

Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History

Yogi Chugh Interview

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Interviewer (I) Good afternoon, Mr. Chugh. Thank you for agreeing to do the interview for the Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History. I am from the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library at San Jose State University, and we are building this oral history project to capture all the memories and stories of Desis or Asian Indians in the area.

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(I) So we will start with the first question.

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(I) Is, if you tell us a little bit about yourself and about the journey up until now?

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Yogi Chugh (Y.C) You know Mantra, first of all, thank you for the opportunity, about your project.

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(Y.C) My journey is like many of the other immigrants who came to this country.

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(Y.C) I came to the United States in...

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(Y.C) about 1986. Landed in New York. I got picked up by my sister and her husband at that time,

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(Y.C) and you know, stayed there for a few weeks, and then made my trek over

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(Y.C) to California.

00:01:06.610 --> 00:01:12.500

(Y.C) Lived the immigrant journey. Odd jobs along the way. Went to college,

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(Y.C) graduated,

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(Y.C) got a job, got married. My wife is from India. We got married in India.

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(Y.C) It was a typical, traditional Indian wedding,

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(Y.C) arranged marriage. The families came together. Monika and I courted each other for a while ourselves for a little bit,

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(Y.C) and then married, and then fast forward,

00:01:38.470 --> 00:01:42.619

(Y.C) you know, proud parent of two children who are in college.

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(Y.C) And along this way, the immigrant story has been one of both joy and pride, but at the same time struggles. And those struggles were, coming into a new country,

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(Y.C) and trying to make a home,

00:01:56.810 --> 00:02:15.660

(Y.C) trying to get a job, and then working through the process of living the immigrant story. It's been gratifying. America has been a good home, a great country for us. We've accomplished much. But the journey along the way is what has...

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(Y.C) humanized us in many ways. The humility that comes with it.

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(Y.C) So... have much to be thankful to the United States, and have much to be thankful for India, where my affirmative years were.

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(Y.C) You know, where I was raised, and where I grew up. So

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(Y.C) that's really been the cusp of India, and the United States has to find me my wife and our two kids.

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(I) Right.

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(I) Great. And so when you say your trek across the country to California, did you come to Silicon Valley and did you know about Silicon Valley, when you were coming all the way from the East Coast?

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(Y.C) Well, my sister, I have another sister who was living here in California. She's been here in the United States since the mid 70s.

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(Y.C) She came here to the United States by marriage, to her husband,

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(Y.C) and you know...

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(Y.C) somewhere along the line, it was always a discussion that the family had that was probably, you know, good to have California as where I would settle and make my home.

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(Y.C) Came here and then went to college. San Jose State University actually. So, you know, was a student there, became a part and

00:03:33.380 --> 00:03:36.590

(Y.C) fabric of the community. The Industrial Association

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(Y.C) was something that I joined. On a whim I decided to run for student government, associated students, and got elected, and served on that in college.

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(Y.C) But, yes, the journey to California was premeditated. It was something we've given some thought. Moved into,

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(Y.C) I believe at that time, my sister was staying in Milpitas. So stayed with her for about three weeks, and then my parents were here prior to me. They'd come about a year ago.

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(Y.C) So we moved to Fremont at that time, and Fremont was a desirable place to live, because it was the Mecca of gravity at that time.

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(Y.C) And then, then Fremont became home, and I've been a resident of Fremont now, for...almost 36 years now.

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(I) Oh, wow, that's fabulous. But what, was Fremont also part of Silicon Valley at the time, or did it become Silicon Valley in front of your eyes?

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(Y.C) Well, Silicon Valley was actually being crystallized during that time, right. The days of Agile and the days of AMD, and all of that up, were just upcoming. So, Silicon Valley at that time was literally Sunnyvale. And it extended to include,

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(Y.C) you know, Santa Clara, Mountain View, and the Silicon Valley as you know it.

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(Y.C) And it was just morphed into that. Fremont was not even a part of Silicon Valley at that time.

(I) I see.

(Y.C) You know, we were always seen as the outskirts of Silicon Valley. But certainly Fremont, over the period of time, you know, has become a coveted place for many Indian Americans to come to. For many reasons, right. At that time,

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(Y.C) you know, Washington Hospital probably had so many of our Indian American doctors. We had so many Indian Americans living in Fremont.

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(Y.C) There's a time when I could count,

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(Y.C) you know, about 1,500 families that lived here,

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(Y.C) and pretty much anybody and everybody knew everybody.

