

Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History

Jaideep Das Interview

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Jaideep Das (JD): Okay.

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Interviewer (I): Good evening, Mr. Das. I'm Mantra Roy from the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of San Jose State University, and I am going to do an interview with you for the Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History, and thank you very much for agreeing to do this interview with us.

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JD: Thank you for the opportunity, Mantra. Really appreciate this. Thank you.

I: Sure, so I'm going to turn off my video now and then we'll launch into the questions, and this is a conversation so that we get to talk about Silicon Valley and the Desi community.

JD: Sure

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I: So we would want to start with a little bit about yourself. So tell us a bit about yourself and describe your journey up until now.

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JD: Okay, so. So my name is Jaideep Das and I, I live in the Bay Area in the East Bay, Pleasanton, city of Pleasanton to be precise, and I have been living here for almost 22 years.

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JD: I work in the tech industry.

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JD: and I...I have an engineering degree so that's how I'm here working in the tech industry. I grew up in Calcutta, in India

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JD: in Eastern India

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JD: and I was born, raised, and I spent my, you know entire childhood, schooling, and college everything in Calcutta; then I also worked in Calcutta for about a few years, and then I came here when I was like in my late twenties.

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JD: That's when I came to to the, to the Bay Area.

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JD: And my background is again in, in science and physics and electronics and telecommunications. So that's what I have been doing on my vocational front. And besides that, I do have some other passions which I pursue.

I: And we want to know about that.

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JD: Okay, okay. So...

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JD: So after you know, I have a few

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JD: passions about; first of all, I have a

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JD: a book-

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JD: store, if you will. It's like online, but also it is, it is like a very event based in-person bookstore. And I cater books that are from India,

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JD: specifically from India and Bangladesh, which are written in Bengali, or which are also written in English, but which are about India, Bangladesh, Pakistan in general, the Southeast Asia.

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JD: That's the business part that they say. This is what I've been doing since about 2009, and there's some interesting story of how I got into this, which I'll perhaps, you know, describe it some, you know, some point in this interview. But besides, and besides that, I always felt,

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JD: you know, a lot of longing for

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JD: passing on our language to the next generation, and also to the entire diaspora community which is, you know, the Bengali language. So I started a nonprofit institution called Dishari Foundation in 2014, and we were just put it, you know the the primary goal was

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JD: celebrate, you know, celebrating

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JD: Bengali language. All that you know, different milestones for the language went through, and also

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JD: teaching Bengali to children. So we have been doing classes, and it's like a Bengali school. Before the pandemic all along from 2014 until about 2020, early 2020, we were having, you know, physical classes.

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JD: Every week kids would come in, and they would actually learn. And then we would actually do this in a very

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JD: very much a non-religious, nonpartisan, very inclusive way, so that we are not talking too much about you know one particular religion or anything. So it was very secular education, and we were also, you know, following a very secular

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JD: the type of a

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JD: festivities. Like, for example, we would celebrate the Bengali New Year or the you know, birthdays of great Bengali luminaries like Rabindranath Tagore or Nazrul Islam,

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JD: but also celebrate most importantly, February 21st, which is recognized by the UNESCO for, as an international language day. So those are the kind of

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JD: celebrations that we would we would foster and

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JD: celebrate. And so this went on till all this was perfect. Everything was perfect till about 2020 when that pandemic hit. We were all going, you know, online and then the whole online world started so our schools continued.

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JD: The good thing is that, we got a lot more students at that point. And so we really had a thriving school. Right now, we have about 50 students who are in all, you know, Bay Area, mostly Bay Area, but there're also some out of state students who join

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JD: join this, join the classes.

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JD: And then fast forward to 2021. That's when we had the other idea, which was a crazy idea that you know what? We should actually; we have a Bengali school, we have a Bengali bookstore, and then we are also

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JD: I was also starting, we also, I was also part of a Bengali Literature Club

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JD: and I also was part of another club that we were trying to do audiobooks. So we got, you know, we were reading audiobooks. So we got audiobooks. You know, book reading, Bengali School

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JD: celebrating Bengali festivals, Bengali bookstore. Okay, so what now is; you know the one thing that we haven't done is like a physical store where people could come in, physical space where people could come in, and

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JD: read books would be one of the areas that we wanted to really do for a very long time. AKA a library. So in 2021 we started you know, just tossing around the idea. And then, fortunately, that gained a lot of for you know momentum, critical mass. And then

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JD: we launched that whole idea in 2021 November, December timeframe, and many, many very talented people, like you Mantra, had also pitched in there, jumped in, and they all helped us build this space. And today we have a physical library here in the heart of Silicon Valley, where

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JD: people not only come for exchanging books but also for exchanging of ideas.

