

Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History
Dita and Amit Basu Interview

00:01.740 --> 00:16.889

Interviewer (I) Okay, good morning Mr. Basu and Mrs. Basu. Thank you for your time. I am Mantra Roy from the San Jose State University Library, and we are interviewing you for the oral history project called "Desis of Silicon Valley Speak."

00:17.140 --> 00:29.389

(I) So we'll start with the first question, and you know both of you can take turns, and you know we can have a conversation. So our, my first question is, if you tell us about yourselves and about your journey up until now.

00:31.530 --> 00:43.689

Dita Basu (DB) Okay. So, I came to America. I do not, we do not live in Silicon Valley personally, but we live in Walnut Creek, which is about

00:44.010 --> 00:46.309

(DB) you know, 30, 40 miles

00:46.880 --> 00:50.809

(DB) from Silicon Valley. I came when I was 22

00:50.880 --> 00:51.970

(DB) and

00:53.260 --> 00:54.989

(DB) so it was long time ago,

00:55.140 --> 01:10.639

(DB) and that's about it. At that time I had no, Silicon Valley this world was not there in my mind, but San Jose and that area was there. So that is my understanding about Silicon Valley. Thank you.

01:11.860 --> 01:14.000

Amit Basu (AB) Hi Mantra, greetings.

01:14.020 --> 01:22.639

(AB) Yeah, I came to this country, to answer your question, to this country in 1970 on professional

01:22.930 --> 01:39.829

(AB) basis, because I'm an engineer by profession, and but not the type of engineers that you guys talk about now. It's not software engineers. We were like brick and mortar type. I was a civil engineer. So, I came

01:40.350 --> 01:52.000

(AB) to Philadelphia, actually JFK and to Philadelphia as an immigrant, and that's how my journey started. And then I ended up in Berkeley,

01:52.890 --> 02:01.820

(AB) because I had my graduate school admission in Berkeley, and so I came to the school, and then

02:02.030 --> 02:06.059

(AB) after finishing my Master's program, I joined

02:06.360 --> 02:09.889

(AB) an engineering company in San Francisco called "Bechtel."

02:09.910 --> 02:16.009

(AB) And that's how I went, that was like in '72 I joined Bechtel

02:16.670 --> 02:17.940

(AB) and

02:18.150 --> 02:19.160

(AB) ...

02:19.200 --> 02:36.409

(AB) the rest is history.

(I) Okay, thank you. So I will, I will bring you back to that history. So like, like Dita said that, you know, Silicon Valley was not a term used during the time. But over all these years, right, what

02:36.740 --> 02:41.659

(I) does Silicon Valley mean to you now, or how did you see it emerge as a phrase?

02:44.180 --> 02:46.400

(DB) I think

02:46.550 --> 02:55.099

(DB) Silicon Valley the name that is, it's with silicon chips, you know, so and

02:56.130 --> 02:59.590

(DB) it started mostly

02:59.890 --> 03:11.509

(DB) to me, from late 80s and 90s, early 90s. Before that, it was like San Jose. We are going to San Jose. We are going to,

03:11.630 --> 03:13.890

(DB) you know,

03:14.140 --> 03:20.060

(DB) Stanford University. We are going to Palo Alto to friend's house. And

03:20.240 --> 03:22.760

(DB) it there were not that very many

03:22.950 --> 03:27.290

(DB) Desis as we see over there right now. So

03:27.880 --> 03:29.310

(DB) so that's...

03:30.490 --> 03:31.370

(I) Okay.

03:31.460 --> 03:39.239

(AB) Yeah, can you state the question again?

(I) Yeah, what does Silicon Valley mean to you, ou know, over the years as it has evolved?

03:39.390 --> 03:40.510

(AB) Yeah.

03:40.560 --> 03:55.730

(AB) Like Dita said, that's...the source of the nomenclature itself, the silicon itself. But when I came, of course, there was no computers at that time. I still remember in Berkeley, I used slide rule

03:55.740 --> 04:13.210

(AB) to calculate, you know, engineering problems and so. But from that point, you know, when I came to Berkeley to study, Steve Jobs and (Steve) Wozniak or, you know, that other guy, they didn't even start to tinkering with the

04:13.220 --> 04:18.460

(AB) with the computers of anything. So in fact, I remember in

04:18.880 --> 04:31.270

(AB) my office in Bechtel, in San Francisco, we didn't have desktop computers, even on each desk. And so, that's how the whole thing started. Silicon Valley wasn't existing, but

04:31.330 --> 04:40.890

(AB) now it has come to stay, and it has come to stay forever. The Valley, the name I heard about it when I was working, but you know,

04:40.920 --> 04:44.710

(AB) I was not really directly associated with the Silicon Valley.

04:45.300 --> 04:46.620

(I) Sure.

04:46.960 --> 05:04.000

(I) Okay, so now, now that Silicon Valley is a well understood term, right, describing, I think the wider, the greater Bay Area is kind of technically understood as Silicon Valley. Right? So in that sense, because you have been in the area for a couple of decades now,

05:04.280 --> 05:11.780

(I) do you identify yourself as a Desi of what is understood as Silicon Valley and what does that mean to you?

05:13.720 --> 05:21.500

(DB) Okay. For me, yes. I, I identify myself as Desi. The term that

05:21.620 --> 05:29.809

(DB) that I found in your writing. Yes, as a Southeast Asian identity.

05:29.840 --> 05:33.669

(DB) And, right now, I write

05:33.850 --> 05:36.070

(DB) in English and

05:36.350 --> 05:41.790

(DB) and that is my identity. I mean, you know, I talk about

05:42.010 --> 05:48.100

(DB) about our lives, about women's lives, what we had gone through, or what I had seen

05:48.220 --> 05:53.099

(DB) in this immigrant context, in this immigrant

05:53.470 --> 05:55.150

(DB) world, you know.

05:55.300 --> 05:59.259

(DB) So yes, I very much identify with that. Thank you.

(I) Sure.

05:59.440 --> 06:17.390

(AB) Yeah, my answer to that is, of course. You have heard the term, you can take a guy out of the "desh" but you can't take the "desh" out of the guy. So that's the way I feel. "Desh" means the country/motherland. And of course that is

06:17.400 --> 06:23.760

(AB) ancient history that you are coming from India. "Desi" term is much more,

06:24.220 --> 06:40.880

(AB) you know, over-expansive. For example, we have a auto shop here. They call themselves "Desi Auto Parts," and or auto shop, and I asked them, you know why did you ask, where'd you name it? And he said, because I want to draw the Desi clients.

06:40.890 --> 06:59.659

(AB) So you know, the, the motivation of using that term by different people are different. But I, of course, feel like you know, I'm still a Desi, like I said you can't take it out of me. And that's, that's what, you know, at this point in my life.