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(Y.C) Now we're 34,000 strong based on the United States census count. But it was a town that had a temple, it had a Gurdwara, it had its Indian store, at that time I think it was called Guru Palace and VIP Travel,

00:05:52.570 --> 00:05:59.989

(Y.C) which was literally, and then Taste of India came along. So it was literally your little India, as you knew it at that time.

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(Y.C) So it was a desirable place for people to live. It was a community that was a small suburb. Certainly you won't recognize the Fremont when I moved into Fremont. But it is definitely, it was never seen as Silicon Valley, but today it is such a critical part of Silicon Valley

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(Y.C) with this innovation corridor, and so much of manufacturing biotech

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(Y.C) coming into the Fremont market. You know,

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(Y.C) Tesla is there, and Thermo Fisher, and Meta just opened up a new campus there as well. So it is well alive in Silicon Valley, it wasn't like that when we moved in.

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(I) Right. So... So what does Silicon Valley mean to you today versus the time when you, 36 years ago when you came, because Silicon Valley was just coming up. It was Sunnyvale,

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(I) it wasn't as widespread. But what does it mean to you today, compared to what it meant to you in the past?

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(Y.C) You know...my memories of Silicon Valley or, or the Mecca of Silicon Valley that people will start or talk about, right. The healed backwards of the world and...the garage that came out of those things were just stories that were just permeating, right.

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(Y.C) And at that moment in time, the immigrant journey was probably about 25 years old, right? The early immigrants, at least on the tech side, were coming in the 60s and the 65s, 1965.

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(Y.C) And as they were coming out of their world, you know, mid-level management was as far as you could see Silicon Valley in terms of for an Indian American...

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(Y.C) community members, right, that were aspiring for positions of leadership.

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(Y.C) Just a handful of companies at that time that had Indian American CEOs.

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(Y.C) And everybody else was pursuing the proverbial mid-management jobs, content in their lives. You know, the transition from Corolla to a Camry, on the transition from a townhouse to a home with a backyard. And

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(Y.C) literally, you know, living in a world in which immigration of Indian Americans was just seen as a process that had begun.

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(Y.C) Very different than you know, the take or of Silicon Valley that many may see today. So many startup founders being Indian Americans right.

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(Y.C) So many tech companies have CEOs of Indian origin.

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(Y.C) So many founders are spawning off of these companies to go start their own companies. Entrepreneurship is well alive, you know. The invest entrepreneur was an organization started to foster entrepreneurship, and it's 25 years old now. So, just look at 25 years ago,

00:08:43.230 --> 00:08:59.610

(Y.C) this concept of starting companies was not even something that most people considered. So then versus now, I think it's very different frankly. One could make the argument that Silicon Valley is wherever the group of founders show up.

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(Y.C) You transform an ecosystem around that. So really it's not only a compelling story, it's a story of great pride, story of great satisfaction. And frankly, having seen all of that, one cannot be amazed by the commitment of a community that came into a country,

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(Y.C) with literally nothing in their pockets, and carved out, you know, a presence and to the point, an acceptance far beyond what used to happen when we first moved during the 80s.

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(I) Yeah. So I guess this is a question you know you have already been responding to it, but I'll still ask it. Do you identify yourself as a Desi of Silicon Valley, and what does that mean to you?

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(Y.C) You know...

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(Y.C) That's an interesting question. Frankly, I identify myself as an American, who happens to be Desi, and then happens to be Hindu American. But I would say that in the broad moniker of a Desi,

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(Y.C) I would see myself as somebody who has come from the South Asian continent,

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(Y.C) and we share something in common: A hunger for success, a hunger for ensuring that we continue to...

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(Y.C) contribute in a productive manner to this country.

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(Y.C) And allow not only us, but our children, to help America even become more successful than it already has been.

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(Y.C) ...

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(Y.C) But you know I am a Desi.

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(Y.C) Looking at me, one can tell

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(Y.C) I'm from South Asia. Certainly my roots are from India. It's a country I'm very proud of, the country taught me so much.

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(Y.C) The country taught me the value of a pluralistic society, in which we were all raised to treat each other with respect and dignity. While I remember in my own community, our neighborhood would take responsibility to ensure that we uplifted each other.

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(Y.C) Every child was everybody's child, and we had this

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(Y.C) inner sanctum of comfort, that there were people in our family, our extended families, our neighbors, that we're always watching out for our best interest.