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JD: And we are using the space in a variety of different ways.

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I: That's great, and that actually it's, it segues well into my next question, because it said that you know in the heart of Silicon Valley, and this is becoming a space for exchange of ideas. And that is also what kind of is the definition of Silicon Valley,

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I: right? An innovative; a hub for innovation rather. Right? So in that sense, and because you are in the tech sector and you have lived and work in this area for a while, what does Silicon Valley mean to you?

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JD: So I mean Silicon Valley, you know what it means today is very different from what it meant to me while I was in India, or while I was, when I just stepped into Silicon Valley. So today for me it's like a you know, it's like a melting pot of multiple cultures,

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JD: not only from India. It's really a close place, though it's kind of right now we have a a lot of dominant you know, dominance of Southeast Asian, you know, diaspora right here, like India, China, Japan, Bangladesh, you know Indonesia, Vietnam. All these, you know, in all these communities here. But you know, overall it's really a very

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JD: cosmopolitan in nature, but at the same time there are, you know, very distinct mosaics of every culture that you can,

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JD: you can, you can experience, so it's kind of

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JD: a mix of melting pot, that yes, everything is, you know, melting into the great American culture. But also at the same time, there are some distinct things that you can; also I I've identified that every culture of these, you know migrants from different communities have come in here, and they are also leaving a mark on that.

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JD: So, I I feel that's really a combination.

I: So, but you said that when you were very new to the area, or maybe when you were still in India but you had heard of Silicon Valley, right. So,

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I: that impression of Silicon Valley, like 20 years ago,

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I: and what you are describing it today as, like what is the difference?

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JD: So yeah, in my mind, it was when I first, when I first, when I first came here,

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JD: it seemed to me that

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JD: this was really an extension of America like what you would really see in America. That's what I, my first thought was when I was here in 2000 that this was very much, like you see what you see in in movies, you know, in in of America. But then slowly and slowly, I'm realizing that

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JD: you know, although that the exterior is still there. But still you can see a lot of these local, you know the cultures that are present. So that's that has been a very

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JD: you know, distinct difference I would say.

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JD: For example, when I was in India, I I never had chicken tikka masala. I never even

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JD: tried that food. I didn't even know that food existed.

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JD: But when I came here,

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JD: I see that, okay there's a lot more about India that I learned

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JD: inside of Silicon Valley than I learned when that was back home, because back home

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JD: we were, I was in again a metro city, Calcutta, which is a very cosmopolitan, very metro City, a large city with a lot of people, very high population density and... But still it was not; it was it was, in a sense

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JD: quite wrapped around its own culture and its own, you know, own heritage if you will. But, when I stepped into Silicon Valley I could see the big global picture of the whole world, not only India, you know kind of unfold in in front of me.

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JD: So so yeah. So the chicken tikka masala is just one example. There are many others that I never experienced, but which are supposed to be

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JD: you know very much Indian, and very much, you know,

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JD: but but we never, you know, never got exposed to that.

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I: Hmm.

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I: Hmm. Very interesting, because...like you were referring to the Asian population in general in this area, primarily probably because of the tech sector, right, is a distinct characteristic of Silicon Valley. At least recently, was it, was it as high a concentration 20 years ago?

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JD: Definitely it was high, but maybe not, but not definitely not as high. Right now it has been, it is, it is significantly high,

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JD: as you can see. For example, I'll give you a simple data point, for example, in Fremont, in 2000 there used to be one Indian grocery store

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JD: and probably two restaurants, Indian restaurants. Where now that's kind of, you know, every block would have, you know one restaurant or a gro- Indian grocery store, you know, in in Fremont.

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JD: So...

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JD: So that's kind of

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JD: you know the spread of

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JD: Southeastern,

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JD: you know. Kind of okay, I I don't know what the right word would be. I guess consumer products availability if that's one metric, right? That's that's one, one way of looking at it.

