who participated in this group-

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-the children have now grown up to be, you know, married and have their own children--but I see that they are holding onto our heritage as something very precious.

That gives me an inspiration then to look into the aspect of how Hinduism is being treated in USA and in the society. To give you some background—and I have talked a lot about it—when I came here in 1960s, it was a time when Hinduism and Buddhism were held in great esteem. Because Maharshi Mahesh Yogi had come here, and at the Harvard Medical School, he had gone through certain medical tests or experimentation while in a meditative state, so the doctors and scientists established that, yes, yoga and meditation have tremendous beneficial effect on one's physical body that can be observed with the instrumentation. Secondly, Swami Rama of Himalayas, came to the Columbia University in Missouri and went through some experimentation there to establish that what is called the autonomous nervous system is actually not completely autonomic. He showed that he, as a yogi, can control his heartbeat, his pulse, and various other indicators of the autonomous nervous system.

That was also the time when the Beatles became the disciples of Maharshi Mahesh Yogi. That was also the time when Ravi Shankar played sitar at every university campus. I had heard him at the Lincoln Center for Performing Arts in New York in 1965 or 1966. In those days Hinduism was an "in thing" on every campus. I believe the Christian establishment in this country was very concerned that the campuses had become too liberal and too much influenced by Hinduism. I did not mention Srila Prabhupada who also came in 1967 and started the Krishna Consciousness movement, which attracted a lot of young people. During the early 60s, also the John Kennedy phenomenon had turned campuses very liberal, so the conservative movement in this country and the far right ideologists 10:03 in the Christian movement were all very concerned. They have been working for the last 30 years very strongly to see to it that the campuses are not liberal, and Hinduism and Buddhism are not given a positive light.

MALA: Now that brings me to the next question. What made you start the HICAD 10:23 organization and what is the story behind it.

VED: I can continue from where I have been. These organizations with so much money 10:36 the Christian conservative coalition, or the far right, moral majority people have been so successful that now many of the people—who during 60s and 70s found great spiritual tradition in the Hinduism, great knowledge, and wisdom in Hinduism —have been attracted by the lure of money, the grant awards, and the prestige showered by these organizations that they only find negative things to say about Hinduism now.

Hinduism having such a large body of literature, one can find positive and also negative things to write about or research. Negative things, as defined by the Christian ethos, one can find a lot in our literature. For example, rather than going to the beautiful large temples of South India, one can go to Khajuraho and just write about sexual figures in the temples as the negative things. Again, those negative things will be in the eyes of the blind followers of Christianity, where sex is sin; not with the eyes that appropriately see procreation as

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divinity, that is Lord's intent, that's how the Universe continues. So things can be put in a negative perspective and they have put lot of money in promoting such scholars who are only looking at, or projecting what they call the negative aspects of Hinduism.

Now I feel that Hindus have a large presence in many states in USA and our children are being taught such rubbish in the schools and colleges about Hinduism that they feel ashamed of being Hindus. This is something that I cannot tolerate. I had come into the political field when I saw that Hindus in Jersey 12:30 City were being persecuted by a group of youth calling themselves dotbusters. Now, they were thugs, a gang, who were physically harassing Hindu man, women, and children in cities and nearby areas. But now this new aspect of disparaging Hinduism is more subtle, and more sinister. Here they are trying to create an environment in academic areas, in schools and colleges, and universities, where Hindu children, as well as the society in general, feels alienated to the Hinduism religion.

When students go to college, some would take just one course in Hinduism. If that course is taught by a professor who is trying to show only the "negative" side of Hinduism, it leaves a bad taste in their thoughts about Hinduism. Later in life, these people become journalists, or high school teachers, or your neighbors, or what have you, and they harbor all kinds of weird ideas of what Hinduism is, rather than the Hinduism that you and I know.

