

Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History Neeraj Dhar Interview

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00:00:00.030 --> 00:00:05.609

Interviewer (I): Hi, Good Morning Neeraj. We're from the San Jose State University Library the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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00:00:05.710 --> 00:00:09.719

I: library, and I'm Mantra Roy. I'm the Open Education librarian and
I: this is my colleague, Bernd Becker

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00:00:13.000 --> 00:00:18.779

I: using the camera. So we are working on an Oral History project to capture the

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00:00:19.300 --> 00:00:22.980

I: various ways that Desi identity can be described in

5

00:00:23.520 --> 00:00:24.580

I: Silicon Valley.

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00:00:24.580 --> 00:00:28.340

I: So we start with a few questions.

Neeraj (N): Sure.

I: just to and you know

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00:00:28.340 --> 00:00:29.700

I: it's really a conversation. It's like, to know about you

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00:00:29.700 --> 00:00:31.700

I: and your work in Silicon Valley, so

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00:00:32.259 --> 00:00:36.689

I: just to get started. Tell us a little bit about yourself to describe your journey up until now.

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00:00:36.880 --> 00:00:43.139

N: Well, I was a banker in India, but my passion was always towards the media; so in

11

00:00:44.050 --> 00:00:51.480

N: 1997 got an opportunity to work in Bollywood

I: Hmm.

N: for a production company and that production

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00:00:51.480 --> 00:00:52.809

N: company was based out of New York

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00:00:52.809 --> 00:00:54.809

N: I've worked with them---

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00:00:55.480 --> 00:00:59.789

N: for couple of years in Bombay, then I got an opportunity to come here to do some events.

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00:01:00.430 --> 00:01:04.709

N: With the same company, so that's how my journey started with the US.

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00:01:05.379 --> 00:01:06.460

N: ---

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00:01:06.460 --> 00:01:09.839

N: I landed here just one month before 9/11 happened.

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00:01:10.060 --> 00:01:11.120

N: So

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00:01:11.160 --> 00:01:12.098

I: And you were in New York?

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00:01:12.100 --> 00:01:14.400

N: I was in New York that time. We were shooting for a

21

00:01:15.160 --> 00:01:19.420

N: TV serial for Zee TV that time in New York City.

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00:01:20.400 --> 00:01:25.040

N: And then unfortunately the thing we know 9/11 happened.

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00:01:25.980 --> 00:01:27.980

N: After that company

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00:01:28.119 --> 00:01:29.979

N: gave me more

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00:01:29.979 --> 00:01:31.979

N: opportunities to work for the media.

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00:01:32.350 --> 00:01:39.059

N: They gave me opportunity to work for an advertising company and they have different branches in New York City and,

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00:01:40.060 --> 00:01:44.790

N: they all, they also used to run a new, they still run a newspaper called Indian Express.

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00:01:45.130 --> 00:01:48.509

N: I'm still the, you know, the business head for West Coast for them.

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00:01:49.060 --> 00:01:55.620

N: And it's, it's a newspaper from India; you know that, it's Indian Express.

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00:01:55.700 --> 00:01:59.140

N: Then they, they give me the opportunity in

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00:01:59.140 --> 00:02:02.070

N: 2007 to shift to San Francisco because

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00:02:02.290 --> 00:02:07.350

N: we used to have only East Coast Edition that time and my boss told me, you know,

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00:02:07.350 --> 00:02:14.519

N: Why not you go there and it's a big Indian community in San Francisco coming up and let's start a, you know,

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00:02:14.980 --> 00:02:16.980

N: a West Coast Edition there.

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00:02:17.340 --> 00:02:22.560

N: Then I, they shifted me and the other reason of shifting, you know, I was little,

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00:02:25.140 --> 00:02:30.960

N: not that comfortable in New York City because it's a lot of, you know, the winter was like

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00:02:31.120 --> 00:02:32.240

I: Laugh

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00:02:32.260 --> 00:02:34.900

N: Laugh

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00:02:34.980 --> 00:02:39.860

N: Too bad there, you know, and people told me other weather wise and you know, California is really good.

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00:02:39.870 --> 00:02:44.760

N: So I took the opportunity. I landed here in 2007, started the newspaper

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00:02:45.160 --> 00:02:48.240

N: called Indian Express, it's still printed in the West Coast

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00:02:49.390 --> 00:02:51.390

N: and then in

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00:02:51.580 --> 00:02:57.749

N: 2009 I saw that Indian community is growing like anything. I mean a lot of immigration is happening.

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00:02:57.900 --> 00:03:02.920

N: In fact when I went for my working visa, U.S. Consulates, I

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00:03:03.840 --> 00:03:08.860

N: got my visa because you know that Officer said you are the first one who is coming as a media

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00:03:09.060 --> 00:03:09.920

N: Laugh.....

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00:03:10.080 --> 00:03:11.020

I: Laugh

48

00:03:11.100 --> 00:03:15.300

N: Otherwise, everyone else is like, you know, techie! So he said after like

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00:03:15.910 --> 00:03:20.010

N: so many weeks I'm looking for somebody who's applying for some different visa.