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(Y.C) So from that regard, you know, we built a community around ourselves right? Well, one of the things that i'm beginning to notice is that,

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(Y.C) you know, we're not only coming as Desi, but we're now coming as Indian Americans, but then we're also going back and saying I'm from Punjab, I'm from Tamil Nadu, from Andhra Pradesh, I'm from Calcutta. So we're divided subsets of communities within our Desi fold now.

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(I) Yes, there are so many different festivals around the same time that each subsection celebrates.

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(Y.C) That's right.

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(Y.C) They do celebrate.

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(Y.C) Mantra, can I put you on hold for just one second, please? If you don't mind, I...

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(Y.C) Will that be a issue or?

(I) No.

00:12:06.140 --> 00:12:18.170

(I) Yes, so you were saying that you know different subsections of the community right? You know people coming from different parts of India. They are forming their own identities as well. So wasn't that the scene in 30 years ago?

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(Y.C) It wasn't that profound. You know, people came from different parts of the country, but there weren't there weren't too many of them either. So our sense of comfort was a familiar face.

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(Y.C) And the conversation never, at least then began, with what part of India are you from. Just seeing each other was joyful, and you would wave to people, you talk to people, and you'd get to know them a little better. Try doing that now.

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(Y.C) Very different.

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(Y.C) But, you know, as we went into college began to find out that there were certain subjects, you know, lunch often enough you would see that the students from Gujarat,

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(Y.C) or the families of Gujarat would converge together, the Sikh American students would converge together, and then you know, different parts of India would converge together as well. But you know, over the year period of time, you know it's bound to happen, but as the numbers increase, you start to work together with those that the homogeneity that comes with it.

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(Y.C) The food, the culture, the values, the art form, the language, all of that is a level of comfort. We all strive for in a world of unknowns.

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(I) Hmm.

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(Y.C) So, it was encouraging at that time, but it was certainly something that you knew was bound to happen as your numbers went up. Who would think that our numbers would ever get to where they are today. You know. But but it is, it is a different world than when we first came here, but that time had its own charm.

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(Y.C) We knew each other.

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(Y.C) We could run into events and you could wave to somebody.

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(Y.C) If there are 200 people that are at an event, you probably knew 50% of the room. Today you try to go into an event where there's 300 people, you're lucky if you know 20 people.

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(I) Yeah, right.

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(I) So why is, why Desi culture. Like, you know, even if it's, I mean whether it's music, whether it's cinema, whether it's the food scene, you know the

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(Y.C) dance classes being offered everywhere, you know, in whichever form. And even if it's very region-specific like, you know Bengali festivals something somewhere or Gujarati you know, Raas and Garba happening somewhere.

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(I) What is it that makes Desi culture so vibrant in Silicon Valley?

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(Y.C) I think that...

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(Y.C) obviously India is a tapestry of cultures, art forms, food, dance, language,

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(Y.C) and our spirituality in many regards, right.

00:14:43.980 --> 00:15:00.720

(Y.C) You come into the United States, and you certainly begin to come back and yearn for some of those institutions. I still remember where there was only a handful of one or two, Bharatanatyam or Kuchipudi or dance forms that were, you know,

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(Y.C) training children to come back and appreciate their dance form right.

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(Y.C) I think that it was our comfort zone. Coming into this country, we wanted our children to come back and have a certain vibrancy of the culture as a part of their DNA, as a part of their

habits, appreciation for the language, appreciation for the festivals, right. It was a continuum of the

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(Y.C) country that we are left behind, to come to this country to make a new home.

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(Y.C) So from that, as the numbers grew,

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(Y.C) you know, more teachers were graduating out of these dance forms, dance schools, and more and more schools were coming back and started. And all of a sudden, you know,

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(Y.C) many, many dance form proponents being along, and then became a way of life. And then, culturally, you know, as we began to attain a level of comfort and financial security, we wanted to be able to provide our children some of those things that defined who were in India. You know, in parts of South India, a daughter...

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(Y.C) learning a dance form of the graduation, their Arangetram right. If I'm pronouncing the word correctly, was just replicating some of those values, and things that we found to be such a critical part of our lives, right? So as a part of that, parents then wanted to come back and not only offer their children

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(Y.C) some continuity of the culture, but then many people realize that this could be a differentiator,

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(Y.C) to teach their children a dance form that would help them assimilate

00:16:30.970 --> 00:16:33.489

(Y.C) into the America that we knew.