In the past, many people in this country, and in Europe, including great philosophers and even 13:35 psychologists like Jung, who looked at Hinduism found what a great knowledge and wisdom it has, but what they are teaching now in some schools and colleges here in US is just the opposite now.

MALA: In that context would you give an advice to the Indian American parents to look into the school books or get involved in world of education.

VED: Absolutely, I think every Hindu family should look at what their children are learning about Hinduism in school. As a matter of fact, one of my friends who was part of the Ved Mandir Group, told me that when he looked at what his son had studied about Hinduism, he felt bad and he told his teacher, you know, what you are teaching about Hinduism is not what we practice. They have started putting down Hinduism as though it only consists of idol worship, holy cows, sensuality of Hinduism and the caste system. The caste system is presented as the essence of Hinduism, and as you know, it has nothing to do with the religion. This is a social custom, which has become polluted like the treatment of blacks in this country. It is not written in any religious book, but this is how the society has come to treat certain groups of people. No where in Hinduism it is written that any people will be mistreated, no matter what there profession, or trade, and no matter what there work is, but in the western education, caste system has been placed as the central theorem of Hinduism.

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They are not talking about, you know, what we believe in: one god, and we believe in an aspect of God, called Sagun Brahm, that has forms and attributes, as well as an aspect of God that does not have a form, Nirgun Brahm, an abstract form of God. Nothing of that sort of intellectually stimulating, sophisticated presentation. If anything, they only teach like, oh, Hindus believe in 33 million or 33,000 gods. It is very erroneous, very superficial views that again certain people 15:40 know and profess.

During the colonial period, the British missionaries tried to dig out dirt, called our deities idols, or false gods, and just created wrong vibrations of Hinduism as being backward or negative. Many school teachers and textbooks in US still follow what those missionaries wrote. The good things that are defined in Hinduism, like yoga and meditation, are not being taught as part of Hinduism. When they are taught, as though they have nothing to do with Hinduism.

Now, there are Christian yoga classes and there is Christian meditation. There was a conference in Bard College, NY during mid-June 2002 on meditation. This was organized by professors of religion. There were papers presented on Christian yoga; how Christian yoga has been practiced, meditation in Judaism, meditation in Islam, and meditation in Greek philosophy. Not a single paper, or professor, is speaking on Hinduism. So the history is being recreated in this country where they are disassociating Hinduism from Yoga and meditation.

Meditation has now been approved even for the army, that it is a very good thing. This is the same meditation, which now they are taking credit for, like this is Christian meditation, but when Maharshi Mahesh Yogi went through those experimentations at Harvard Medical school, that was late 60s, Christian groups were against meditation. They were saying that oh, meditation is bad, because meditation requires you to empty your mind, and an empty mind is devils workshop. So the devil will come into your brain when you do meditation. Exactly this was the theory of Christianity. Now 30 years later, the story has changed 17:15 that meditation is an old tradition of Christianity, it has nothing to do with Hinduism.

This can only be corrected by the participation of Hindus being aware, Hindus talking to their school teachers, principals, and at least teaching your own children so they can speak up in the school and colleges against falsehoods being taught about Hinduism.

My daughter, Rane, who has just graduated from college, I can say for sure, anywhere Hinduism is taught, she can speak up, even to the teacher, or whoever is speaking.

17:56 that this is not Hinduism that I have learned. She will say it respectfully

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but she will oppose and say that if you want to discuss further, you have to discuss with my father, or somebody else, but I understand that this is not Hinduism as you are teaching.

MALA: In fact it is a large way to come across anything that is wrong in the society and we correct it. What is the role World Hindi Foundation do toward this end.

VED: Okay, the role the World Hindi Foundation, as I see for myself, comes here like this. OK, I spoke with you about teaching religion Hinduism, but my experience is when I started teaching at Sunday school at Ved Mandir that Hindi is crucial to understanding our culture and religion. I wanted to involve all the children.

MALA: That was your creation the Youth Group.