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I: Yes, so so because, and you know, because our oral history is about, you know, the the Desi community right, in Silicon Valley, which is like primarily from from India or of Indian origin. So given like how you are describing the growth of a community,

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I: like you know, for example, the data point of one restaurant 20 years ago, and like a restaurant in every block now, perhaps. So given that, do you identify yourself as a Desi of Silicon Valley and what does that mean to you?

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JD: So, well, you know, I think that it's it's true that by force, you know, being, being from Indian subcontinent, you're Desi in Silicon Valley. But I think what it means is that, or how it's been changing is that now the, the Desis

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JD: are,

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JD: are also getting involved in a lot of activities, which are not just vocational in nature. Like, for example, I was talking about my passion. You know, I'm sure if you talk to other people, they will all have

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JD: or a majority of them, or most of them will have, some sort of other passion that they're pursuing.

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JD: So that's, you know, that's one thing. And also if you see in governance, in...in the in the polity, there are lots of Desis as well. I mean today on NPR was,

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JD: had a podcast where they were saying that now there are five Congressmen in you know, from from the Desi community. So I I think that the Desi, the Silicon Valley Desi identity is is, is not only now being confined to the technical jobs that they are, individuals are doing, but it's spreading across

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JD: you know, other other areas of

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JD: culture and politics, and you know business. And if you see the top level companies, you know, back in 2000, no

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JD: Indian, no, no CEO was Indian, of an Indian origin back in 2000. But you see that now it is changed quite a bit.

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I: Why do you think the Desi culture is so vibrant in Silicon Valley?

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I: I mean, this is as an example. So you know, I mean other parts of the United States right? Indian communities are living in almost all cities in the country.

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I: I mean they have their own festivals, they have their temples, they have their you know, arts and you know, cultural centers. But but the range of cultural activities that happen in in this part of the country,

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I: right? The quality,

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I: right, of vocational training. Like Carnatic music, for example, it's it's actually, I I read it somewhere that outside Chennai,

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I: the place where Carnatic music is being practiced at its best quality is the Silicon Valley.

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I: Why does that happen in

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I: Silicon Valley?

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JD: So, I, one of the biggest reason is,

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JD: and this is the biggest reason that I can say quite confidently,

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JD: is the prosperity of the people.

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JD: You know the economic, the economic prosperity contributes a huge amount

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JD: to providing leisure for people to practice these kinds of activities which are cultural, which are, you know, which are of your aesthetic, you know,

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JD: manifestations of our, you know of our, you know, intellectual capabilities. So that happens when you have you know, when you have a stable economy, when you have a good jobs. When people are, you know they they have they're not having to worry about the bottom layer of Maslow's pyramid. So that's how I see it.

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JD: And then for Carnatic music, of course there is there is, you know, for from the southern part of India there has been the first huge influx of

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JD: you know, software engineers back in back, and that has got also, you know, policies that the...the governments in those states of,

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JD: Chandrababu Naidu, for example, had a huge impact, right? How they have modernized their state that led to software engineers being developed and that's led to software engineers, you know, coming in here, settling down, and you know kind of the first generations of Silicon Valley.

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JD: You you, you could say this. You know talents from India that came in, you know, that that happened there. So, so definitely, that has got a lot to, a lot to do with that. But in general I I feel that the cultural

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JD: manifestations that you see here in Silicon Valley is definitely a reflection of the economic prosperity. This is not a reflection of how things are back home where you do not have that equitable distribution of that prosperity. So you so you have a lot of struggle, you don't you don't have that.

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JD: You know there's not much of affordability of practicing these,

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JD: you know, cultural activities.

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I: Right. So, so the economic prosperity also means that there is disposable income. Enough of it to be able to, you know, send kids to to, you know, learn these art forms and things like that. Right? So...

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JD: Right, right.

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I: So so do you think that...

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I: you know

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I: generally because you know, Indians typically tend to be, you know, among the higher higher skilled, higher educated

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I: minority group in this country, right? So they are doing well for themselves wherever they are in general right, in across the country. But do you think the same kind of talent

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I: among the community members

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I: would probably not be available?

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I: In order to say, you know music, or you know theater, or you know other art forms. Do you think there is a difference in that?

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I: Say somebody in Maryland, big community in you know this is an example. But do we see that same level of performance skills, kids training, and doing all of that? Do you think it would happen at the same rate in other parts?