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(Y.C) And then, as these dance forms perfected, you found that, you know, students became creative, and then led to the fusion of dance concepts, and I've literally seen the

commercialization and acceptance of Bollywood music by mainstream America today. It's because these children,

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(Y.C) first started as a force of habit from the parents who wanted their children to have some identity, then to come back and permeate

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(Y.C) into the schools and high schools and colleges where these children were growing up, to start to emulate these dance forms as mainstream.

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(Y.C) And I think that's really been the journey along with us.

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(I) Right.

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(I) Having said that, like dance classes, music classes, festivals, you know, among the Desi communities. They happen all across the country right, wherever Indian communities live.

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(I) But, and you have lived in other parts of the country, you have traveled widely, and I have also lived in other states. But, what has struck me is that

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(I) although similar kind of festivities and cultural forms are practiced by the Desi community elsewhere,

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(I) the level of efficiency, the level of the scale, the the high quality,

00:17:52.080 --> 00:17:58.920

(I) the professionalism in all of this is very unique here in Silicon Valley. Why does that happen?

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(Y.C) One, I think it's a critical mass. But what I've seen as, Mantra I've traveled across this country, I've been fortunate enough to travel not only for personal family travel as well, but I've

been involved in a lot of nonprofits, right? I've been involved in lot of political organizations, so as a part of that

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(Y.C) I've had the privilege of traveling to many parts of this country. Not only the big metropolises like Chicago, Houston, New York, New Jersey...Dallas...you know Atlanta, Florida, Orlando, the typical places where you would have seen a concentration of Indian Americans, right?

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(Y.C) Really these pockets of communities became because a lot of our doctors moved into those local communities.

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(Y.C) And then we also saw that a lot of people moved into these communities because of access to a temple.

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(Y.C) And you've found communities around these centers of excellences, right?

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(Y.C) And then, all of a sudden, the H1 movement right. Employers began to take workers, all of a sudden they were working in different parts of the country. You know, so we're having pockets of communities in Iowa. You're having pockets of communities around Idaho. You're having pockets of communities in Salt Lake City.

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(Y.C) So it's literally this agglomeration of this migration out of our comfort zone,

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(Y.C) and then the Gujarat community, certainly with their motels, opening them up across all parts of the country, led to a new spawn of community pockets. And that's where

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(Y.C) our practices, our cultures, and our values, have continued to warp around the whole country. And frankly, I would say that you can probably find every state in this country, where there is a pocket of concentrations of an Indian American that's not only growing, but thriving and flourishing as well.

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(I) Right.

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(Y.C) And that brings in more things right, more festivals, more celebrations of Diwali, and Baisakhi, and you know, Durga Pujas, and you know, Nagar Kirtans in the Sikh community, or Eid events.

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(Y.C) And literally, when that starts to happen, you know, when you start to see a community that is growing and thriving. More people move in, right. Oh, there's a company that's hiring and they're looking for good

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(Y.C) programmers or engineers, or they're looking for nurses, all of a sudden more people start to start to move there because they find that it's a vibrant growing community, and in many instances,

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(Y.C) you know, affordability enables them to live the lifestyle that they choose to live for their families. So that's really the the beauty about the Indian American, the South Asian immigrant story. We've forged ecosystems across this country,

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(Y.C) and each of these ecosystems is well and thriving and, and literally you're finding that people are becoming a fabric of the community, and and that is resulting in more people entering into non traditional careers. You know, they're getting into some of the largest trucking companies. There's some of the largest gas station owners.

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(Y.C) Many of them are going and opening up in the small accounting practices that end up becoming very large accounting CPA offices, right. So as we grow, as we mature, you know, people want bigger and better.

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(Y.C) They want a better world for their children, and that's really where I think our immigrant story has been a little different than most of the immigrants have entered this country. We take our vibrancy wherever we've gone.

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(I) Right and how does Silicon Valley, the nature of Silicon Valley, the spirit of Silicon Valley and the innovation, right? How do you think that ties into the Desi community in Silicon Valley?

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(I) Has it influenced the Desi community?

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(Y.C) Of course we're risk-takers.

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(Y.C) You know we come into this country with literally nothing but a dream,

00:21:46.840 --> 00:21:48.370

(Y.C) and a hope, right?