VED:: Yes. In my first experiment in getting the Indian community youth and having them learn culture and religion., I found it necessary for children to know something of our language. Although we used the medium of English to teach, but students have to learn our language to really understand the meanings because words have such shades of meaning that sometimes some of the things—especially when it comes to our religion—you cannot translate exactly into English and it is very necessary to know the language.

Myself coming from North India, and most of the group was North Indian, I taught Hindi, but this is true for every Indian language. You have to teach whatever language you come from, that you bring as your mother tongue. Then only you can really convey your culture fully, as you understand, and religion. Although our religion is the same, but it can be translated from any of the Indian languages, whether they are South Indian, North Indian, Bengali, or whatever language. You can do justice to that. You can really convey the meaning and deeper understanding of it. Also, you know, as they learn a little bit of your language, I think, they will feel closer to the family, specially the extended family. They will feel more comfortable talking to grandparents. Going to India, they will enjoy more. So in that sense we thought, you know, that we should try to help.

We know that Korean, Japanese, Chinese, all of these communities are doing so much to preserve their culture. There is a Chinese school here in Marlboro. The Central School is taken by them every Saturday. You go to that school on a Saturday, you will not find a parking spot because there are 200, 300 Chinese parents who come with their children and they spend whole morning learning. So that was the effort that children should learn something about our cultural hritage.

MALA: Because our idioms are also sometimes based on the religion and idiomatic speech 20:56. Do you think that Indian Americans are going to different subjects. Do you think that Indian Americans have broken the glass ceiling or penetrated the glass ceiling by any chance?

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VED: Yes, that is not something which is uniformly true, but in certain corporations, that is true. You see, the corporations where we started 4A, the Bell Laboratories, you know, at the time we started, there were hardly anyone who was above the supervisory position. There were just one or two people called department heads, but I am happy to say that, finally, during the decade of the 90s, one of the Indian Americans, Arun Netravali, had been the President of Bell Laboratories. The Vice Chancellor of Research at UCLA, Kumar Patel, who was also a director of research at Bell labs, is an Indian American. The President of Bell Communications Research, Sanjiv Ahuja, was an Indian American. So there are Indian Americans at the top positions in many corporations. There is a magazine called Silicon 22:12 India that's come around, which can show you that there are lots of people who have done very well, purely based on the strengths of their professional capabilities. The same thing is also true in other parts of this country. This phenomenon is true on the West Coast in the Silicon Valley area where a very large segment of companies, new start up companies, have been started by venture capitalists, by Indian Americans.

MALA: Going back to our conversation, we were talking about the god feeling. So the next question is, what is one cultural heritage we bring to US that you can truly explain.

VED: This is a very difficult question -- to finding just one, but if it is just one then

MALA: You have to mention what that one?

VED: I have to get back to religion again. The philosophy that comes through our religion, which is Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti -- that is -- God is One, wise call it by various names. 00:37 that is what I always think when I see people of other faith.

When they talk about Jesus, the only Savior, the only one who can save us from hell; or 00:48 when the baptists council said: oh - praying what they call "idols" is like a sin or something; or the Christian ministers in their churches saying 01:00 to their congregation -- you are all sinners because of the original sin, or whatever theories I hear, I always think that our tradition has gone thru and beyond all of these things of "exclusion of others" and has come to a saner view: Ekam Sat God is One, wise call it by various names.

Some 01:19 wise people have said different things to take care of their society at different points in time, but the eternal truth is that God is not a human being, or a King, or a Shahenshah (king of Kings) and does not have human attributes. God is something that is only described in abstract terms of infinite intellect, infinite love, and infinite consciousness that we cannot even understand with our limited senses, and limited intellect. Therefore, finally all human beings are the same. We are all children of the same God and, therefore, you know, I take interest in propagating such thoughts.

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Definitely, it has to be propagated to the Indian Hindu community youth whose heritage it is, so then we can also have others understand this. Because, unless this is understood, this whole world will continue to fight about these narrow things, like convert everyone to Allah, or convert everyone to believe in Jesus, or whatever other Gods that might be.