06:59.670 --> 07:17.649

(AB) and it's not couple of decades by the way, Mantra. I have been here for 52 years.

(I) Yes, yes.

(AB) So, what I have served this country, this country is a country of immigrants. No whatever Trump says, or whoever says, everybody is an immigrant here, it's a matter of time.

07:17.660 --> 07:29.569

(AB) So everybody is really Desi from their point of view. They came from Ukraine. They came from England. They came from South Africa, wherever they came from. So

07:29.700 --> 07:33.320

(AB) we call ourselves Desis because we have

07:33.360 --> 07:42.099

(AB) great attachment to our motherland, which is India. And at this point, like I said, I started saying that

07:42.650 --> 07:47.309

(AB) I want to serve my country the way I can best do it.

07:47.470 --> 07:53.250

(AB) So, like, I think you know that I started translating Tagore

07:53.260 --> 08:14.169

(AB) almost from when I came in 1972. So it's a 50 year project. I just came out with whatever I could do, you know, translating. So that we know how great Tagore in our minds, but I want to convey to the Western audience that, you know, and translation is the only means to do it so,

08:14.180 --> 08:29.059

(AB) anyway, I think I'm veering from the subject.

(I) No, but that I think itself talks to your Desi identity, that you are translating one of the greatest thinkers of India into English and making his work accessible.

08:29.190 --> 08:30.180

(I) So,

08:30.270 --> 08:43.119

(I) yes. And I think it will probably lead to my next question is, because you know you have lived here for so long, and you have seen the, the Indian community right, grow in numbers.

(AB) Correct. (I) Right?

08:43.610 --> 08:47.870

(I) So, you know, I have lived in other parts of the country, and I'm relatively new to this area.

08:47.910 --> 09:01.919

(I) So what I noticed was this, that the way Desi culture, like whether it is music, whether it is art, whether it is you know, dance class, classical dance, right? You know, literary groups,

09:01.940 --> 09:04.339

(I) right? So many different groups.

09:04.710 --> 09:16.030

(I) The Indian arts in different ways, they're very vibrant in this part of the country. Now why, why do you think that happens? Why is Desi culture so vibrant in Silicon Valley?

09:17.720 --> 09:22.950

(DB) Well, I think there are lots of very talented people here, and

09:23.090 --> 09:27.100

(DB) and it's interesting to see that a person who is

09:27.560 --> 09:30.989

(DB) talented mathematically is also talented

09:31.140 --> 09:44.630

(DB) in dance and, and then what they give to their kids, to their next generation is high class, you know. Sometimes I see that in very

09:44.670 --> 09:51.060

(DB) you know, you know, just

09:51.720 --> 10:05.360

(DB) when I went to someone's house for a dinner, you know, that the child does something. And I said, wow, you know, and sometimes they are not so good, but many times they are really great. And

10:05.610 --> 10:20.860

(DB) so I think that is an important thing that, you know, there are lots of very talented people who have come here, from whatever, whatever side they came, you know, whatever area they came from

10:20.910 --> 10:26.369

(DB) in writing, some in mathematics and whatever, but mostly they are very talented.

10:26.520 --> 10:27.370

(I) Hmm. Okay, great.

10:27.420 --> 10:40.640

(AB) Yeah. The one overwhelming thing is that, as you know, Mantra, and we all know, but we are obviously biased is that the Indian culture is very rich, very old,

10:40.960 --> 10:55.610

(AB) very tolerant, and you know you name it. So, and it's widely spread over all the different human intellects that you can think of coming from, you know, dance, songs, classical, modern,

10:55.620 --> 11:04.200

(AB) literature, and...you know, when I am exposed here more into the Western culture,

11:04.400 --> 11:06.099

(AB) I can see that

11:06.320 --> 11:15.200

(AB) what we lack maybe, is the marketing part of it, and but, but we all know that the quality of our culture is

11:15.320 --> 11:26.620

(AB) is excellent. Therefore, you know like I said, I feel it's my mission to let Western audience know where we stand. But besides that,

11:26.750 --> 11:32.950

(AB) it is also, like Dita pointed out, that it is our duty

11:33.050 --> 11:35.099

(AB) for our

11:35.630 --> 11:51.829

(AB) children to know about our culture, that we cannot keep them because we, I feel responsible for that because we brought them here. We were there, they are born and brought up here, but because we came here they might have been

11:52.290 --> 11:59.930

(AB) missing out on things that if they were in India they could have done it, or they could have assimilated their culture more.

11:59.940 --> 12:15.590

(AB) So, you know, and it is available in the Bay Area in such a wide extent. We had Ali Akbar's school of music. We had Chitresh Das' dance company, and my daughters were both students of the...dance company, they loved "Kathak" dance

12:15.600 --> 12:27.420

(AB) and they actually practiced it and they performed on stage, things like that. So and an Indian, you know, the culinary expertise,

12:27.430 --> 12:37.639

(AB) is not only that we covered that, Western [inaudible] also have accepted that very well, as you know. So and Silicon Valley grew up,

12:37.910 --> 12:40.599

(AB) you know, in the, in this context,

12:40.710 --> 12:49.469

(AB) because and, you know, Indians are really intelligent people. That's how what is getting manifested in Silicon Valley

12:49.660 --> 12:51.010

(AB) culture.

12:51.140 --> 12:59.299

(AB) So, overall, like I said, we are biased probably. Every other country might be thinking, oh, we have a great culture. But

12:59.820 --> 13:02.439

(AB) anyway, this is my thoughts about it.

13:02.900 --> 13:04.710

(I) Right. So do you think,

13:04.940 --> 13:13.609

(I) say an institute like Chitresh Das', you know, Dance Institute, or Ali Akbar's institute. Do you think they would have

13:13.810 --> 13:17.430

(I) thrived in other parts of the country as much as they did here?

13:20.270 --> 13:29.060

(DB) I don't know. I don't know. I think they, you know,

13:30.070 --> 13:39.430

(DB) there are similar things over in other places also, maybe in New York and, you know, east coast somewhere,

13:39.660 --> 13:40.670

(DB) I don't know.

13:40.810 --> 13:43.400

(DB) But we were very lucky to have

13:43.480 --> 13:45.499

(DB) have these kind of...things.

13:46.680 --> 13:47.420

(I) Yes.

13:47.940 --> 13:52.379

(AB) Yeah, yeah my answer to that is

13:53.030 --> 14:08.229

(AB) like Dita said, it's a theoretical question, but I need to answer that by saying, probably New York would have been another good spot for the development of exactly this similar culture. And somehow

14:08.870 --> 14:20.850

(AB) Khan Sahib, and Ravi Shankar, and Nikhil Banerjee, and everybody were attracted by this area. I know Chitresh himself came to study at

14:21.090 --> 14:23.000

(AB) you know, Washington State.