00:21:48.650 --> 00:21:53.110

Y(Y.C) In some instances you come on scholarship, and in some instances

00:21:53.240 --> 00:21:56.190

(Y.C) you come in with...nothing but

00:21:56.780 --> 00:21:59.820

(Y.C) a sheer desire to put it all

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(Y.C) and...

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(Y.C) make do with it. They're not willing to, to put in the big bets

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(Y.C) on moves that may be seen as...unconventional at times.

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(Y.C) ...

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(Y.C) And I think that coming in from India, you know our hard work, our resilience, our ability to survive, build a 'jugaaá¹' (getting things together to get things done). You know, brings you into this environment where we work hard, we succeed hard, we're well educated. We're English speaking in many regards.

00:22:31.660 --> 00:22:44.760

(Y.C) We can hold our front. We can demonstrate to people that we are absolutely good at what we do, and we have the ability now not only to develop and do good work, but at the same time we lead teams to inspire teams.

00:22:44.830 --> 00:22:54.710

(Y.C) That willingness to take the big risks is inherent in any immigrant story, and I think that the Silicon Valley culture of, you know,

00:22:54.870 --> 00:23:07.189

(Y.C) make the decision...think through the problem, and if you think it's the right decision, you will act on it. If it's not a great idea, fail but fail quickly and do it all over again.

00:23:07.200 --> 00:23:12.120

(Y.C) I think that Silicon Valley culture is what permeates our immigrants

00:23:12.180 --> 00:23:15.570

(Y.C) and our households to come back and say, I'm going to take the risk.

00:23:16.430 --> 00:23:24.129

(I) Right. So, how does being Desi help you succeed in your work in Silicon Valley?

00:23:24.220 --> 00:23:36.529

(Y.C) Well, my work ethic. I'm not afraid of the challenges to come into this country with literally just a couple hundred dollars, right. Living on your own, working two odd jobs, going to college.

00:23:36.700 --> 00:23:37.760

(Y.C) ...

00:23:37.850 --> 00:23:59.859

(Y.C) Working, studying. Trying to fast track your graduation to make sure you don't have to spend money for another semester, right. It was the desire to succeed in hunger, and frankly Mantra, you couldn't go back to India man, you you would be seen as I failed. Right? You told all your relatives, I'm gonna go to the Great Land, and I'm gonna go come back and make a name for myself, right. So you have to succeed.

00:23:59.870 --> 00:24:18.920

(Y.C) There's no other choice. Your family, your sisters, are all your safety now, right. But you have to do the work yourself. So my hard work, my ability to to sway people, our own ideas and build coalitions is something that I think came naturally to me as a part of

00:24:18.930 --> 00:24:22.689

(Y.C) just living in my community and going to my university in India, right?

00:24:22.700 --> 00:24:27.690

(Y.C) So that...ability and the humility that comes with it

00:24:27.700 --> 00:24:32.100

(Y.C) has enabled me to build broad strokes of success,

00:24:32.360 --> 00:24:50.000

(Y.C) and being humble at the same time. Arrogance will get you nowhere. So I think that that Silicon Valley DNA of, let your work show your results. Rather than being loud about what you can and will do. I think it's a community of meritocracy.

00:24:50.010 --> 00:25:03.929

(Y.C) Your skills are applauded, and your success is something people want to emulate. So I think from those things, it has led me well. It's led my wife, she thinks the same way.

00:25:03.940 --> 00:25:14.110

(Y.C) For my children forge your careers, forge your profession or education around what inspires you to do the best that you can. Shoot for the stars.

00:25:14.250 --> 00:25:20.789

(Y.C) Mom and Dad will be your safety net.

(I) Yes.

(Y.C) But never be afraid to go and seek your potential.

00:25:20.800 --> 00:25:21.290

(I) Right.

00:25:21.300 --> 00:25:31.680

(I) So when you look back at your journey in, in this area, how does Silicon Valley influence your identity as Desi?

00:25:32.830 --> 00:25:50.590

(Y.C) It has both good and bad. The good being that we work hard, we're intellectually very right. We know how to innovate. We know how to do it once, we know how to do it twice, and in some instances we know how to do it again.

00:25:50.600 --> 00:25:54.460

(Y.C) And we're a community of affluence.

00:25:55.090 --> 00:25:56.689

(Y.C) And we're humble.