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00:03:20.440 --> 00:03:25.739

N: So he was excited too, I was excited too and then I was fortunate to get visa,

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00:03:26.350 --> 00:03:28.799

N: working visa for immediate (inaudible)

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00:03:29.890 --> 00:03:32.279

N: Then I landed here in San Francisco.

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00:03:32.280 --> 00:03:39.300

N: I saw that lot of Indian community is growing here, and there is very less media opportunity.

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00:03:39.300 --> 00:03:39.800

N: I mean there was few newspapers

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00:03:39.800 --> 00:03:41.170

I: Hmm

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00:03:41.170 --> 00:03:43.160

N: But there was nothing else.

I: Hmm..

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00:03:43.500 --> 00:03:49.760

N: So then it came to my mind because I, I saw radio working in New Jersey and New York and

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00:03:49.860 --> 00:03:50.740

I: Hmm

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00:03:50.800 --> 00:03:52.800

N: People were like very, you know,

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00:03:53.560 --> 00:03:59.220

N: dedicatedly or and you know, follow that radio, used to call like ABC Radio, I still remember,

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00:03:59.340 --> 00:03:59.960

I: Okay

62

00:04:00.120 --> 00:04:04.980

N: in New York City. So I thought, you know, there is a very good opportunity to start a radio.

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00:04:05.240 --> 00:04:10.620

N: But radio is very expensive; so somehow I found a broker. I went to him I said, you know

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00:04:11.390 --> 00:04:16.779

N: I want to start a radio station here. He said, no, Indian population is very less.

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00:04:16.780 --> 00:04:20.693

N: You can't you know, I don't think radio can work here

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00:04:20.693 --> 00:04:21.413

I: Hmm

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00:04:21.413 --> 00:04:21.913

N: for a particular language.

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00:04:21.920 --> 00:04:22.420

N: ---

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00:04:24.680 --> 00:04:27.400

I: And you have mostly Hindi language content, right?

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00:04:27.440 --> 00:04:31.300

N: We have all Hindi and English but cater to only Indian community.

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00:04:31.460 --> 00:04:31.960

I: Right.

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00:04:32.220 --> 00:04:38.020

N: So then he said no, it's not a, you know, good market right now and

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00:04:38.320 --> 00:04:40.460

N: he didn't give me that much of, you know,

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00:04:41.510 --> 00:04:48.849

N: What you follow it is time. He said no, don't waste your time and then after one year, then somebody started at AC

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00:04:49.610 --> 00:04:52.120

N: Station called 1170. Yeah, and

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00:04:52.910 --> 00:04:58.119

N: it started doing very well. People, everyone was talking about it and

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00:04:59.660 --> 00:05:01.660

N: I went back to my broker and said, See?

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00:05:02.560 --> 00:05:08.679

N: The radio has started. You didn't give me the opportunity. You now see how it is working. So find me a station now.

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00:05:08.750 --> 00:05:11.799

N: He said no, there is already one radio station. So

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00:05:12.590 --> 00:05:14.380

N: that is enough for your community.

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00:05:14.380 --> 00:05:20.139

N: I don't think another radio station can work and then eventually I was able to convince him

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00:05:20.510 --> 00:05:22.629

N: and he found me a station

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00:05:23.150 --> 00:05:24.229

N: called

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00:05:24.229 --> 00:05:25.639

N: 1550 AM.

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00:05:25.660 --> 00:05:32.680

N: It was owned by CBS. We, we started very well. 1550, people started liking it.

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00:05:34.900 --> 00:05:42.000

N: What I did different from other stations was I bought the content from India. So we

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00:05:42.360 --> 00:05:44.760

N: we, we made a studio in India.

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00:05:44.770 --> 00:05:51.549

N: We've hired people in India and they made a programming for us instead of. We also had few people here

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00:05:51.550 --> 00:05:54.130

N: but the kind of, you know,

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00:05:54.880 --> 00:05:58.660

N: people, the RJ's you get in India, you don't find them here.

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00:05:59.360 --> 00:05:59.860

N: But eventually,

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00:05:59.860 --> 00:06:01.980

I: not even in the Indian population here?

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00:06:02.120 --> 00:06:08.220

N: Eventually, we found like a lot of them but to start a radio station, you know

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00:06:08.300 --> 00:06:08.920

I: hmm

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00:06:08.920 --> 00:06:14.680

N: very first day, it was very difficult to find you know, yeah, somehow, people started, like, a

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00:06:16.360 --> 00:06:20.840

N: s,tation and became overnight a very popular station and

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00:06:21.020 --> 00:06:21.520

I: hmm

98

00:06:21.680 --> 00:06:23.720

N: the rest is history. [Laugh]

99

00:06:23.940 --> 00:06:25.180

I: Yeah yeah its a very well known station.

100

00:06:26.320 --> 00:06:28.320

N: So eventually we

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00:06:28.369 --> 00:06:30.789

N: So we left 1550, we went to

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00:06:31.339 --> 00:06:32.449

N: 1170

103

00:06:32.449 --> 00:06:36.758

N: last year because of a bigger frequency and ...