14:23.330 --> 14:26.649

(AB) What was that? Pullman, Pullman's

14:27.040 --> 14:30.020

(AB) ...college. So,

14:30.240 --> 14:38.599

(AB) so somehow they ended up at the Bay Area because of it's weather, because of, you know, and right now, after all these decades

14:38.740 --> 14:52.760

(AB) because of Indian people being here so many years, and in...such numbers, that's another thing that really influenced this here, too.

14:53.140 --> 14:55.950

(DB) Also, I think there is money.

14:56.110 --> 15:02.619

(I) Hmm.

(DB) The capital is also important. So, you know, there

15:03.140 --> 15:07.610

(DB) so that is more attractive than somewhere in the midwest, you know.

15:07.690 --> 15:09.870

(I) Right, right. So

15:10.110 --> 15:18.500

(I) so money in the sense like for, so, A) is cultivating the art forms, B) is having the disposable money to take your children

15:18.620 --> 15:19.970

(I) to these

15:20.040 --> 15:23.340

(I) classes, right in that sense, you think?

15:23.740 --> 15:29.170

(DB) To some extent, yes. I mean people most mostly I think...

15:32.180 --> 15:45.239

(DB) that they are in good, good jobs and stuff like that. Yeah, yeah, there is and when we were here, I think the housing and everything was not so

15:45.360 --> 15:49.399

(DB) expensive like it is today, I mean, you know.

15:50.170 --> 16:10.289

(DB) But still I think there is more money here than many other places.

(AB) Also Mantra, you know, it's a matter of logistics probably, and it's the pragmatism in the sense. Again, it's a theoretical question, but I'll try to attempt to answer it. If I was leaving in the Midwest, for example,

16:10.460 --> 16:26.120

(AB) and there were no schools, or you know, for dance or, and my daughters who are growing up. Would I go 400 miles driving there and taking them? Because, you know, another, you know, I have heard that

16:26.170 --> 16:32.350

(AB) for example, kids in gymnastics or ice skating or, you know, I mean I'm talking of

16:32.470 --> 16:40.059

(AB) American kids. Yes, their parents have taken them over long distances, but would I have done it? Probably not.

16:40.080 --> 16:57.039

(AB) So, it's at that point pragmatism would take over, or what is practical and what is not practical would take over. We'd still have the hankering for that culture, but it's not physically possible at that point.

(DB) The other thing is I would also say that

16:57.180 --> 17:14.319

(DB) the parents, that our friends and us too, we were very dedicated in that respect to give our language, our culture to our next generation. For example, we had a Bengali school, and

17:14.560 --> 17:25.800

(DB) for 13 years every Sunday we drag them there, you know. So 13, I meaning I'm meaning we both kids, you know.

17:25.810 --> 17:40.370

(I) Yes.

(DB) And when they were like in high school they stopped. We couldn't drag anymore, but before that, until then. So that was a commitment and there was a wonderful community that grew

17:40.690 --> 17:43.129

(DB) very, very close and

17:43.170 --> 17:43.860

(DB) you know,

17:44.400 --> 17:45.110

(I) Right.

(DB) community.

17:45.570 --> 17:46.330

(DB) Yeah.

17:46.570 --> 18:06.510

(I) Yeah, would you like to say something about that Bengali language school, because it doesn't seem, that school doesn't seem to exist anymore.

(DB) No, because it started in 1975, and in the beginning it used to be in people's home, like there will be 3 or 4 families, then

18:06.600 --> 18:10.680

(DB) then the number grew from word of mouth

18:10.790 --> 18:12.189

(DB) and

18:12.930 --> 18:25.240

(DB) we started in a...church in El Cerrito area, and then also in one of our friends was a faculty member and

18:25.250 --> 18:40.149

(DB) managed to give us a room on Sundays. So we used to have it in the campus, UC Berkeley campus for, for a decade or so. That's where I remember going to teach.

18:40.230 --> 18:41.430

(DB) And

18:41.790 --> 18:47.320

(DB) we had 3 groups. One is very young, like

18:47.970 --> 18:53.250

(DB) from age 5 to 8, 7-8, then the next group was like

18:53.710 --> 19:00.189

(DB) mid-elementary area. And, and then there was one was

19:00.290 --> 19:13.869

(DB) who were like almost high school going. When they go to high school there is so much pressure from their real school that they couldn't, you know, do it regularly, but they

19:13.960 --> 19:20.530

(DB) they managed to keep it like a club or something, and they did things with the culture

19:20.710 --> 19:21.849

(DB) and

19:22.580 --> 19:24.830

(DB) talked about

19:25.040 --> 19:35.380

(DB) you know, the two cultures and what they were thinking. So we had a magazine every year, we used to get a magazine out. We did plays

19:35.490 --> 19:38.819

(DB) on "Saraswati Puja" and

19:38.940 --> 19:51.549

(DB) they learned dancing and everything what from our culture. So, and I would say these, the our friends who are there they were very talented to, to, you know, put up those things and

19:51.610 --> 19:54.330

(DB) make books for them to,

19:54.360 --> 19:59.340

(DB) because there was no books, there were no books for this kind of learning.

19:59.800 --> 20:01.630

(DB) So we did it, yeah.

20:01.690 --> 20:07.649

(AB) Yeah, because these kids, our kids here are kind of unique in the sense that, you know, we

20:08.510 --> 20:13.440

(AB) discuss this in length, the in...the primary

20:13.480 --> 20:30.289

(AB) children's books that are prevalent in Calcutta or India would not be applicable to them. They. they are not familiar with the things that happen in...Bengali, typical Bengali culture like back in India. And you know, and India is such a

20:30.300 --> 20:49.919

(AB) unique country in the world. When I explain India to Western people asking me about the country, I said, just imagine Europe to be one country. (I) Yes.

(AB) You know, Scandinavia has different language than Germany, Germany has a different language than England or France. So

20:49.930 --> 20:59.810

(AB) in India, every state has a different language. So our culture revolves around the language familiarity and consciousness.

20:59.820 --> 21:13.809

(AB) Therefore, that's how the Bengali school started, because we thought that we could give our children the exposure to Bengali. And of course, you know, other cultures, South Indians probably must have done it also in their community here.

21:13.820 --> 21:39.910

(AB) And the other thing is, yes, we, we're probably the first Bengali school in the Bay Area for kids. But then, Fremont had a school, so almost like, not quite simultaneously, and then Concord here has another. See, our connection with Silicon Valley is little less than typical San Jose area Silicon Valley, because all my

21:40.840 --> 21:55.160

(AB) education here and work and the community service, our community involvement was based around Berkeley, Walnut Creek, maximum San Francisco area, and Fremont.

21:55.270 --> 22:03.020

(AB) So, of course, San Jose has more prevalence of South Indian culture. Probably, I'm not sure. See, this is

22:03.450 --> 22:14.299

(AB) my, my lack of, or actually, my ignorance, but also the fact that other schools are coming up now, like, you know, the "Dishari" school.