00:25:56.760 --> 00:25:58.660

(Y.C) But on the other hand,

00:25:58.670 --> 00:26:02.269

(Y.C) you know, there are people sometimes that may despise you

00:26:02.420 --> 00:26:20.810

(Y.C) for a variety of reasons. You know we may have displaced them in a job... as a part of our outsourcing or business development offices, offshoring, and all that kind of stuff. So somewhere along that line there's this delicate balance that we have to show, right. So to contribute to these communities,

00:26:20.820 --> 00:26:31.989

(Y.C) we have to do our philanthropy here. We have to become a part and parcel of our communities. We have to be involved in our local nonprofits. We have to be involved in our local events.

00:26:32.030 --> 00:26:46.460

(Y.C) We have to come tell everybody, or at least demonstrate to everybody, that we care deeply and passionately about this community that has given us so much. I've had a long-standing rule: if I'll give \$100 to India,

00:26:47.600 --> 00:26:55.280

(Y.C) I'll have to give \$100 to some nonprofit in the United States, and that's what defines Monica and I's philanthropic giving.

00:26:55.600 --> 00:26:59.189

(Y.C) We feel that, sure we have to give much to India that

00:26:59.200 --> 00:27:01.329

(Y.C) helped us to where we are.

00:27:01.380 --> 00:27:08.789

(Y.C) But this country also now deserves our gratitude, our help, because this is what we have chosen to make our home,

00:27:08.800 --> 00:27:11.339

(Y.C) and where our children are getting their futures.

00:27:11.350 --> 00:27:15.299

(I) And do you think Silicon Valley inspires that?

00:27:15.950 --> 00:27:25.350

(I) This notion of giving back to the community after having worked very hard and having an affluent lifestyle. You think Silicon Valley inspires that?

00:27:25.400 --> 00:27:35.490

(Y.C) I think, to a certain point it does, because I'm of the belief that there's a living, and this may seem philosophic or religious, but God gives to those with the hope that they will give to others.

00:27:35.500 --> 00:27:53.290

(Y.C) If you give, if you get a certain amount of wealth, you should get a portion of that. You know, not everything but certainly within reason. You know, if you're fortunate enough and you're doing well, it's time to help uplift those that could hold, you know, could need some assistance.

00:27:53.300 --> 00:27:54.570

(Y.C) Pay it forward.

00:27:54.580 --> 00:28:08.599

(Y.C) But I do believe that there is a certain sense of generosity and giving that's well known in life. And there are many who give openly and they're known for it, and there are many who probably give it anonymously and nobody even knows about it.

(I) Right.

00:28:08.710 --> 00:28:26.850

(Y.C) But I do believe that our...culture from India, our values has always taught us to give back. Now, whether it's through your church, your temple, your mosque, your synagogue, or whether it's to a nonprofit, or whether it's to an organization focused on education,

00:28:26.860 --> 00:28:34.940

(Y.C) or children of special needs, or kitchens for feeding the children, or providing affordability of housing to

00:28:34.950 --> 00:28:50.289

(Y.C) the homeless, or providing support to victims of domestic violence. You know, I think giving is well and alive and I think it's happening. And I think Silicon Valley culture may have something to do with it, but I think our upbringing has more to do with it than anything else.

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(I) So you, would you characterize that as a contribution of Desis to Silicon Valley?

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(Y.C) I think we are a portion of the philanthropy giving. Many others do too. You know, I would not say that the Indian American community gives more money than the others. There are many other immigrant communities that probably give way more than we do. But I think we give, we're beginning to give and I think our numbers, our dollars are being noticed now.

00:29:16.300 --> 00:29:26.859

(Y.C) You know, they're lists being created by many who are trying to compile, you know, how much money do we give in philanthropy. You know, if you take the top 300 affluent Indian Americans in this country,

00:29:26.920 --> 00:29:32.030

(Y.C) you know, their giving is probably gigantic. But nobody takes into factor the...

00:29:32.120 --> 00:29:49.530

(Y.C) 500 or 1,000 or contributions that 100,000 people are making. But you know, I think people give those not because they want the accolades. They give those because they believe that, you know they should have, and I'll give you an example. I used to serve on a nonprofit

00:29:49.540 --> 00:29:52.190

(Y.C) in Fremont, called the Fremont Education Foundation.

00:29:52.700 --> 00:30:05.630

(Y.C) And it was designed to support programs that Fremont Unified School District could not offer because of budget cuts. And some of the programs were the, the after school band program.