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00:06:37.279 --> 00:06:41.859

N: Now it's from 1550 now we're on 1170; that's how we

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00:06:42.580 --> 00:06:47.340

I: So how many RJ's work with you here?

N: Uh, we have 40+ RJ's here. Yes

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00:06:47.900 --> 00:06:49.580

I: All stationed in this office in San Jose?

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00:06:49.720 --> 00:06:57.720

N: Yes, most of them are. We have three in house and rest of them, they come and go. I mean most of them are

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00:06:57.769 --> 00:07:01.149

N: technical people but they have a passion towards RJ.

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00:07:01.149 --> 00:07:06.729

N: What we do is we do RJ hunt every year. So every year we find one two

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00:07:07.729 --> 00:07:12.609

N: different RJ's, you know. They've worked in India for some radio station.

I: Oh, I see.

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00:07:13.159 --> 00:07:15.429

I: That's great.

N: Yeah, that's interesting.

112

00:07:15.469 --> 00:07:15.979

I: Yeah

113

00:07:15.979 --> 00:07:19.598

I: So when you made the move to San Francisco,(a) of course the weather appealed

114

00:07:19.909 --> 00:07:24.009

I: And the fact that you know that the Indian community was growing on the west coast

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00:07:24.009 --> 00:07:29.408

N: I took it as a challenge, you know, I thought, you know, this is the market and there is nothing here

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00:07:29.408 --> 00:07:35.440

N: So it's a good opportunity to do something.

I: Right. So over these years like, what does

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00:07:35.440 --> 00:07:37.000

I: what is being Desi

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00:07:37.000 --> 00:07:43.820

I: mean to you here like in Silicon Valley? Like you have lived in New York City or worked there, you know Indian content,

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00:07:43.879 --> 00:07:48.039

I: but doing it here. How is it different? How is being Desi different here?

N: Okay.

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00:07:48.559 --> 00:07:50.979

N: The crowd, the kind of people in

121

00:07:52.099 --> 00:07:54.578

N: east coast are different

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00:07:55.729 --> 00:07:57.709

N: compared to the west coast.

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00:07:57.709 --> 00:08:00.879

N: The main difference is here, the most of the people are techie people.

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00:08:02.940 --> 00:08:06.800

N: In east coast most of them are business oriented.

I: Hmmm.

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00:08:07.180 --> 00:08:11.280

N: The culture is different. Here, they're, I would say they're more educated

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00:08:12.220 --> 00:08:15.179

N: community. It's much younger. In New Jersey,

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00:08:15.940 --> 00:08:18.329

N: they are like second and third generation now.

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00:08:19.479 --> 00:08:21.430

N: But here it was

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00:08:21.430 --> 00:08:27.449

N: the first generation which was coming, migrating from India and they still have that Indian thing in them.

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00:08:27.449 --> 00:08:32.278

N: So, the moment they were landing here, they were missing that thing.

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00:08:32.279 --> 00:08:36.359

I: Okay.

N: That culture, you know, because obviously you are the first generation

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00:08:36.400 --> 00:08:41.549

N: So, so you, a lot of things you miss in India. Have so many RJ's here.

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00:08:41.550 --> 00:08:43.979

N: They just came here like eight or ten years back.

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00:08:43.979 --> 00:08:45.870

N: They still go every year,

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00:08:45.870 --> 00:08:48.419

N: you know, twice or three because they miss India so much.

136

00:08:48.700 --> 00:08:53.980

N: So I thought why not we get something here, which is which they miss in India. So I

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00:08:53.980 --> 00:08:56.140

[Phone ringing]

138

00:08:56.560 --> 00:09:02.780

N: So I spoke to couple of people. They said, you know, we miss the Indian radio station here, so

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00:09:03.550 --> 00:09:08.039

N: that was also in my mind while I was looking for a radio station, right?

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00:09:08.040 --> 00:09:14.250

I: So in terms of programming, like, you do, you have music programs. You have chat, talk shows on different topics.

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00:09:14.250 --> 00:09:17.460

I: How do you decide on what is going to appeal to the Desi community?

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00:09:17.620 --> 00:09:23.260

N: Okay, the thing is when we started this station, so we found that a lot of,

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00:09:24.040 --> 00:09:25.240

N: you know,

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00:09:25.240 --> 00:09:27.040

N: Desis which are here,

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00:09:27.040 --> 00:09:32.370

N: they not only wanted to listen to music, music because in music there are so many apps

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00:09:32.370 --> 00:09:35.039

N: there are so many, you know things you can just

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00:09:35.770 --> 00:09:38.819

N: click it and listen to anything you want to?

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00:09:39.130 --> 00:09:45.749

N: So we thought, why not we create something interesting where people talk about so many things and which

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00:09:46.450 --> 00:09:48.450

N: educate them also at the same time?

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00:09:49.060 --> 00:09:51.060

N: So, so we made this

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00:09:51.850 --> 00:09:53.850

N: station like you know, it's not a

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00:09:54.339 --> 00:09:57.239

N: entertainment attempt, is an infotainment station.