22:14.440 --> 22:25.860

(AB) And they are very much welcome, because yes, we Berkeley school has stopped functioning, but they planted the seeds, for every other school here.

22:26.730 --> 22:30.890

(I) Yeah, wow

(DB) And, but I have heard that

22:31.070 --> 22:49.730

(DB) one of two Bengalis, the very first Bangla school, we call it "Prabasi Bangla School." Those, there were two kids who have started a school. I do not know how that is functioning right now, but they are, they are a little bit different. They are focusing more on

22:49.740 --> 22:56.029

(DB) the culture than the language. And maybe it is a more Desi school, I don't know.

(AB) Mantra, can I veer off this question a little bit?

23:03.160 --> 23:06.070

(I) Yes, yes, of course.

(AB) It's not, of course, Bangla school was one of our

23:06.470 --> 23:17.089

(AB) you know, things we did and we are proud of it, but also the Bengali community, and because I have been here 50+ years, the Bengali community started

23:17.190 --> 23:23.249

(AB) actually under my wings, along with other people, because 1974,

23:23.360 --> 23:26.589

(AB) the first Bengali, actually,

23:26.640 --> 23:39.399

(AB) yeah, let's say we felt a need for an association for all the Bengalis here. So we started the club called "Prabasi." That started in 1974, that was the first one in the Bay Area.

23:39.770 --> 23:56.699

(AB) And of course then, after that "Sanskriti" came in and all that. And but...and again, I was so much very involved. We started talking of magazine that Dita said about Bangla school. We had this first magazine called "Shankha," which still is running,

23:56.980 --> 24:06.160

(AB) but it's not in very good shape right now. But anyway, so I was very, very involved with that, because you know, language is what I think

24:06.170 --> 24:20.450

(AB) is the source of all our cultural entity. Therefore, I was very much dedicated, very much attached to it. It was almost like, you know, my baby. So...

24:20.560 --> 24:25.220

(AB) and, and maybe my leaning towards literature, and towards the

24:25.640 --> 24:28.850

(AB) that kind of culture, that attachment to the language

24:28.900 --> 24:31.190

(AB) propelled me into that. So

24:31.470 --> 24:51.070

(AB) that's, I, I thought I'd just mention that. And Prabasi then, and now you've seen "Centerville Durga Puja." We have all these different clubs that mushroomed in the area. So we have a, we have a, a luxury of picking and choosing where to go when Durga Puja comes.

24:51.140 --> 25:03.549

(DB) Yeah. And also, I remember that at that time there was no computer, so it was all handwritten. So those magazines were all handwritten, so we, we had,

(AB) Right, it started then.

(DB) Yeah, so we wrote it in with...

25:04.040 --> 25:17.000

(DB) but it was a very good magazine and lot of good writers, very good writers from here.

(AB) I'm biased but I think it's one of the best foreign-language magazine in the United States.

25:17.580 --> 25:18.490

(I) So...

25:19.380 --> 25:28.350

(I) okay, maybe I will keep this question for, you know, after the interview, because I'm now very curious about how, about this magazine and, you know, how it can be.

25:28.590 --> 25:45.029

(AB) I'd love to talk to you for this.

(DB) I think he can show you. I mean, yeah. Right.

(AB) No, but she said after.

(I) Let's finish this interview so that, you know, then I can talk to you about it, because I think we, this needs to be curated as part of Bay Area history.

25:45.080 --> 26:01.430

(AB) Absolutely, it's in the Prabasi archives.

(I) It's in the archives, okay.

(AB) Well they, they, I think they did, but I'm not sure.

(DB) It went for maybe a decade or so. Yeah, okay.

(I) Oh, that's a lot of writing, for a decade, yeah.

26:01.550 --> 26:07.959

(I) Wow. So, you know, my next question is very related to this. So I think I would ask Dita to first respond to this,

26:08.020 --> 26:18.170

(I) because, you know, you're a writer, and you have taught Bengali language classes, and you've probably done many more things which I want to know about. So I'm asking you is,

26:18.190 --> 26:20.430

(I) how does being Desi

26:20.540 --> 26:24.349

(I) help you succeed in your work in Silicon Valley?

26:26.680 --> 26:36.939

(DB) Okay, let me, then I have to tell a little bit about my life. I started, my degree is in economics that,

26:37.240 --> 26:48.390

(DB) but I was not really interested in it. When I came here, I did master's in education. So that was a lot of

26:48.620 --> 27:03.980

(DB) and I had to take lots of different kind of classes. They said, here, they said that if you go try to do MBA, it would be, we can, you know, give you some credits, but if you want to do education, you have to start from level one and I said that's fine.

27:04.270 --> 27:12.310

(DB) So I, doing that, I had some basic resources for

27:12.410 --> 27:19.420

(DB) how to teach kids, especially young kids. My, my specialization was in early childhood education.

27:19.470 --> 27:21.080

(DB) So

27:21.140 --> 27:39.130

(DB) that I, so I taught in schools and in Montessori settings, and also in Saint Mary's College as a faculty for a little while. So that helped me and I could, what helped me in that

27:39.140 --> 27:43.030

(DB) immigrant, immigrant context is

27:43.950 --> 27:45.819

(DB) I could understand

27:46.290 --> 27:53.770

(DB) the many, many kids, you know, situation because I was

27:54.410 --> 28:06.870

(DB) you know, I went through it. So like I can, I can remember an Afghanistani student, and I wrote about that in my short story I mean, I had a short story

28:07.030 --> 28:13.549

(DB) in Bengali also. So the most of the stories are

28:13.680 --> 28:16.249

(DB) my immigration,

28:16.550 --> 28:19.170

(DB) immigrant experience. So

28:19.600 --> 28:22.760

(DB) yes, and then...

28:24.630 --> 28:31.990

(DB) that's what I, and right now, I, the more I go I feel that, you know,

28:32.150 --> 28:35.799

(DB) I have, I should write

28:36.010 --> 28:38.630

(DB) our stories so that my

28:40.160 --> 28:48.450

(DB) my friends, my children, they can, they can know what we have gone through, or what these people go through, you know,

28:48.670 --> 28:49.570

(DB) in

28:49.600 --> 28:50.320

(DB) so

28:50.760 --> 28:54.460

(I) Sure.

(DB) Did I answer you, oh, and I also

28:54.590 --> 28:57.930

(DB) I think I've told you, I wrote this one

28:58.110 --> 28:59.660

(I) Yes.

(DB) first.

28:59.690 --> 29:02.309

(DB) This is a story about

29:02.390 --> 29:12.290

(DB) a young girl during the partition of India. The seat came from my mother because

29:13.140 --> 29:24.139

(DB) she was in Mymensingh (city in Bangladesh). She was born and brought up in Mymensingh, and then from Mymensingh she had to, they had to as a refugee they came, they had to come to India.