I think that is the part of our heritage that I think is unique. Every other heritage and all other people have, you know, compassion, education, being a good person, but this concept of Ekam Sat is unique to our tradition, as Hindus, and that is why lately I am working with the HICAD - Hindu International Council Against Defamation, to spread this message. I think this is one heritage that I am very proud of and that I think is needed at this time of turmoil in the world.

MALA: Now with the defamation organization get any, did your group deal with any particular complaint or any higher defamation that has been done within the New Jersey community.

VED: Well, you raised the question of New Jersey community. I think you know our name is International, so we have been looking at wider problems, than just New Jersey, even though most of the active people are here in New Jersey and New York area. But we always take the approach of national and international, and actually, we find that there is so much to do.

It has been only one year and we find that the problems of this nature are so immense, and our resources of the organization are just so meagre 04:07 right now, that we have to be very careful in choosing where we spend our energies on. So for example, one of the first things last year we did was that after September 11, 2001, we saw President Bush saying that, you know, "Let us all go to our Church, synagogue, or mosque and pray", and we said, well, where do we Hindus go to pray? He only says: church, synagogue, and mosque. What about any other place of worship? you know, Hindu temple, or Buddhist temple or Sikh Gurudwara, or whatever we have. So we sent a petition to the President, urging him to be more inclusive. Hopefully some of the people are still following up on it, because there was a question put up by a reporter to him only recently, a month or two ago. So he is being more aware that there are not only three religions in this country, there are many people of other religions. He should, you know, be concerned. I think, when the President says and thinks so narrowly, what do you expect of other people? We went to that level to protest to the President.

Similarly, many other problems, like in Jammu and Kashmir, Hindus being killed. This is called, you know, racial or ethnic cleansing happening in J&K. Also, in Bangladesh, Hindus are being killed. Again ethnic cleansing is the only term that describes it. So we have been trying to do some opposition, to build small and large efforts against major problems that the Hindu community is facing here in USA and internationally.

MALA: That brings me your cheered fashion in the White House and that was about Indian American leadership conference that was hosted at White House and _____

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06:10 you do have some contact in the White House and you seem to have known Governor Florio and you are now working with

VED: Governor McGreevey.

MALA: So then who would be your contact group at White House, if you have to reach up to the president, who would your contact? What will be your source of contact over there.

VED: The source changes every time the administration changes. So during Clinton administration, there was different sources, this was a democratic administration and now there is a republican administration, so it's a different context. Fortunately, I have been all my life an independent and I have friends both in the democratic organization, as well as republican administration. There are people, Indian community people, who do a lot of fund raising, and by the way, I have not been doing that. Depending on which administration is in power, we tried to contact the right people and, by the way, within the White House there is always an organization that deals with various ethnic minority groups, and there is always someone who is designated to be the contact person with the Indian community. Now a days, as you have heard, the Indian community has a little bit more say than in the past. Because of the success of the Indian Americans in Silicon Valley, as well as in New York and New Jersey area where we have large numbers, some of the congressmen do pay attention to the votes and the funding that we can provide. New Jersey has been specially active in getting the Congressional caucus **08:05** on India and Indian Americans set up in congress, which now has 140 congressmen members, or supporters of the caucus. Those 140 congressmen include both democrats and republicans. So depending on what administration is in power, and depending on what issues we are working with, and what congressmen would be supportive of those issues, we try to contact them differently.

MALA: Now comes the question of 80/20 that seems to be another interesting subject for you to talk about, tell us about your 80/20.