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JD: Yes, I mean I've seen that it does happen at the same rate. It does happen, although there are pockets right. But yes, there are, you know Silicon Valley, is, is not very unique in that way, it is not. I mean, there are other pockets you will see...

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JD: You know New York, New Jersey. You know Washington, D.C., Balt- you know Baltimore area, Maryland, that area. Los Angeles. There are these areas

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JD: where you have that, where you have those pockets. And you know I mentioned about economic prosperity and I think there's also another aspect to it. The...the population who are...

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JD: taken in for, you know, typical like Silicon Valley, or tech professionals,

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JD: they are also...

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JD: they are also the ones that are, you know, who are trained, or who had a lot of exposed exposition to

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JD: exposure to

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JD: you know culture, and who have been from good, you know, well, you know well-to-do families.

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JD: So there's been also an economic,

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JD: economically quite advantaged people who you know, from India, who immigrated to United States in Silicon Valley.

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JD: So that is also a reason. And there is also a funny saying that why are all Indians good in math. Well it's because

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JD: the H1-B visa processing that requires you to work for tech industries for a certain number of years, and that requires you to have a math degree, and that requires you to [inaudible]. If you just trace it back, you will see that the whole immigration process was based on being, you being good in math. So that's the reason why they are here. So it's not, it's not that everybody is going to be is, is going to be good in maths just because of, just because of the the sample that you see. The sample that you see here is a very privileged chosen sample.

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JD: Right? So that's true from, and that's why they had that exposure to art, music, culture, which you're seeing, being you know, which you seeing being practiced here in their next generation, and also the income part that they mentioned that they have the disposable income like you said, right? Yeah. So so it's like a combination of both.

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I: I see. So in, in

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I: in your in your work, like you know, with this whole book world that that you, you know, starting with your Book Mania, right, the...store that you have run successfully for so long, and the fact that it has

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I: brought you know, Bengali literature for example, you know, and a lot of other Indian literature to people here, instead of having them make a trip all the way to India to get those books. So that work, then your your Dishari Foundation work, you know, cultivating the Bengali language, and the literature and

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I: the history of that, teaching students, and then the library, right. All of this work, right?

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I: Hmm.

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I: How, of course you are Bengali so you you are Desi, you are part of the Desi community, but

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I: do you think if you were just an enthusiast of the Bengali language and the literature, but not necessarily a Desi,

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I: right. Do you think you would have been as successful in this work? Or do you think your being Desi positions you in a specific way in the Silicon Valley?

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JD: Oh, so you're...you're asking if I was, if I were enthusiastic about Bengali, I mean that kind of makes me a Desi, if I were enthusiastic about Bengali.

I: Yeah

JD: So, so is that the question that if I'm...?

I: Yes, yes, I mean in a simple statement, I would say how does being Desi help you succeed in your work in Silicon Valley?

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JD: Okay. So being okay, so...

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JD: Okay. So so well, you know, being being Desi as in like being Indian.

I: Yes

JD: And yet, you know, pursuing that.

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JD: I think to some extent

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JD: there is an, you know...

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JD: Even for, even for people who are, you know, from the US, right. I'm talking about Caucasian people, white people.

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JD: Even they have an interest to learn about things, right, which are not in their culture. There is a huge amount of interest, right? So, so I guess there is an inquisitiveness to learn. Okay, so whenever I'm going to, you know, going with, out in with books or I'm talking to my friends or coworkers about about this bookstore, and

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JD: you know, so so that there is an interest level that okay, they are, you know, this guy is doing this. There must be some passion to it, and I; but you know that's kind of the, but I think I always think that this is going to be something obvious, because I don't expect that

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JD: somebody who is not a Desi would have

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JD: you know enthusiasm to promote Desi, you know Desi content if you will.

I: Yes, yes, sure. I mean yes, content wise, the language right, the access to the language or the access or the interest in the literature, that definitely. But also because...

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I: Okay, so I'm I'm going to ask this question from the, from another angle. Say, if you were somewhere in you know, in other states, right in in any other state.

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I: Do you think that you would have had the same kind of passion and the interest to be able to do this work, right?

JD: Yes.

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I: Do you think you would have been able to do it at the level at which you have been to, being able to do it in Silicon Valley?