29:24.720 --> 29:35.360

(DB) And she used to tell me stories, and in the beginning I didn't pay much attention, you know. After she was gone, then a protagonist kind of used to visit me very often.

29:35.480 --> 29:36.890

(DB) And

29:36.910 --> 29:41.350

(DB) I wrote it, in the beginning I wrote it in Bengali,

29:41.460 --> 29:47.329

(DB) but, and that part I also read it to my mother and father.

29:47.590 --> 29:57.980

(DB) So that is one good thing I feel, but when my children asked what is it all about, my daughters, then I had to translate it and I felt, oh no,

29:58.080 --> 29:59.120

(DB) you know.

29:59.200 --> 30:01.540

(DB) So writing it,

30:01.920 --> 30:05.950

(DB) it's not translating, it is writing for a different audience

30:07.800 --> 30:12.809

(DB) taught me a huge thing, and it took 14 years to learn

30:13.020 --> 30:14.370

(DB) that. So

30:14.660 --> 30:32.289

(DB) I consider myself as a bilingual writer in that sense, not a translator. But the same thing, if you write in two different language, you have to think about two different kind of audience, two different kind of, you know, so that was a quite a journey for me.

30:32.500 --> 30:39.559

(DB) And CWC, California Writers Club, which was started by Jack London 100 years ago,

30:41.960 --> 30:46.629

(DB) I am a member of that. So I am into lots of

30:46.650 --> 30:50.919

(DB) young adult writing, competition, and all that things. So I

30:51.190 --> 30:55.459

(DB) constantly we are, I'm learning more and more about writing

30:55.650 --> 30:58.509

(DB) and it's wonderful experience, and it

30:58.840 --> 31:03.810

(DB) I learned a lot about, you know, writing in a different,

31:04.060 --> 31:08.280

(DB) bringing the same thing in a different language, so

31:08.580 --> 31:12.440

(DB) that is my journey.

31:12.780 --> 31:14.419

(I) Yes, wow. That's wonderful.

31:14.470 --> 31:22.790

(I) Thank you for sharing that. And now I'll move to Amit about your translation work,

31:23.230 --> 31:31.109

(I) right? And so I think, I mean you probably wouldn't have translated Tagore if you were not a Desi, if you were not a Bengali.

31:31.320 --> 31:35.679

(I) But, so in that sense, how do you connect your

31:35.890 --> 31:39.149

(I) identity as a Desi in your work,

31:39.300 --> 31:42.189

(I) with respect to your work as a translator of Tagore?

31:44.340 --> 31:47.969

(AB) Yeah Mantra, like I said, our

31:48.240 --> 32:01.630

(AB) identities are evolving around our language itself. And since, fortunately or unfortunately, India is so divided language-wise, you have to concentrate

32:02.460 --> 32:04.179

(AB) to be

32:04.440 --> 32:14.790

(AB) known as what, a Bengali first and Indian second or, I wouldn't quite put it that way. But that's, I mean putting it the way, like I think

32:15.510 --> 32:17.870

(AB) I know Bengali better than Hindi.

32:18.080 --> 32:33.030

(I) Hmm.

(AB) So, so in fact, it's interesting that you bring this up, and I never thought about it because I'm Bengali [inaudible]. I was looking at translating other things, because I like translating

32:33.040 --> 32:45.289

(AB) and the translating is the only way to convey it. It's a cross-cultural exchange to convey what we have in our store in culture

32:45.390 --> 32:56.819

(AB) to convey to the other side of people that do not know Bengali, do not know Hindi, should, you know, know at least that how to...

32:58.040 --> 33:03.899

(AB) access what we have in in our cultural background. Therefore

33:05.320 --> 33:19.089

(AB) because I'm a Bengali, you know, and I am a Tagore aficionado. So, I love everything about Tagore. I don't see anything he did wrong. You know, things like that, and of course, Tagore

33:19.830 --> 33:36.120

(AB) you know, influenced my heart and soul so much, and this I took as a mission, and so I did it. If I was anybody else, I was like, I was born and brought up in Kerala, I don't know whether I would have done it, because

33:36.500 --> 33:42.379

(AB) since I left India when I was 23, and most of those years, at least

33:42.400 --> 33:56.079

(AB) after I started high school and all that, I was busy studying and all that. I don't really know much about India. I haven't traveled much in India either. So to grasp India as a country is very hard for me.

33:56.130 --> 34:00.050

(AB) Although, you know, I know the basics of Taj Mahal to Kanyakumari-ka (famous site in Tamil Nadu)

34:00.710 --> 34:14.270

(AB) but that's, that's not really knowing India, and I cannot answer that question. If I was not a Bengali, what I would have done. A way that Tagore has

34:16.040 --> 34:21.820

(AB) really crossed the boundaries of all the states to be equally popular.

34:22.050 --> 34:32.409

(AB) I know he wrote the National Anthem of India, as well as Bangladesh, and all that. But again, those are, the language

34:33.060 --> 34:37.299

(AB) is the basis of, you know, that kind of talk. And

34:37.690 --> 34:39.699

(AB) so, logically,

34:39.780 --> 34:42.240

(AB) would I have done it for Premchand (famous Indian writer),

34:42.650 --> 34:46.600

(AB) as translating Premchand? I don't know much about him myself.

34:46.760 --> 34:49.500

(AB) So Tagore, I know

34:49.590 --> 34:55.529

(AB) a little bit and I thought it was my duty and mission to do it.

34:55.830 --> 35:08.860

(AB) And I love "Tagore Songs." In fact, you know, when I hear that Bob Dylan got the first Nobel Prize in songwriting, I got very mad, because obviously Nobel Committee

35:09.030 --> 35:14.450

(AB) I applaud them, for you know, giving Tagore the Nobel prize. But

35:14.760 --> 35:18.849

(AB) they didn't understand, obviously, that those were songs.

35:19.110 --> 35:25.630

(AB) Tagore didn't do it as a song translation. He just did it when in 21 days he was going from

35:25.690 --> 35:48.080

(AB) India to England on the ship, he translated those songs. So, and he took liberties because it is his own creation, so he didn't complete some of those poems as they exist in Bengali. He did it the way, I think he was modern in thinking that whatever the Western audience would think

35:48.550 --> 35:51.120

(AB) and like,

35:51.460 --> 36:08.700

(AB) rather than the whole song, probably they would like the the lyrics of it as he thought fit. So he did part of those, some of those points I can show you, the Bengali and English doesn't, they don't match, but that's his prerogative. That's his

36:08.710 --> 36:23.009

(AB) and he did it. And that's, you know, he, this was his only translation of note that got Nobel Prize. Can you imagine any, anybody in the whole world that has one

36:24.380 --> 36:40.469

(AB) cross-language book that got a Nobel Prize? I don't know anybody else. Anyway, so I got mad when I heard that Bob Dylan was the first songwriter to get Nobel Prize. Anyway, so this is the height of

36:40.990 --> 36:54.820

(AB) what should I say, ignorance is a strong word, but height of lack of knowledge of Western people about Eastern cultures. And I felt, you know, I could do whatever little I can do

36:55.320 --> 37:06.750

(AB) to convey, you know, hey, we have these things in our store, and you guys should know if you read. And then the hard thing is to do that last phase, to read.