153

00:09:57.310 --> 00:10:01.409

N: So here you will get the information you educate them with

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00:10:01.779 --> 00:10:07.989

N: nice good educated people plus we will give you entertainment at the same time. So whenever we

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00:10:09.050 --> 00:10:10.130

N: we

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00:10:10.130 --> 00:10:16.210

N: have any client coming in, so we wanted to make sure you know he is well educated in his own field.

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00:10:16.460 --> 00:10:20.040

N: He talks well and he connects good with Indian community.

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00:10:20.060 --> 00:10:24.040

N: So these are the three different things and if it doesn't, we train them,

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00:10:24.740 --> 00:10:26.740

N: you know, how to talk on radio.

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00:10:27.140 --> 00:10:32.770

I: Do you think over the years when you started, say in 2009 right? and 2019, 10 years,

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00:10:32.980 --> 00:10:39.360

I: do you think the way you appeal to the Desi community has had to change over the years?

N: Ummmm

162

00:10:39.580 --> 00:10:41.460

N: Means in terms of what?

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00:10:41.620 --> 00:10:45.460

I: The content that you have been preparing. Like, so people who came into 2010 and

164

00:10:45.500 --> 00:10:50.380

I: people who are coming now.

N: Yes Yes, so eventually you'll learn so many things over the period.

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00:10:50.380 --> 00:10:56.710

N: You know what people like, what people don't like. So we yes, we do changes according to, you know,

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00:10:56.710 --> 00:11:02.079

N: we take suggestions from people and people do call us. I mean, oh, I don't like this kind of language,

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00:11:02.080 --> 00:11:06.099

N: I don't like this kind of program, why you are giving so much of, you know.

168

00:11:07.610 --> 00:11:11.050

N: We have some kind of programming which sometimes people don't like it.

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00:11:11.300 --> 00:11:16.060

N: And here people they have so many means of reaching us.

I: Hmm.

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00:11:16.640 --> 00:11:23.840

N: They just go to our website email at so this was garbage or this was good. So we get those feedbacks and

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00:11:24.340 --> 00:11:29.440

N: on basis of that we, we decide what, what is working what is not working

I: Right.

172

00:11:29.920 --> 00:11:33.360

I: So, so you identify yourself as a Desi of Silicon Valley?

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00:11:33.360 --> 00:11:34.040

N: Of course, yes.

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00:11:34.060 --> 00:11:39.660

I: So, how, how do you describe that? What does that mean to you?

N: Desi, Desi means, you know

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00:11:39.660 --> 00:11:41.660

N: Laughing.

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00:11:42.080 --> 00:11:44.080

N: Okay, first of all

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00:11:45.260 --> 00:11:51.520

N: Food.

I: yes.

N: Okay. We eat Desi food every day, you know, I travel a lot and

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00:11:52.480 --> 00:11:56.400

Everywhere I go I always look for an Indian restaurant.

I: Okay. Hmm.

179

00:11:56.480 --> 00:11:59.520

That's the first Desi thing I have.

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00:11:59.760 --> 00:12:01.320

I: This area is full of

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00:12:01.580 --> 00:12:04.840

N: This area is full of Desi yeah, so

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00:12:05.540 --> 00:12:08.380

N: Of course, we can't, we can't leave that. That is in our blood.

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00:12:08.380 --> 00:12:14.780

N: So, of course we try to change ourselves according to the American culture, but end of the day,

184

00:12:15.460 --> 00:12:20.880

N: you know, we miss what you know, we got in our blood from India.

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00:12:21.769 --> 00:12:28.569

I: So food is one part of

N: food is one part of it and dress up. You will see you know, I always

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00:12:29.149 --> 00:12:31.149

N: follow the

187

00:12:31.370 --> 00:12:32.480

N: Indians,

188

00:12:32.480 --> 00:12:39.760

N: you know, clothing style. I don't follow still, don't follow that American side.

I: Okay.

N: That's the second Desi thing

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00:12:39.760 --> 00:12:44.580

N: I have you know. If you see all my clothes are from India; so I go there and do lot of shopping.

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00:12:45.640 --> 00:12:51.640

I: Do you see that part kind of being reflected in Silicon Valley in general? Like a lot of Desis tend to dress,

191

00:12:52.220 --> 00:12:57.480

I: You know food part, yes, because there are so many restaurants people eat a lot, you know, outside food

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00:12:57.480 --> 00:12:59.480

I: because they get that kind of home food.

193

00:12:59.480 --> 00:13:00.680

N: It depends on person to person.

194

00:13:00.680 --> 00:13:06.400

N: Yeah, it's not like I don't see everyone is following American culture or everyone is following

195

00:13:06.460 --> 00:13:08.300

N: Indian culture. It's a mix, mix, yes.

196

00:13:09.160 --> 00:13:13.780

I: But there are a lot of, like, events for Indian communities, right? Like we know these parades

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00:13:13.780 --> 00:13:15.640

I: music shows, these are very

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00:13:15.640 --> 00:13:19.839

I: unique to Indian communities. So do you think that and you can expose?