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JD: Got it. Yes, okay. So now that's that's okay, now I get your question, okay. So I think it's it would depend upon that specific geography. For example, I do have the same, like same

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JD: extension of one of my business activities in in Southern California, which is,

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JD: which is not Silicon Valley right? Because in Southern California you've got, you know I can tell because all of of the people who come and buy books from me, they're not from tech industries. They are, you know, they could be

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JD: you know, civil engineers, there could be doctors, professors.

00:23:25.340 --> 00:23:38.889

JD: You know, people who work in art. They're also people who are, you know, running restaurants or driving cabs. There's a wide variety of people that are in the diaspora, and even there is a connection there. So I think

00:23:39.310 --> 00:23:44.870

JD: the reason why people come and buy books from Bengal and India,

00:23:44.920 --> 00:23:49.739

JD: because they, they are...because there's nostalgia that plays out there

00:23:49.850 --> 00:23:55.930

JD: to a big extent, and also they sometimes they also buy books for their kids. And that's

00:23:56.000 --> 00:23:59.620

JD: that's pretty universal across,

00:23:59.900 --> 00:24:02.039

JD: between here and the; but I think

00:24:02.250 --> 00:24:07.790

JD: that I I may not be able to start it if I was not in Bay Area, because, in in the Silicon Valley, because

00:24:08.390 --> 00:24:10.060

JD: being in the Silicon Valley

00:24:10.120 --> 00:24:12.289

JD: maybe gave me that

00:24:12.330 --> 00:24:26.250

JD: little push to do this, to...to start something. I mean this whole entrepreneurship, and you know, and doing ventures and all that. This is perhaps kind of in the DNA of of Silicon Valley, which I cannot ignore.

00:24:26.480 --> 00:24:28.630

I: Right. And and do you think that,

00:24:28.740 --> 00:24:47.729

I: because there are so many like, you know, people who you know, like you are in in immersed in the book world. There are others who are probably doing pursuing dance right? Somebody is pursuing music, you know, almost at this level. And they're doing, I mean similar things which are appropriate to that specific discipline, right?

00:24:47.740 --> 00:24:51.689

I: So do you think the synergy between the

00:24:51.890 --> 00:25:05.040

I: the passion or the innate talent in the Desi community, and Silicon Valley, you know the spirit of innovation, the spirit to go ahead and try something. Do you think that is historically accurate, or is it only

00:25:05.290 --> 00:25:16.600

I: you know, it's just a few people like you have been successful in doing this?

JD: No, you're right. I think this is, this is quite accurate. Historically, it is accurate, because...

00:25:18.080 --> 00:25:42.069

JD: The the whole, you know, the whole idea of...to be able to do something, to to build, or something to, or create some enterprise. It doesn't have to be a profitable enterprise, it could be a nonprofit, it would be whatever, right. But out of nothing, to be able to create something, I think that's very innate of the Silicon Valley. I haven't stayed in many other countries,

00:25:42.080 --> 00:25:50.690

JD: but if I were to compare myself living in Calcutta, doing this, I probably wouldn't have been able to do it, or I, you know. So.

00:25:50.780 --> 00:26:00.389

I: Why not, why not? That's a very popular, good like population, dense, it's dense. There's a lot of talented people, you know. But what, what would be missing?

00:26:03.210 --> 00:26:06.800

JD: It's a very good question. I...don't, I don't know. Perhaps,

00:26:07.050 --> 00:26:15.859

JD: you know, perhaps I wouldn't even feel that there would be a need for it, because there are already so many bookshops, there is, everything is hustling bustling, there is so much of

00:26:16.180 --> 00:26:19.590

JD: you know, everything is already available. So,

00:26:19.740 --> 00:26:21.020

JD: so that need

00:26:21.040 --> 00:26:24.789

JD: perhaps is not there. But again, that doesn't mean that you know,

00:26:25.070 --> 00:26:39.430

JD: you know. Flipkart for example, or Amazon, they were born, even though even the books were being sold here in in America or India. So, so but perhaps I think that I would...miss out on having that

00:26:39.530 --> 00:26:40.870

JD: you know, having that

00:26:41.860 --> 00:26:48.430

JD: business need that somebody might look for a book and they might not get it, because it's so much available.