37:06.820 --> 37:10.059

(AB) I have done my job, right? Translating Tagore.

37:10.550 --> 37:15.649

(AB) I have not heard anybody give me any critical comment, or

37:15.910 --> 37:17.910

(AB) or

37:18.310 --> 37:38.000

(AB) later said appreciation of how they like this book, because nobody has read it yet. And that is one thing I don't know how to get it in the hands of Western people to read this. Anyway, I'm veering off the subject. Does that answer your question?

(I) Yes, yes. I'm also wondering about the translation bit that, you know

37:38.520 --> 37:39.889

(AB) I mean it's important.

37:39.970 --> 37:46.720

(I) No, no. I'm thinking about the translation is in the sense that, you know, because you were in a foreign country

37:46.800 --> 37:59.950

(I) with access to a language and that kind of rich literature in a language that you could translate into English.

(AB) Correct. (I) So I'm wondering if you were, you know, if you lived your life in Calcutta,

38:00.100 --> 38:02.779

(AB) Yes.

(I) right? Would you be translating?

38:03.650 --> 38:10.900

(AB) Very good question. Yes, I would. If this passion or mission arose in my mind that, hey,

38:11.300 --> 38:22.260

(AB) we have this thing in my culture, in my language, it is my duty to get it across the cultures, across the borders, across the world.

38:22.700 --> 38:25.649

(AB) And probably, if I

38:26.170 --> 38:39.339

(AB) was in a similar situation, but just living in Calcutta. In other words, I'd be retired. I would have all this time in my hand. And if I had, a friend of mine puts it nicely: "If you have nothing better to do,

38:39.380 --> 38:41.279

(AB) sure, I would have done it."

38:41.530 --> 39:00.309

(AB) So. (I) Okay, that's good to know. Yeah.

(AB) Because, like I said, I'm not going to get a Nobel Prize in science, physics, or you know, on engineering has nothing. I mean, I do not want to pursue something that comes from my, that does not come from my heart.

39:00.320 --> 39:02.590

(AB) This came from my heart.

39:02.650 --> 39:06.910

(I) Sure, yeah.

(AB) And no matter where the heart was, in India or here.

39:07.070 --> 39:22.690

(I) Right, yeah. I guess I'm trying to understand that what you have done, you know, with the translation and what Dita does with her teaching, and with her writing, I'm trying to see the connection between who you are and what you bring as an immigrant

39:22.740 --> 39:24.120

(I) to the

39:24.140 --> 39:26.220

(I) you know, the geo-

39:26.270 --> 39:27.430

(I) location

39:27.640 --> 39:31.560

(I) of where you are. I'm trying to see that connection.

39:31.750 --> 39:40.879

(I) Like, would you be writing A) first in Bengali and then translating it into English, the way Dita did with her book?

(AB) You know Mantra, one of the

39:41.230 --> 39:48.090

(AB) primary things why I did it, I know Bengali quite well. I know English somewhat well.

39:48.300 --> 39:56.610

(AB) No other language in the world I know any, anywhere closer to these two languages. And the other thing is, English is a very,

39:56.700 --> 40:07.030

(AB) it's a beautiful language. Well, Bengali is the most beautiful language in the world. But English is, it comes close, but when I came to translate it, it's very interesting.

40:07.720 --> 40:09.599

(AB) There are some words,

40:09.710 --> 40:12.399

(AB) of course, in both languages, that are

40:12.940 --> 40:28.699

(AB) untranslatable, in one word at least. You know, like Bengali it comes to my mind, "obhimaan." In English, "nostalgia." I mean, I'm just picking at random. So there are words that cannot be translated, and I

40:28.750 --> 40:37.979

(AB) taught my, when I taught at Berkeley I told my students, look, you don't have to strain yourself so much. If you cannot translate a word

40:38.210 --> 40:49.269

(AB) in another word, just break it down into two or three words, doesn't matter. I mean, if you convey the sense of the word into the new language, that is fine. So,

40:49.570 --> 41:01.489

(AB) and I'm really surprised sometimes that why other people didn't do these translations before. Well, you know, Tagore has been translated by other people,

41:01.610 --> 41:15.610

(AB) of course. William Radice comes to my mind, he's a professor in England. he's very well known as translator. But when I translate, my uniqueness has been that I rhyme them.

41:16.020 --> 41:22.250

(AB) Especially the songs and the points. I have another book out before called "Lyrics to Love"

41:22.300 --> 41:37.500

(AB) which are mostly, which are all Tagore Songs, like 51 songs in the first volume, and the 101 songs in the second one. And I rhymed all those, because when I think Rabindranath (Tagore) had "moni" and "boni" the next line,

41:37.670 --> 41:44.950

(AB) he rhymed. I think it is a duty of the translators to rhyme. And again, because they were songs,

41:45.510 --> 41:57.870

(AB) rhyming plays a big part.

(I) Sure. (AB) and my ultimate objective, and I don't know in my lifetime I would ever see, is that those translated songs would be some

41:57.960 --> 41:59.490

(AB) by, by

42:00.130 --> 42:07.259

(AB) whoever can sing it, and it doesn't have to be in the Tagore notations, in Tagore

42:07.820 --> 42:14.250

(AB) melodies. They can put their own melody and sing. But it is a beautiful words that are,

42:14.580 --> 42:18.890

(AB) that needs to be conveyed to the, across the language border.

42:19.390 --> 42:24.869

(I) Yes, wow. Yeah, I want to hear them too with, you know, in your translations being sung,

42:24.990 --> 42:44.959

(I) that would be lovely. (AB) Exactly. So between you and me, Mantra, we'll bring that dream to life.

(I) Yes, we should do that. Yes, we should do that. (AB) Let's do that. I'm still, I'm looking for some real musicians, because I cannot, you know, put them to tunes.

42:45.300 --> 42:50.370

(I) But I'm sure there are like, you know, we have been talking about it. There are many talented people, you know. I think,

42:50.380 --> 43:07.960

(I) I think this could be a project that could be designed. There are lots of musicians in the community, really. You know, even outside Bengali community, there are so many musicians.