199

00:13:19.839 --> 00:13:20.839

N: Of course, of course!

200

00:13:20.839 --> 00:13:25.328

N: You know, you see, if you see the events we do here

201

00:13:26.449 --> 00:13:28.279

we

202

00:13:28.280 --> 00:13:33.940

We celebrate Diwali much bigger way, what we used to do in India.

I: Why is that?

203

00:13:34.380 --> 00:13:36.660

N: In India, it was just one day.

204

00:13:36.949 --> 00:13:41.379

N: Here, it's like it's Diwali party starts from month,

205

00:13:41.389 --> 00:13:47.379

N: you know, before the Diwali because you know every friend circle. You have like 3,4 social circles.

206

00:13:47.380 --> 00:13:52.140

N: So everywhere you have a different Diwali and then you have different Diwali events.

207

00:13:53.260 --> 00:13:58.920

N: You know, we go. That's the only thing we can do on the weekends.

I: Right.

208

00:13:58.920 --> 00:14:01.300

I: Why are there so many Diwali parties?

209

00:14:01.300 --> 00:14:04.580

I: For example, I mean there are Holi parties and

N: I think

210

00:14:05.360 --> 00:14:07.990

N: It's more as a convenient thing

211

00:14:09.199 --> 00:14:11.199

N: You know.

212

00:14:11.630 --> 00:14:15.939

N: If you have a ... you know here in the U.S., you have not only

213

00:14:17.209 --> 00:14:19.209

N: you know home and

214

00:14:19.490 --> 00:14:23.920

N: You have so much help. You have to divert so much of time in your you know work

215

00:14:24.500 --> 00:14:26.890

N: You have to divert so much of time with your kids.

216

00:14:27.170 --> 00:14:31.420

N; We don't have that luxury of, you know, what we used to have in India.

217

00:14:32.020 --> 00:14:35.820

N: For example, my son was born

218

00:14:36.400 --> 00:14:38.800

N: Me and my wife both were working in India.

219

00:14:38.800 --> 00:14:41.620

N: So my son was brought up by my parents.

220

00:14:42.040 --> 00:14:47.820

N: So we don't have that luxury here in the US. So we have to take care of everything.

I: Right.

221

00:14:47.820 --> 00:14:48.560

N: And, and

222

00:14:48.560 --> 00:14:53.420

N: if you see the schedule for kids, you are super busy. I know, you know, I have been,

223

00:14:54.320 --> 00:14:59.740

N: my son was like 11 years old when I came here, so I have gone through that cycle.

224

00:14:59.740 --> 00:15:02.409

N: That's seven eight years when they are in school.

225

00:15:03.170 --> 00:15:10.209

N: You are, just bound up with your kids and your work. You don't have anything else to do. So then

226

00:15:11.360 --> 00:15:15.820

N: you get some time during the weekend to go to the event. So

227

00:15:16.340 --> 00:15:20.820

N: once you miss one event, then you have the opportunity to go to the second event

228

00:15:20.830 --> 00:15:25.629

N: which is the next; so you have that, you know, leverage that. Okay,

229

00:15:25.630 --> 00:15:28.990

N: If I'll miss one party, I have few more, you know,

230

00:15:29.960 --> 00:15:34.720

N: Holi events coming up so I can, you can you can plan your things accordingly.

231

00:15:35.060 --> 00:15:38.500

N: So you don't have to depend on one particular day or something?

232

00:15:38.500 --> 00:15:41.440

I: And why do you want to go to that party?

233

00:15:41.780 --> 00:15:46.920

N: Because of course we miss that thing, you know from India, Holi, Diwali.

234

00:15:47.320 --> 00:15:49.900

N: Anything, all festivals were like, you know,

235

00:15:49.900 --> 00:15:55.600

N: it was like, we used to wait. O now Janmashtami is coming. We have to go out the whole night.

236

00:15:56.480 --> 00:16:02.230

N: Go to the different temples. So we miss, I mean we miss that thing in US

237

00:16:02.230 --> 00:16:06.279

N: and in the same time we wanted to give our kids the same culture

238

00:16:07.100 --> 00:16:14.139

N: which we and we miss that, you know, that what kids are missing that thing which we, you know,

239

00:16:14.140 --> 00:16:15.650

N: we enjoyed in our childhood.

240

00:16:15.650 --> 00:16:21.519

N: So I think by these events and all these things we gave our kids some little,

241

00:16:21.770 --> 00:16:25.989

N: you know, idea what we used to do and what they,

242

00:16:26.810 --> 00:16:31.960

N; that's our culture. Ththat's the one way of, you know, showing that okay, yeah,

243

00:16:33.170 --> 00:16:34.290

N: not only

244

00:16:34.290 --> 00:16:41.120

N: because in in school, they they they have all American culture. So this is the only way you can give them some,

245

00:16:41.720 --> 00:16:44.960

N: you know, idea about what our culture is.

246

00:16:46.020 --> 00:16:53.040

N: Yeah, and I have seen that, you know, that kids, they also enjoy something different for them.