00:26:49.600 --> 00:27:00.330

I: Hmm, yeah. So another question I guess, and and I think it stems from your experience. So the the Desi community at large, right, you know

00:27:00.430 --> 00:27:03.720

I: like all, not only Bengalis, but you know, from different states of India.

00:27:04.930 --> 00:27:19.720

I: Because they're doing so well for themselves here, right? And of course you know, we generalize a lot right, when we talk about these things. But, as they're doing very well for themselves, and they're they're, and also because the numbers have been increasing over the years,

00:27:19.730 --> 00:27:26.490

I: right? So they're definitely creating a cultural impact, and then eventually, it seems they're moving towards the political impact too.

00:27:28.450 --> 00:27:36.779

I: What is your take on, on the Desi community in general? Are they really doing as much as they can or should

00:27:37.380 --> 00:27:39.290

I: in in the area? Or

00:27:39.340 --> 00:27:42.360

I: could it have been different, could it have taken a different direction?

00:27:43.190 --> 00:27:48.229

JD: So that's yeah, that's a good question, and I I strongly feel that it

00:27:48.300 --> 00:27:54.200

JD: it should, it should have, there's lots of opportunity of improvement and I think it should have been...

00:27:55.010 --> 00:28:09.179

JD: I would have loved to see a different direction in the general thinking of this. Although if you see from the...the Desi community, like any educated society is supposed to behave, this is a very liberal community.

00:28:09.280 --> 00:28:20.230

JD: But, that liberalism is, but that liberalism and that whole idea of you know, equality, and trying to, you know, take

00:28:20.340 --> 00:28:23.290

JD: take the, you know, the best of what you would

00:28:23.350 --> 00:28:26.010

JD: consider, you know, philosophically as

00:28:26.090 --> 00:28:35.070

JD: philanthropic approach as possible. I think that there is, there is more that could be done there, right? So, there there is definitely,

00:28:35.360 --> 00:28:36.830

JD: there's I I would be,

00:28:37.140 --> 00:28:38.989

JD: you know, I would say that

00:28:39.270 --> 00:28:42.630

JD: this company can do much, much better than that; what they are doing today.

00:28:43.230 --> 00:28:55.619

I: Right. For example, somebody told me in another interview, was that you know there are many temples, spaces of worship. People go and do a lot of, you know, festivities, pujas, and everything.

00:28:56.280 --> 00:29:02.970

I: Yet the actual spiritual connection, for which the temple stand right, is missing in the community.

00:29:03.540 --> 00:29:05.440

I: I mean, do you have a parallel

00:29:05.540 --> 00:29:15.569

I: feeling about, you know, maybe not to this, because this person is involved in religious practices, so you mentioned that. But in your thinking, do you think a parallel of this exists?

00:29:15.600 --> 00:29:29.709

JD: Yeah. So, so that's yeah. So I was kind of hinting around those lines, not necessarily on the temple religion, but really about a community, about a community that is so prosperous. I would expect that this community to have more giving,

00:29:29.800 --> 00:29:35.209

JD: you know, more giving nature that is giving back to the community in various ways.

00:29:35.690 --> 00:29:42.980

JD: That would be something that this community at large should be engaged in in a much, you know, in a much bigger way. So I find that to be not

00:29:43.080 --> 00:29:54.899

JD: very you know forthcoming. Of course there are organizations, and I volunteer for another organization called Association for India's Development. There are a few people who are, who are like, who have a community giving

00:29:54.930 --> 00:30:10.260

JD: at- you know, attitude to the core, right? I mean, they're like the doctors be on, you know, borders, and they're amazing people out there who are exceptional. But if I look at the general, if I look at how many of them fall into that category,

00:30:10.700 --> 00:30:18.950

JD: that is, that is not very promising. I'm, I'm sometimes disappointed, right, that I don't see a lot of people who are really thinking

00:30:19.030 --> 00:30:21.320

JD: the like, true...

00:30:21.760 --> 00:30:38.740

JD: you know, truly about everything. Not only about, you know, about poverge poverty, equality, here, both it's in the US and also back home. You know, the climate changes, all these different aspects which are very important issues of today's world, right. It's one thing to have

00:30:38.850 --> 00:30:52.499

JD: have a you know, a a very good GDP and a Wall, Wall Street, and stock markets that are skyrocketing. But, there is also a very large amount of price that has to be paid through the price of you know,

00:30:52.820 --> 00:30:57.110

JD: lives of people who don't have access to,

00:30:57.130 --> 00:31:01.179

JD: you know, clean water, education, all these basic amenities.