VED: Okay, you see, both the Indian American community, as well as the Asian American community, find themselves divided between the democratic and republican parties. Very clearly, the people in both of those communities who have been very successful, financially, they get lured by the republican party's platform of lower taxes and some support, whereas most Indian Americans, and I would think, most Asian Americans, when they come here as immigrants, they tend to think of democratic values. But if you look at the general Asian American population, a third of us are democrats, a third of us are republicans, and a third of us are independent. Being such a small minority, and being divided this way, third, third, third, we loose our significance. What candidate would want to come to our community, when they know that the small number of votes, that we have, are going to be divided half-and-half between democrats and republicans.

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So, one strategy that some of the Asian American leaders have come out with is that we should unite and vote as a block. We should not unite to be democrats or republicans, but we should unite and vote as a block at every major election, which is the Presidential election, as well as the state level gubernatorial elections, or senatorial elections. We call this organization 80/20, because what we try to do is: we try to get 80% of the Asian votes to one candidate that this organization will endorse.

This organization gave itself the name 80/20 to make this clear that we are going to do 80/20 block vote. We, this group, is going to do whatever we can to unite, and what we do is bring together leadership from all 13 ethnic groups that comprise the Asian American Community. At the last gubernatorial election, we invited both gubernatorial candidates to the Pines manor in Edison, 10:48 gave them one hour each to speak, and to answer our questions. We had 33 representatives from all 13 communities and after both the candidates spoke, we had one hour for ourselves, where we discussed as to which of these two candidates is going to be more favorable to the Asian American Community, based on what they said and what we know about them. Then there was a vote of the 33 people there—the Asian American leaders—and the vote came out very strongly in favor of McGrahey. That is why McGrahey was endorsed and favored by this group 80/20. So this is what they plan to do again and again in the future. Matter of fact, we have been quite successful because, you see, unity is important. Even if the person who you did not endorse wins the office, he will remember that these guys are united and it behooves him to win you over, so that he can get these 80% votes in the next election. So they work for you.

MALA: Okay, that's a good thought. So, positive takeover the negative outcome.

VED: As a result, you see for the first time in the federal government there are two cabinet level Asian Americans.

MALA: You might remember the name?

VED: The Transportation Secretary, Norman Mineta, as well as the Secretary of Labor, Elaine Chao. And for the first time, here in New Jersey, there is one person, Seema Singh, who has been nominated, designated, at the cabinet level and that is just the start 12:45 and these are the first attempts to move up, as we are trying to move up, to get united and go to a block vote to one candidate.

MALA: What advice would you give to the young people?

VED: The advice to young people is that we bring, as I mentioned, such a rich heritage and values of education, professionalism, and hard work, and them to accept the work ethics that we bring. We are one of the most hard working people. They—young people—need to continue the tradition that our generation has brought, and given to them. There is not just one strategy of the American “melting pot” where you suppose to lose your identity, but I feel that we should follow the “garland” analogy: flowers of various

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colors and fragrance, united together in a garland. That you maintain your fragrance and color, and identity, that you bring something that is uniquely yours, that you should continue to hold on to, and share with others. And at the same time, share in what others have brought to this culture. There are so many good values from other cultures to learn from and appreciate them. This is how we can be successful, and help the society here, in general, to become more successful by our presence.

MALA: By the way, are you happy, that you came to America?

VED: Oh! Let's see. I give an unequivocal, yes. I knew that, even before I came here, this is a great country. There is more equality, equal treatment. Specially, I have worked in Bell laboratories with people with tremendous experience. To work with such great people helped in my self development, and you know I had the opportunity to work with the community at various levels. So I feel that it was a very good decision to come to US. As you know, lot of people have followed since I came here in 1965. Now that we have a nucleus, I am happy that we have been as successful as we have been. But we need to continue to work very hard. As you know, in order for us to succeed, we have to work harder than people who have been here because they have certain advantages for having their roots here. And you know, they are feeling that we are the new comers, and there is always some price of admission for the new comers in to the society. We should do all of those things for the society.