247

00:16:53.100 --> 00:16:54.520

I: Right and

248

00:16:55.360 --> 00:16:57.960

I: so I think it's that attempt to,

249

00:16:58.260 --> 00:17:00.260

I: kind of, relive and

250

00:17:01.140 --> 00:17:03.780

I: continue the culture that

N: Correct, Correct.

251

00:17:03.840 --> 00:17:10.160

I: Is that why it is so vibrant in Silicon Valley?

N: Everywhere. Not only here; you go to any country.

252

00:17:10.320 --> 00:17:15.800

N: Even, I was, my friend told me in Brazil the Indian community is very,

253

00:17:17.220 --> 00:17:19.220

N: you know,

254

00:17:19.799 --> 00:17:22.819

N: getting bigger and bigger and they're also, you know,

255

00:17:23.100 --> 00:17:28.960

N: they have started all these Diwali thing and Holi thing and everything. So, of course,

256

00:17:30.000 --> 00:17:36.180

N: it's not only US. I mean everywhere, once you're outside India, you miss that.

I: Yeah, yeah right.

257

00:17:36.360 --> 00:17:39.440

I: So given your kind of work,

258

00:17:40.040 --> 00:17:47.840

I: tell me about how you think your Desi identity helps you to succeed in the work you do.

N: See what I am seeing is

259

00:17:49.020 --> 00:17:51.020

N: in, even in

260

00:17:52.350 --> 00:17:54.350

N: our business,

261

00:17:56.070 --> 00:17:58.070

N: it's the connection.

262

00:17:58.679 --> 00:18:00.709

N: in our culture, Desi, it's;

263

00:18:01.440 --> 00:18:06.320

N: for our kind of business, it's not only business business. It's a relationship

264

00:18:06.419 --> 00:18:10.249

N; which matters most, which I have seen. So

265

00:18:10.799 --> 00:18:13.819

N: once you're Desi going to a Desi business,

266

00:18:14.400 --> 00:18:16.860

N: it connects very easily,

267

00:18:17.120 --> 00:18:18.700

What I have seen.

268

00:18:18.700 --> 00:18:19.960

I: Give me an example.

269

00:18:19.960 --> 00:18:21.660

N: For example, I

270

00:18:23.160 --> 00:18:28.340

N: will give you a very classic example. There was a client which was coming from east coast, starting his business in

271

00:18:28.860 --> 00:18:35.880

N: in west coast and I was talking to my sales manager and she said okay there is another radio station

272

00:18:35.880 --> 00:18:37.880

N: which is approaching them.

273

00:18:37.929 --> 00:18:41.609

N: And I know that from that station

274

00:18:42.610 --> 00:18:45.599

N: they don't have any Indian who represent them.

275

00:18:46.240 --> 00:18:47.740

N: So I

276

00:18:47.740 --> 00:18:54.449

N: gave, I told her okay, don't worry. If he's an Indian, this business will come to us.

277

00:18:55.080 --> 00:19:00.500

I: Okay.

N: So I was pretty much sure that that Indian connections always work.

278

00:19:00.580 --> 00:19:02.700

I: Hmm.

N: and it worked.

I: It worked. Okay.

279

00:19:02.710 --> 00:19:07.919

N: Yes, so so that is the thing, which I see.

280

00:19:09.760 --> 00:19:14.039

N: When I see that there is an Indian client compared to an American client

281

00:19:14.039 --> 00:19:21.419

N: I know it's easier for me to convince him and to get connected. Even on radio when my client talks, I

282

00:19:21.940 --> 00:19:24.150

N: always tell them to talk in Hindi too,

283

00:19:24.669 --> 00:19:26.200

N: Not only English

284

00:19:26.200 --> 00:19:29.850

N: because the moment you are in your own language the connection is

285

00:19:31.120 --> 00:19:37.080

N: much better.

I: Okay.

N: Yes, there are, what I feel, yeah, and it has worked for them.

286

00:19:37.100 --> 00:19:39.640

I: Sure, okay great.

287

00:19:39.820 --> 00:19:41.820

I: Then

288

00:19:41.830 --> 00:19:46.350

I: If you look back at your journey since you moved from the east coast to the west coast, right,

289

00:19:46.419 --> 00:19:49.829

I: So how do you think the Silicon Valley has influenced

290

00:19:50.350 --> 00:19:51.490

I: your

291

00:19:51.490 --> 00:19:57.030

I: identities in... and in coming to that, I want you to talk about what you understand of Silicon Valley.

292

00:19:57.039 --> 00:20:00.149

I: How would you define the Silicon Valley?

N: You know, when I was in India,

293

00:20:00.760 --> 00:20:03.479

N: I saw a picture on one of the magazine.

294

00:20:05.020 --> 00:20:11.549

N: There was a big buildings and it says Silicon Valley. So I was like, okay there is something different.