00:31:01.210 --> 00:31:02.889

JD: I think the Silicon Valley can do

00:31:02.910 --> 00:31:10.799

JD: much better in that area. And again I'm optimistic that you know many, many people are already doing it, but I think we we need to see a lot more.

00:31:11.130 --> 00:31:17.330

I: Okay. So when you look back at your journey, you know, over 20 years,

00:31:17.410 --> 00:31:25.710

I: how does Silicon valley, and you have said a little bit about that, but I'm going to ask you again; how does Silicon Valley influence your identity, as a Desi?

00:31:28.500 --> 00:31:46.310

JD: In in here, in Silicon Valley, how does the Desi? Okay so, I feel that that melting pot, that melting pot I was talking to you before. So I think it's it's like, it's sucking us all into it right? So it's all sucking, sucking us into it. So now it's

00:31:46.360 --> 00:31:50.359

JD: yeah, I'm Desi, at the same time American,

00:31:50.500 --> 00:32:02.389

JD: and at the same time a Bengali, and you know, in at the same time Indian at the same. So it's really that, you know, a very hodgepodge of of different things that are now mixed into my identity.

00:32:02.530 --> 00:32:08.180

JD: And at the best way, and sometimes so it's very hard for me to identify what I am today

00:32:08.330 --> 00:32:11.910

JD: versus what I was, you know, a decade or two decades back.

00:32:12.300 --> 00:32:21.240

JD: And it's also, so it, so when I go back home and I meet with people who are, who have seen, who are seeing me after many years. So,

00:32:21.760 --> 00:32:33.910

JD: so I I, they are the best judge, those people. Because the people who are seeing you on every day they they don't know what your identity. You always feel that this is exactly how I've been always so what, nothing has changed right? So.

00:32:34.270 --> 00:32:37.699

JD: So I guess, what I hear from from them is that,

00:32:37.990 --> 00:32:40.780

JD: the viewpoints are very different.

00:32:40.890 --> 00:32:49.370

JD: The viewpoints that we have here. So Silicon Valley has molded by thinking in a very different, a very positive, you know, I find it very positive way.

00:32:49.460 --> 00:32:53.040

JD: You know, made me much more community oriented.

00:32:53.070 --> 00:32:55.299

JD: Maybe, you know,

00:32:55.630 --> 00:33:08.330

JD: you know, look at, yeah, of course all the all the prosperities and everything's out there. But there's also, you know, there's also a greater good that awaits to be done, kind of, kind of mental state.

00:33:08.340 --> 00:33:20.829

JD: So I think those are some of the biggest things which which, I think to your earlier question whether I could have been able to do that when I was in Calcutta or not. So I think those, that that I wouldn't have been able to do, so that way it is a transformation for me.

00:33:21.550 --> 00:33:24.290

I: And you think Silicon Valley has played a role in this?

00:33:24.380 --> 00:33:31.750

JD: I think so. Yes, Silicon Valley has, has that DNA of entrepreneurialism

00:33:31.970 --> 00:33:51.590

JD: and you can do a startup, you can start it in your garage. And think of our library, right. It it used to be started in a conference room. So I think, I think that way it is...shown us, historically these things are possible. And when you have historical, you know pathways laid out in that manner, so you know that yeah, it's got to be

00:33:51.700 --> 00:33:57.660

JD: doable. So yeah, let's take a risk. Let's try this out. So and that that has, that has worked out.

00:33:57.790 --> 00:34:06.600

I: Right, great. So my my last question technically. So, how do you foresee your future or your family's future in Silicon Valley?

00:34:07.900 --> 00:34:14.189

JD: So I have kids, so my kids are going to college, and they, one will be going to college and the others has finished college.

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JD: So I guess

00:34:17.389 --> 00:34:18.549

JD: it will be,

00:34:19.310 --> 00:34:30.660

JD: it is yet to be seen how it turns out, for you know, in the in the long run. Because, for us it is one thing like I was saying, we are all going, you know, going through a melting pot.