One thing I feel, as I think back about India, that the wealthiest communities in India: Baniya, Agrawal, Jain, Marwari, they all give in visible ways to the community. All dharamshalas are Agarwal dharamshala or Jain dharamshala. There are Birla Temples everywhere in India that were built in the last century. There are hospitals that were built by Agarwals, and Jains, this and that. So if our community is successful, we should give in return to this community in visible ways that peoples could associate with Hindu community. Whatever we do in visible ways, it should say Hindu temple, or Hindu hospital, or Hindu charity, or whatever. We are not doing that. So we need to do those things. After a few generations, most of our young people will be called Hindu-Americans while some of them will be Muslim-Americans, and some of them will be Christian-Americans. The point is that they won't identify with India as such. They will not be called Indian Americans, but will continue to associate with our religious traditions, just as you know Jewish-Americans are Jewish-Americans, no matter whether they came from Poland 17:14 or Germany or somewhere else. Hindus come in from Trinidad or Venezuela, or Fiji, or even Pakistan, and Afghanistan, or Bangladesh. They all will be here Hindu-Americans and we need to do visible things that people can relate to that Hindus are giving back to the community.

VED: Do you also feel that two generation or three generation from now our society that are either Hindu-Americans or Indian-Americans, whichever way you put it, we will get diluted, our language and our culture will become diluted because our children may marry outside of our community and in that process we can lose our languages, as well as our culture, do you fear of that?

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MALA: No I am not fearful of that. It is going to happen and one should not be fearful of that. You see, this is the process of assimilation, as we in India have done that probably better than any other community, or society in the world. In India, if you look at from north to south, from Kashmir to Kanyakumari, or from Punjab to Bengal, we have people and customs that are very different, yet we feel that we are one. There is something about us that makes us all Indians, Bhartiya, which is our cultural heritage, basically. Our languages are different, and we probably come from different gene pools, or whatever, but we are Indian. Coming here, we should feel the same way that, you know, we will mix with people who are here, black, white, Mexican, Spanish, Asian, whatever, but we should have our succeeding generations 19:19 continue with the traditions that we brought with us. The greatest thing we have is our conception of what is divinity, what is religion, what is the core of the religion, or the divinity, and the values that are inherent in them.

On language, it would be good to continue, but as I see the Italians, as with all other nationalities, it may not be possible to continue with language for many generations, but the central theme of our religion, and our culture, we can transmit. That will be great. There are two ways to see, as we all know, when the daughter is married, you can say you lost your daughter, or you can say you gained a son. So that will always continue. Either you can say that when your son or daughter is married with somebody outside that you lost our culture; or you can say you gained another person, who is sympathetic and knowledgeable, and supportive of your culture. And it is the second one that I believe in. What we need to do is transmit our values to our next generation. I do not want people to think that everything good is in Indian culture, or Hindu religion. That is not true. There are many good things in every other culture and we should--via osmosis--take them too. But at the same time, not lose what we already have, it is important. If we can transmit that to our next generation, then as we disperse, our values will disperse to other people and other communities as well. So I am more positive in that area. If we all, or many of us—all will not do it anyway—but if many of us can continue the tradition of believing in what Indian culture is based on, which is, we took people from everywhere and assimilated them, even with different faiths. I guess we believe in so many gods, because we said okay you believe in this god, that's good, because that is also a form of god, and he believes in this other god, it is also a form of god. Thus we brought every body together and we can continue with that heritage here, then we should not be fearful.

MALA: That is a very positive and very optimistic view and you almost sound like the statue of liberty was there in India long before statue of liberty came into these shores and I thank you on behalf of AIA, New Jersey chapter. It is a pleasure to interview you and we are hoping that the historical commission will be able to publish it, and the future generation can hear it, read it, and see how the pioneers like you came to the United States as far back in the 1960s and proved yourself outside India, but from deep roots in New Jersey and made a huge commitment and you have made a lot of inroads to the society here and I thank you on behalf of the AIA.

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VED: Thank you. I have been delighted to be a part of this project. 22:50.