00:30:06.700 --> 00:30:08.829

(Y.C) And then some of them were the...

00:30:09.040 --> 00:30:15.610

(Y.C) the sports program, the uniforms right. For odd reasons the school district couldn't provide support to those.

00:30:15.780 --> 00:30:19.799

(Y.C) So Fremont Education Foundation was tasked with raising money to support those.

00:30:19.880 --> 00:30:35.100

(Y.C) On a quick study, we found that many of the beneficiaries of the Fremont Education Foundation's band program were South Asian students. Those numbers don't get reported. They're at the micro level.

00:30:35.120 --> 00:30:39.310

(Y.C) You know, but if somebody made a half a million or a contribution,

00:30:39.440 --> 00:30:52.670

(Y.C) that would be noticed. And there have been many examples of people who make contributions to some of the private schools in this area, right. You have different sections of the schools named in their honor of the money they've given.

00:30:52.680 --> 00:30:59.029

(Y.C) But I believe the financial contributions we're making on the idea philanthropy

00:30:59.070 --> 00:31:11.090

(Y.C) certainly is not going unnoticed. And it's now become a part and parcel for our community. Now not everybody gives, I totally respect and appreciate that.

00:31:11.100 --> 00:31:13.140

(Y.C) But I think enough are giving.

00:31:13.340 --> 00:31:14.490

(I) [inaudible]

00:31:14.500 --> 00:31:14.990

(I) Yeah.

00:31:15.000 --> 00:31:21.209

(I) So how do you foresee your future or your family's future in Silicon Valley?

00:31:21.740 --> 00:31:36.990

(Y.C) Well we're here to stay. We're not going anywhere. I think we're going to continue to contribute to our communities. You're going to start to see a lot of people who are going to start to serve in city commissions. You're going to start to see a lot of people,

00:31:37.000 --> 00:31:49.579

(Y.C) start to run for office. You're going to start to see a lot of people run on the boards of the local hospitals, local education foundations. You know, and nonprofits are now opening up. You know you have;

00:31:49.590 --> 00:32:06.730

(Y.C) many nonprofits are now focusing on the fusion of our art and culture with other...minority communities, Latino, South Asian. You know, I can think of Mosaic, which is an acclamation of art forms and bringing people together

00:32:06.740 --> 00:32:24.329

(Y.C) to demonstrate a new form to more of the mainstream than just our traditional homogeneous silos of our South Asian communities at times. So yeah, people are seeing us and

they're recognizing that we're contributing, we're adding to the fabric of our communities, we're

00:32:24.340 --> 00:32:30.850

(Y.C) founders and CEOs of many companies, many small businesses have South Asian CEOs.

00:32:31.040 --> 00:32:43.750

(Y.C) So you know, I think that contribution will continue to grow, and as our children come back from college, you're going to find that the second and third generation of children are going to carry the baton forward. They're going to do it even better than we did.

00:32:43.760 --> 00:32:55.780

(I) Right. So this is, this would be my last question. Is there anything else about the Desi identity in Silicon Valley that I haven't asked you about that you would like to comment on?

00:32:55.820 --> 00:32:59.190

(Y.C) Sure. We're a

00:32:59.420 --> 00:33:03.870

(Y.C) an immigrant community that has had it struggled just like every other immigrant community.

00:33:03.880 --> 00:33:19.679

(Y.C) I do believe our success came a little quicker than most did. You know our immigrant journey is only 40 to 50 years. If you look at some of the other immigrant communities, they may or may not have the level of impact that many of our South Asian communities are able to show right now.

00:33:19.970 --> 00:33:25.959

(Y.C) I think we're at the phase of our immigrant journey where, when we first came in we were a little fearful.

00:33:26.330 --> 00:33:31.339

(Y.C) The second wave of our general, of our immigrant story was being a little secure.

00:33:31.580 --> 00:33:34.489

(Y.C) Third, we're we're level of confidence right.

00:33:34.620 --> 00:33:42.650

(Y.C) This is the moment in time when we have to be more humble. We have to be more...

00:33:43.010 --> 00:33:51.239

(Y.C) thoughtful. We have to be... not to come back and say we are successful and everybody else is not.

00:33:51.390 --> 00:34:07.620

(Y.C) Because there's really a moment to dwell deep into our communities, to let people come back and say, you know what they're good Americans. They just happen to be from India, and they happen to be of this faith or this part of the country of India. They need to see us Americans.