295

00:20:13.659 --> 00:20:19.349

N: So when I landed, I landed in San Francisco, I was, I

296

00:20:20.289 --> 00:20:21.309

N: was

297

00:20:21.309 --> 00:20:26.548

N: going towards Santa Clara and I saw all these companies which I have seen in India, you know

298

00:20:26.710 --> 00:20:31.590

N: and they have all their head offices most of them in Silicon Valley and so every

299

00:20:32.260 --> 00:20:34.260

N: Stanford is here, you know.

300

00:20:35.799 --> 00:20:38.788

N: Facebook is here. Google is here. So I

301

00:20:41.020 --> 00:20:46.229

N: felt like, no, this is the city where you get the opportunity to

302

00:20:47.580 --> 00:20:49.580

N: to do something.

I: Hmm.

303

00:20:49.919 --> 00:20:54.148

N: This is the city which has created so many people, you know, who have done wonders; so

304

00:20:55.059 --> 00:21:01.859

N: somehow I felt that no, here I can do something. That was the connection.

I: I see.

305

00:21:02.620 --> 00:21:04.620

N: And and somehow

306

00:21:06.250 --> 00:21:08.669

N: in the first year when I landed, I I

307

00:21:09.580 --> 00:21:15.899

N: met the each and every organizations, Indian organization, I made relationship with them. I

308

00:21:17.740 --> 00:21:25.709

N: helped them in different ways and that's how my journey started here and when I started my own radio station, everyone was like

309

00:21:26.460 --> 00:21:29.560

N: coming to me and helping me.

I: Okay, that's great.

310

00:21:29.620 --> 00:21:33.760

N: That was the other Desi connection.

I: Yes. Yes, of course.

311

00:21:34.120 --> 00:21:36.120

I: So, I mean, how do you see

312

00:21:36.519 --> 00:21:43.109

like your future or your family's future in Silicon Valley and the direction in which Silicon Valley seems to be going now?

313

00:21:43.840 --> 00:21:49.679

N: I mean, I think Silicon Valley is the future of U.S. Not only U.S., it's the future of world.

314

00:21:52.000 --> 00:21:58.320

N: Everything which starts; these days, everything is technology.

I: Yes

N: and technology starts

315

00:21:58.320 --> 00:21:59.460

N: from Silicon Valley.

316

00:21:59.460 --> 00:22:00.730

I: Hmm.

N: And

317

00:22:00.730 --> 00:22:08.339

N: the the capacity of people spending money here is compared to any other city, which, and I travel a lot,

318

00:22:09.070 --> 00:22:11.189

N: I've seen the capacity of people

319

00:22:12.309 --> 00:22:14.309

N: spending money is much

320

00:22:16.179 --> 00:22:17.620

N: bigger,

321

00:22:17.620 --> 00:22:22.379

N: compared to all Indian cities. They have money because all, you know,

322

00:22:22.379 --> 00:22:25.379

N: all tech people, they have a very good salaries.

323

00:22:25.720 --> 00:22:31.500

N: So I think I and I also seen that they, you know, during the

324

00:22:32.950 --> 00:22:35.490

N: downfall, Silicon Valley

325

00:22:37.000 --> 00:22:39.000

N: business was not down.

326

00:22:39.280 --> 00:22:47.020

N: Businesses were still doing good.

I: Okay.

N: Yeah, so in fact we didn't get any hit so far

327

00:22:47.920 --> 00:22:55.120

N: in, you know, so so I think this is the city, I mean [laughs].

I: Good, yeah.

328

00:22:55.140 --> 00:22:58.840

I: When you mention technology that's an important thing. You know, there's been some you know

329

00:22:59.410 --> 00:23:05.849

I: academic research on what makes Silicon Valley culture thrive and an important observation there is that

330

00:23:05.849 --> 00:23:09.880

I: you know technology and community

N: Both together

I: They are very

331

00:23:10.020 --> 00:23:14.620

I: intensive in this region. Do you, do do you think that is true for the Desi community too?

N: Of course.

332

00:23:14.830 --> 00:23:17.189

N: Of course, it helps a lot. In fact

333

00:23:18.220 --> 00:23:23.620

N: went to so many companies, techie, you will see only Indians there.

I: Only Indians.

334

00:23:23.860 --> 00:23:29.620

N: Yeah, and I heard now a lot of meetings they happen there, they happen in their own languages.

335

00:23:29.620 --> 00:23:33.980

I: Hmm. [Laughs]

N: [Laughs].

N: That gives you an idea, you know.

336

00:23:34.080 --> 00:23:38.240

N: And I don't see any any problem there. I

337

00:23:39.340 --> 00:23:41.340

N: I think it makes

338

00:23:42.370 --> 00:23:45.959

N: It brings you more closer. It's easier for people to work.

I: So

339

00:23:48.580 --> 00:23:50.840

I: Do you, do you think, do you have, I mean,

340

00:23:50.880 --> 00:23:53.060

I: There could be so many things that I could ask you.