(AB) I can see you're excited already, your voice has really gone up. But you know what, I have a maxim that I go by:

43:08.110 --> 43:11.470

(AB) "You cannot put one person's passion into another person's heart."

43:13.110 --> 43:22.010

(AB) It is my passion and I have to run with it. I have found examples in my life that has happened that, you know,

43:22.770 --> 43:26.329

(AB) you can dream something, but to put it to work,

43:26.360 --> 43:30.170

(AB) you need other people who may not be equally excited.

43:30.960 --> 43:32.370

(AB) And I'm glad you are.

43:32.630 --> 43:47.720

(I) No, I think we can find people who can implement your...

(AB) Right. Those, exactly.

(I) Yes, because you can explain what it is you're trying to do, and they with musicians skills,

43:47.840 --> 44:05.549

(I) can work on it, you know. It is, I think it is possible.

(AB) You know, now that you tell me, shall I tell you. I sent my translations to James Taylor. I sent my translation to Zakir Hussain. Just to name a few, John Baer. Nobody responded.

44:05.990 --> 44:22.000

(AB) So maybe I should try the next level, right? Is that what you're thinking?

(I) No, no. I mean I think we should, we should talk about this.

(AB) Oh okay good, offline. I'm so glad I've got a partner. Maybe misery loves company so.

44:22.040 --> 44:26.770

(I) No, I think sometimes, you know, the right
(AB) Exactly.

44:27.160 --> 44:30.479

(I) tributaries come together, [inaudible].
(AB) That's right.

44:30.530 --> 44:49.649

(AB) You know, when you rub two stones, the sparks don't always come out. Only one time it might come.

(I) Yes, yes, and sometimes they will. Yes. So I'll, I'll go onto my, you know, it's a second-last question for us. So, when you look at your, look back at your journey,

44:49.950 --> 44:52.569

(I) right, in this area,

44:53.070 --> 45:02.729

(I) how do you think Silicon Valley, or what we understand broadly as Silicon Valley, how does it influence your identity as a Desi?

45:08.460 --> 45:18.379

(DB) Say that again, if I, when I go back to...

(I) Yeah, as you look back at your journey, how does Silicon Valley influence your identity as a Desi?

45:20.780 --> 45:23.589

(DB) Well, I think I

45:25.340 --> 45:29.119

(DB) I love the things of my, of my background

45:29.160 --> 45:34.270

(DB) in a different way, you know, and to see the richness

45:34.500 --> 45:35.830

(DB) in a different way.

45:36.890 --> 45:39.089

(DB) But,

45:40.380 --> 45:42.080

(DB) but

45:42.160 --> 45:59.480

(DB) but I am, I think I'm more Bengali than, than the Desi part of it, you know, because I'm not so very much into Hindi culture, because I do not know the language very well.

45:59.600 --> 46:07.620

(DB) When I left India, you know, I didn't need to learn Hindi as much as they need to do it today. I mean,

46:07.700 --> 46:10.269

(DB) India is more

46:10.620 --> 46:12.839

(DB) a small world,

46:12.890 --> 46:16.970

(DB) you know, today than it was when I left so.

46:17.290 --> 46:19.499

(DB) But I love when my

46:19.570 --> 46:26.769

(DB) my friends translate me from Urdu, or something like that, you know, because I love language. I like that.

46:26.890 --> 46:27.790

(I) Right.

46:27.880 --> 46:39.739

(DB) And I think that as a, in future, I think I would like to stretch myself a little bit more for Desis because...

46:40.520 --> 46:56.489

(DB) because we have something in common, and I mean Bengali and Madras are, you know, in certain things are common, very core things, and as a writer, I would like to reach out there. And

46:56.740 --> 47:12.099

(DB) one of the thing is I'm very much, I, the genre I write in is women's fic, so women's fiction. So, there is a lot to talk about that, lot of things to bring, you know, in that

47:12.210 --> 47:13.750

(DB) and do.

47:13.910 --> 47:17.160

(DB) So I like to work there in that perspective. Yeah.

47:17.430 --> 47:19.469

(I) Right, great. Thank you. And Amit, how about you?

47:23.410 --> 47:36.120

(AB) You know, I'm proud to be, if you consider me representing Silicon Valley culture, Silicon Valley area. Because, you know, I'll give you examples. When you go somewhere else,

47:36.180 --> 47:40.689

(AB) for example, in Europe we just went there and Portugal and

47:40.740 --> 47:46.040

(AB) we before that we went to Greece, and all that. When they hear that we are from San Francisco,

47:46.140 --> 47:58.019

(AB) they say, wow, you are in the best part of the country of the world, and we know Silicon Valley, we are very proud of it. So our entity is centered around

47:58.460 --> 48:01.620

(AB) the, the identity of being

48:01.940 --> 48:17.610

(AB) part of the Silicon Valley, and just by myself, if Silicon Valley, I put the question in the different context. If Silicon Valley didn't exist, like when I first came, I think I would have missed a good part of my

48:17.620 --> 48:35.849

(AB) existence here, because, for example, if Silicon Valley was not this developed. Maybe, you know, right now Texas, Austin seems to be coming up also in software engineering and stuff. But let's say I was living here and Austin became the Silicon Valley, and here there was no Silicon Valley. I would

48:35.890 --> 48:49.339

(AB) feel there will be a void in my existence. I, we are the best in everything, you know. Like I said, in Europe, they they consider us to be the, at the, living at the best place. I've heard it from quite a few different persons.

48:49.360 --> 48:52.889

(AB) when we were abroad. Even from, from

48:53.710 --> 49:13.630

(AB) Americans when I meet them, they say, oh, we are from Michigan, where are you from? And I say well, I'm from San Francisco. Wow, you live in San Francisco! So, I'm pretty sure they have Silicon Valley in the back of their mind, and Silicon Valley has excelled in so many things that

49:13.670 --> 49:21.630

(AB) it's almost unimaginable to have a world without the Silicon Valley, and I feel proud to be a part of it.

49:21.800 --> 49:28.359

(DB) And Silicon Valley there is, there is a lot of, you know, Desi contribution.

49:28.380 --> 49:34.830

(I) Yes.

(AB) Yeah, Silicon Valley is almost identical, in our minds at least, with the Desi existence.

49:34.950 --> 49:36.269

(DB) Especially today.

49:36.500 --> 49:53.650

(DB) Not when we came here.

(AB) And personally, our children are not part of it. My younger daughter teaches at Dublin, a... school, children's school, and my elder daughter is in

49:53.870 --> 50:09.400

(AB) works for NASA, so she could have done it anywhere else. So fortunately, unfortunately, we are not directly, and I keep saying that, connected with the Silicon Valley culture. But I feel proud of it.

50:09.410 --> 50:29.349

(DB) Yeah, my daughter was, was in that area, my younger daughter. And yeah.