00:34:07.630 --> 00:34:11.530

(Y.C) We're not there yet, in my humble opinion.

00:34:11.610 --> 00:34:14.389

(Y.C) That's where we need to get to.

00:34:14.400 --> 00:34:17.540

(Y.C) I think it;

(I) Will it take a few generations?

00:34:17.550 --> 00:34:35.970

(Y.C) No, I think we're there. You know, as our children have gone on to, you know, do different things in their lives, right. Our children were the beneficiary of their parents' hard work. You know, we're letting them go to college without any debt in most cases. Right?

00:34:35.980 --> 00:34:54.740

(Y.C) That gives them choices. It gives them the chance to come back, to their homes where they grew up. One of the biggest challenges, Mantra, America faces today is incommunicability.

(I) Yes.

(Y.C) Every parent fears for the fact that, will their child ever be able to come back to the communities in which they lived in?

00:34:54.750 --> 00:35:00.170

(Y.C) And a lot of times you may find that affordability prevents it from happening. And

00:35:00.180 --> 00:35:14.579

(Y.C) unless you, you know, can give a zero student loan education to your children, and you can afford to have a home that they can move into with literally no mortgage. You know, many people can't afford to come back.

00:35:14.590 --> 00:35:31.610

(Y.C) But they're coming in from so many aspects. You know, before it was engineering and medicine were the two majors. Now you're looking at people pursuing different forms of education, right. Public policy, anthropology, sociology, psychology. You know, music.

00:35:31.700 --> 00:35:42.230

(Y.C) And they're going into different fields, and they're coming back and they're good at what they do. And when they are talking, or when they're speaking, or when they're sitting at a table,

00:35:42.240 --> 00:35:59.839

(Y.C) often enough they're not seen as Desi Americans. They're seen as Americans. They speak the dialect property in a way, they dress appropriately to many instances, and as a part of that, their ability to succeed in these communities will become a whole lot more than we did.

00:35:59.850 --> 00:36:00.490

(I) Right.

00:36:00.500 --> 00:36:02.100

(Y.C) And I'll tell you...

00:36:02.740 --> 00:36:10.020

(Y.C) the challenge is always going to be that how much can we ensure they hold on to their values, their culture, and everything else we were raised up with.

00:36:10.030 --> 00:36:11.730

(Y.C) Raised them up with, right.

00:36:11.740 --> 00:36:30.279

(Y.C) My wife and I often talk about this. We've raised our children well, we've taught them right and wrong. They appreciate the language, they can speak Hindi, they go to the temple, they attend events. When they go to a wedding or a party they're not afraid to wear a "lehenga" or a "kurta pajama" or whatever else they like.

00:36:30.430 --> 00:36:47.490

(Y.C) So will they be able to come back and do this when they have their own children? That's the question. This second generation will. The third generation, we still have to see how it goes on. That's why the vibrancy for culture has to permeate deep into our communities and I think things are happening.

00:36:47.500 --> 00:36:53.549

(Y.C) Celebration of Diwali is now mainstream, companies having Diwali celebrations, right.

00:36:53.560 --> 00:37:00.580

(Y.C) Bollywood dance is now the norm. You're finding mixed racial marriages.

00:37:00.750 --> 00:37:19.349

(I) Yes.

(Y.C) Every time a mixed racial marriage happens outside of the South Asian but versus the Chinese American, or Jewish American, or African American. New spawns of generational shifts happen where communities are all of a sudden now beginning to appreciate your food, might even break out into a Bollywood dance step,

00:37:19.360 --> 00:37:25.559

(Y.C) or might appreciate the food that you have to offer and that's really where I'm excited about,

00:37:25.570 --> 00:37:43.770

(Y.C) how this community will be perceived as. Probably the one community that has contributed so much, not only to America's economic success, but will also contribute to the greatness of America as a nation which values diversity, which applauds pluralism, and allows anybody to thrive,

00:37:43.780 --> 00:37:56.780

(Y.C) as long as you have the desire, the willingness, and the ambition to succeed. And when somebody fails, as a society we will be there to uplift them. And that's really America's success and I think we're going to play a big part of that.

00:37:56.930 --> 00:37:58.069

(I) Great.

00:37:58.130 --> 00:38:01.989

(I) Thank you. This is great. So I'm going to stop the recording now.

00:38:02.000 --> 00:38:03.069

(Y.C) Okay.