341

00:23:53.070 --> 00:23:55.559

I: But is there anything else you want to tell us about

342

00:23:55.750 --> 00:24:02.280

I: You know, this whole ... like Silicon Valley is almost like, especially the tech world right, is you know

343

00:24:02.590 --> 00:24:04.590

I: Indians everywhere. You

344

00:24:05.170 --> 00:24:11.789

I: know, anecdotally speaking and a lot of jokes about them, you know, skewing the real estate market for

345

00:24:12.250 --> 00:24:17.063

I: salaries they make, they push up the real estate market. Schools become very competitive

346

00:24:17.063 --> 00:24:20.160

N: because parents are there

I: because parents are, their Indian training.

347

00:24:20.160 --> 00:24:25.830

I: So, in this context, like, how do you think Desi identity will continue to flourish?

348

00:24:25.830 --> 00:24:29.339

I: Will the direction change? Will they adapt things from?

N: I doubt.

349

00:24:29.950 --> 00:24:34.589

N: think it's in our blood. It's in our blood, so we cannot change that.

350

00:24:35.140 --> 00:24:38.430

N: It will take time. Eventually. I think third or fourth generation

351

00:24:39.540 --> 00:24:42.200

N: you will see the difference but not right now.

352

00:24:42.640 --> 00:24:47.240

I: I mean, difference in the way?

N: In the way they bring up their kids right now. Yes.

353

00:24:47.800 --> 00:24:53.520

N: The more I think, yeah second and third generation. You will see the difference.

I: Okay

N: Yes and

354

00:24:54.400 --> 00:24:56.170

N: also;

355

00:24:56.170 --> 00:25:01.920

N: what's the difference between East Coast and West Coast is that the third second and third generation in east coast is

356

00:25:02.820 --> 00:25:05.960

N: still Desi.

I: What do you mean?

357

00:25:05.960 --> 00:25:09.540

N: Means that I see they they follow all these

358

00:25:10.920 --> 00:25:12.780

N: festivals

359

00:25:12.790 --> 00:25:14.850

N: They you will see them

360

00:25:15.720 --> 00:25:18.200

N: talking in their own language.

I: Hmm.

361

00:25:18.460 --> 00:25:24.320

N: But that culture is not here in Silicon Valley.

I: Oh.

N: Yes.

I: So it's changing.

362

00:25:24.330 --> 00:25:27.749

I: They don't follow the rituals, language.

N: It's; see language is,

363

00:25:28.450 --> 00:25:30.450

N: not that, you know,

364

00:25:30.910 --> 00:25:34.290

N: issue, but the thing is we are more into American culture here

365

00:25:34.930 --> 00:25:36.930

N: compared to any other,

366

00:25:37.420 --> 00:25:39.280

N: compared to east coast.

367

00:25:39.280 --> 00:25:45.629

I: So that though there is a strong Desi identity, yet there is a blending?

N: Yes

368

00:25:46.180 --> 00:25:52.499

I: Ok, and then what do you think of that?

N: Um, I don't see any problem. I mean another day

369

00:25:52.500 --> 00:25:56.850

N: It's not like, you know, it's not about culture itself. America is so great

370

00:25:57.760 --> 00:26:04.400

N: from my point of view. I don't think if you adopt an American culture, there isn't anything bad about it.

371

00:26:04.760 --> 00:26:05.260

N: I

372

00:26:05.260 --> 00:26:10.200

N: think I I actually respect all cultures, but

373

00:26:11.640 --> 00:26:19.120

N: if you ask me for me American culture is much better than an Indian culture. I feel

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00:26:19.240 --> 00:26:20.600

I: --- which respect?

375

00:26:21.430 --> 00:26:23.430

N: Any respect. You see

376

00:26:23.620 --> 00:26:27.120

N: here of we respect human beings so much.

377

00:26:27.840 --> 00:26:33.600

N: That's the first thing as in humanity we should do. We respect animals here.

378

00:26:36.040 --> 00:26:38.040

N: India you don't see that much.

379

00:26:39.670 --> 00:26:45.239

N: So that's the first thing. When 9/11 happened I was here. I

380

00:26:46.000 --> 00:26:49.020

N: don't see any reaction from any American

381

00:26:49.750 --> 00:26:51.340

N: towards it.

382

00:26:51.340 --> 00:26:55.760

N: They were all so good. The police was so nice. Everything was nice.

383

00:26:56.400 --> 00:26:59.840

N: You don't see that in India. I'm very

384

00:26:59.840 --> 00:27:04.000

N: sorry to say if anything happens in India like 9/11

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00:27:04.750 --> 00:27:06.660

N: There will be riots

386

00:27:06.660 --> 00:27:09.380

N: for sure.

I: Hmm.

387

00:27:10.040 --> 00:27:14.260

N: So that's why I'm here [Laughs]

388

00:27:14.340 --> 00:27:20.630

I: So you are a proud Desi of Silicon Valley.

N: I'm proud Desi and I'm proud, you know, proud to say that

389

00:27:20.630 --> 00:27:25.729

N: I follow American culture as well. Yeah.

I: Thank you very much for your time.

390

00:27:25.820 --> 00:27:29.539

N: Thank you.

I: Yeah. Lovely talking to you.

N: Same here. Thanks for coming.

I: Sure. Thank you.