(AB) She used be in Palo Alto area. (DB) Palo Alto, yeah, Redwood City area. So, so we have seen, you know, Atherton and

50:30.580 --> 50:34.669

(DB) Menlo, Menlo Park, and that area quite a bit. Yeah.

50:34.870 --> 50:35.759

(DB) And yeah.

50:35.960 --> 50:47.470

(I) So I guess you're kind of responding to my very last question. So how do you foresee your future or your family's future in Silicon Valley?

50:50.530 --> 51:01.389

(DB) Again, if you consider Silicon Valley just that area, I mean Palo Alto and Redwood City and San Jose and that area,

51:01.450 --> 51:05.620

(DB) then I don't know, because they might, you know,

51:06.370 --> 51:16.299

(DB) my kids are not there. My, and we are here, 50 miles away. But I think the influence is there because

51:17.280 --> 51:19.680

(DB) lots of things are happening there, you know.

51:19.790 --> 51:21.720

(I) Right.

(DB) So,

51:23.050 --> 51:39.129

(DB) so I think, how they are going to impact our family, my family, I am not so, I haven't given a thought about that. But, I think there is great potential of the

51:39.140 --> 51:54.210

(DB) community, as Silicon Valley community for Desis, it's, it's just amazing. It will be, it will be awesome. That's what I can visualize in near future.

51:54.300 --> 52:12.550

(DB) In all, in all aspects. Yes.

(AB) In my case, of course, Mantra you know that nobody has the crystal ball. So future is hard to talk about, but I can mention a little bit about my past, which is within the last 10 years, immediate past. I ended up teaching at

52:12.580 --> 52:30.630

(AB) at Stanford also. Bengali, for only a stint for one semester. Actually, they have quarter system, one quarter, because when they came to know that I was teaching at Berkeley, they offered me, they were in a kind of an SOS situation. They lost their Bengali teacher, so

52:30.640 --> 52:35.359

(AB) they said, can you teach here too? And I said, well,

52:35.560 --> 52:54.070

(AB) if you are in such dire consequence, I might take it up, but it's on a trial basis. And you know, for Walnut Creek to Palo Alto, it was like 60, 50, 60 miles, and it was not feasible. So I did it, I finished my term, and

52:54.080 --> 52:56.019

(AB) the one quarter, but

52:56.030 --> 53:14.699

(AB) then they found somebody, frantically. They were looking for someone. So, anyway, so with Stanford I had that little stint, and I like this, you know, culture there. I love to go to the museum whenever I got time, but my commute was killing me, so I couldn't do it.

53:15.060 --> 53:29.449

(DB) I have only one thing to tell Mantra that I think Silicon Valley Desis also need to assimilate to this culture. Sometimes we are very clannish, and that I have also felt, and

53:29.760 --> 53:46.820

(DB) if we are only within our community, only going to Indian, Indian programs, events, and not open up to the, then there is, there is a risk, because people will see us differently, and

53:47.650 --> 53:58.140

(DB) and that's one concern I have. And I, I really do not like it, and I feel that, when I have opened up to my Western

53:58.270 --> 54:06.209

(DB) friends, I feel more full in that respect, you know. I, I am very much into Bengali community.

54:06.770 --> 54:15.260

(DB) Many of my friends are like that. Most, but I also have very good, strong friend circle in

54:15.440 --> 54:22.769

(DB) in the California Writers Club. So that, that made me whole, you know.

54:22.970 --> 54:32.099

(I) Yeah. I think that's a very important statement, because is that a, is that a trend you have noticed in recent years, that you know, Indians will stick to their own culture groups?

54:32.290 --> 54:46.240

(DB) Yes, I have. Because what they do is, you know they, I have, it could be very short-sighted, or maybe you know. But I'll just tell what I saw, and to you that

54:46.470 --> 54:54.940

(DB) I have seen that, all week long, they work very hard. Most of them are in very good professions, and you know that take a lot of it.

54:55.170 --> 55:10.300

(DB) And after that they are, the rest of the time they have is either they are doing Indian performances, going to Indian things, and watching Indian, Bollywood things. So they are here, taking the

55:10.390 --> 55:17.510

(DB) you know, best of both worlds. But I think that is...

55:18.720 --> 55:21.669

(DB) that can backfire.

55:21.860 --> 55:33.620

(I) Hmm.

(DB) It is important to, it is important to mix in, in this culture. They are also, you know, because the next generation would be American. So

55:33.630 --> 55:51.720

(I) Yes.

(AB) Yeah, that's a very good point that Dita raised, and I second that. The only thing is, I shouldn't say they, I should say we also, because when we first came we did the same thing. We mingled or used our time more into Indian

55:52.040 --> 56:09.180

(AB) culture things and Indian things. Except for like, we used to say, from 8 to 5 we speak English, before and after that we speak Bengali. Or, you know, at home and with friends and on the weekends. But yeah, we are

56:09.270 --> 56:17.500

(AB) Americans right now. We have to think that way also, because America, it's nothing but a bunch of immigrants. And I,

56:17.710 --> 56:22.330

(AB) so we, we are part of this country as well as any other

56:22.390 --> 56:33.130

(AB) Irish or any other...background, heritages, people.

(DB) Yeah Mantra, one thing is, you know, the word "they" and "us." Okay. It's there in

56:33.490 --> 56:41.429

(DB) it's there, right? So even in... our

56:41.470 --> 56:48.960

(DB) close contact there, there is always, did you say Americans? They do this, or we do this, you know.

56:49.090 --> 56:53.489

(DB) And I feel, the more my circle is larger,

56:54.260 --> 57:07.120

(DB) I feel that human beings are very similar, you know. So and when that is there, then this discrimination will go away, because they will feel that

57:07.140 --> 57:16.129

(DB) we also cry when, when we are hurt. They also cry when they are hurt. It's not that only we take care of our old fathers and mothers

57:16.200 --> 57:32.750

(DB) and they are very selfish people. No, they are also a sandwich generation, you know. The more you see these people in that, my, you know, I see the same thing in my, in my American friends. They are exactly what we have gone through.

57:32.770 --> 57:37.479

(DB) Then I do not feel it that "they" and "us" and I think I can

57:38.220 --> 57:48.950

(DB) you know, close the gap, and the work that I'm doing that is diverse, diverse literacy, and all these diversity in literature.

57:49.030 --> 57:55.180

(DB) That is a big point, otherwise I cannot, I will be biased also to write.

57:55.330 --> 57:56.149

(I) Hmm.

57:56.900 --> 57:57.689

(I) Yes.

57:58.030 --> 58:01.789

(I) Wow. Thank you very much. This has been such a great conversation.

58:01.830 --> 58:03.920

(I) I will stop the recording now.

58:05.370 --> 58:11.529

(AB) We enjoyed it too.

(DB) Yes, thank you so much. You gave, we feel very honored. I feel very honored.