00:34:30.820 --> 00:34:34.680

JD: But for our next generation, it is going to be

00:34:35.560 --> 00:34:54.910

JD: it's going to be a pot for themselves, right. It's not necessarily the, it's, they themselves are, you know, having that whole identity. And now the...the you know, going forward it, you know how my life is going to change is how their life, and our life are going to interact. Right? So I think that's where...

00:34:55.690 --> 00:34:57.239

JD: I think it helps that

00:34:57.440 --> 00:35:12.270

JD: if this newer generation has got that connection to the roots in some way, I'm not saying that they should be kind of bound to the roots, no. But but just having some ideas of how things evolve. I think if they have the whole big perspective,

00:35:13.760 --> 00:35:15.379

JD: that's always helpful. And,

00:35:15.450 --> 00:35:16.149

JD: you know

00:35:16.280 --> 00:35:30.980

JD: we were immigrants. So generally immigrants, what I've seen is that they're all people who are very, you know, hard working. This is like the stereotype, we're hardworking. You come here with \$100 and then you build everything. You know, that's really the story. For for them,

00:35:30.990 --> 00:35:46.699

JD: hopefully, you know, maybe they'll immigrate to somewhere else. But, if they're going to be staying here, so for them it's going to be very different for them. This is going to be their birthplace and this is where they've spent their, the rest of their lives. And so, it's interesting. I I mean, I don't know really to answer your question.

00:35:46.710 --> 00:35:51.790

JD: How the future is going to look like.

I: Yeah. So, but in general, say

00:35:52.590 --> 00:36:05.149

I: in terms of the Desi community. Are you hopeful about, the Desi community in Silicon Valley. I mean prosperity, more technology, of course, that will probably keep coming. But in general, are you hopeful about the community?

00:36:05.640 --> 00:36:08.249

I: Or you have other thoughts?

00:36:08.770 --> 00:36:11.989

JD: Yeah, my my thoughts are are that

00:36:12.860 --> 00:36:20.910

JD: over time the fork will, the fork in the road is that, where which directions of the Desi community takes. That is,

00:36:21.030 --> 00:36:33.420

JD: they become more you know, absorbed in...really the upper class lifestyles and everything, or they kind of do retain some of the traits and

00:36:33.490 --> 00:36:44.050

JD: and continue their giving back, which was very important for me. For me it is very important that you know, you have to have that, and you know that journey is

00:36:44.640 --> 00:36:55.540

JD: that's really the journey. So I think that is TBD on which direction you go. Probably there will be a split that you will see people going in...either directions.

00:36:56.330 --> 00:36:57.779

JD: So yeah.

00:36:57.820 --> 00:37:00.080

I: That's, that's great. Because,

00:37:00.180 --> 00:37:07.479

I: yeah, I think because, because there are these dualities, I think in in the community, you know. Some people...

00:37:07.660 --> 00:37:14.389

I: and that's what I've been hearing for, especially from people who have been here, at least, you know, 20 years like you or longer.

00:37:14.510 --> 00:37:21.189

I: You know. I noticed this thing that, all of you are observing that there is a need to do some more.

00:37:21.310 --> 00:37:25.399

I: But different kinds of needs identified by each one of you, but yeah. Anything else?

00:37:25.730 --> 00:37:37.299

JD: Yeah, that's what I was saying. So what I see is that the fork in the road is the whole idea, that you know that the whole idea of inclusiveness, right, inclusiveness

00:37:37.370 --> 00:37:42.369

JD: within the US Community, within the community with India, within, you know, different minority groups.

00:37:42.550 --> 00:37:45.359

JD: That whole idea, right, of inclusiveness.

00:37:45.440 --> 00:37:50.969

JD: Because our diversity is really the factor that has shaped India, in over,

00:37:50.990 --> 00:37:52.309

JD: you know, over time.

00:37:52.570 --> 00:38:04.200

JD: And so that's really the key, Mantra, if you will. Mantra, your namesake. Right? So that's where I think is, the is the key thing that we have to foster in a generation.

00:38:04.240 --> 00:38:05.450

JD: Keep that active.

00:38:05.530 --> 00:38:06.180

I: Right.

00:38:07.260 --> 00:38:15.709

I: Yeah, great. Thank you very much Mr. Das for your interview, and sharing your views about the Desi community in Silicon Valley.

00:38:15.860 --> 00:38:21.130

I: It's my pleasure, my pleasure. Thank you.