

Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History

Jayan Ramankutty Interview

00:00:01.530 --> 00:00:14.599

Interviewer (I) Okay. So, good afternoon Jayan and thank you for agreeing to do an interview for the "Desis of Silicon Valley Speak: An Oral History" at the

00:00:14.810 --> 00:00:25.450

(I) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library of San Jose State University. So we'll start off with the very first question, and that is tell us a bit about yourself,

00:00:25.480 --> 00:00:28.460

(I) and describe your journey up until now.

00:00:28.970 --> 00:00:30.479

Jayan Ramankutty (JR) Okay, yeah.

00:00:30.710 --> 00:00:35.360

(JR) Thank you, thank you Mantra. My name is Jayan Ramankutty.

00:00:35.800 --> 00:00:39.099

(JR) I was born in a small town in

00:00:39.140 --> 00:00:44.350

(JR) in Tamil Nadu. In those days it used to be called Madras,

00:00:44.750 --> 00:00:49.809

(JR) close to a small town called Coimbatore. There's a

00:00:50.190 --> 00:00:56.950

(JR) hilly area called Anaimalai, and up in the hills there are about 4 or 5 different tea plantations.

00:00:57.160 --> 00:01:02.489

(JR) And I was born in one of those tea plantations, where my father was a medical officer

00:01:02.520 --> 00:01:04.890

(JR) and that was one of his first jobs, and I was

00:01:06.190 --> 00:01:16.609

(JR) born in the tea plantation. I don't think there was much other facility there, and eventually my father moved to Coimbatore, where he practiced medicine.

00:01:16.670 --> 00:01:17.839

(JR) And

00:01:18.030 --> 00:01:19.880

(JR) I grew,

00:01:20.530 --> 00:01:36.249

(JR) most of my school days I spent between two towns in Tamil Nadu. One is Coimbatore and the other one is Madurai. And that's because my father was working for the government medical services, and so he kept getting transferred between those two places every three years.

00:01:36.520 --> 00:01:38.089

(JR) So I finished my

00:01:38.270 --> 00:01:57.000

(JR) 11 years of schooling, and one year of university between those two towns. And in 1975, I got my admission to BITS Pilani, which was quite an interesting episode because my mother actually wanted me to

00:01:57.010 --> 00:02:08.820

(JR) study in a local university in Coimbatore itself. But I got, I got rejected, not because of my marks, but because I was one of the forward, so-called forward classes.

00:02:08.930 --> 00:02:20.919

(JR) And there was a lot of things going on during that time where they had manipulated the marks and the thresholds for people to get mid-admissions in the local university

00:02:20.950 --> 00:02:27.719

(JR) based on your class, you know. And so mostly it was reserved for backward class, backward communities.

00:02:27.930 --> 00:02:32.720

(JR) It was all corrupt. And so I'm really thankful

00:02:32.940 --> 00:02:37.760

(JR) that the system was so corrupt that it pushed me out of that region

00:02:37.850 --> 00:02:45.240

(JR) and that made me apply for BITS Pilani. I think I'm really thankful for that, because had I, had that not been the case

00:02:45.300 --> 00:02:50.969

(JR) I would never have gone to Pilani, and my parents would not, never have probably accepted. But anyway, after

00:02:51.170 --> 00:02:53.340

(JR) I joined with BITS Pilani,

00:02:53.870 --> 00:03:01.250

(JR) within about three months, I got admission to REC (Karnataka Regional Engineering College or KREC) Surathkal as well, or two months, about a month to month and a half.

00:03:01.950 --> 00:03:08.950

(JR) And my mother was very keen that I come back because Surathkal happened to be closer to Coimbatore than Pilani was.

00:03:09.200 --> 00:03:12.370

(JR) And thanks to my dad,

00:03:12.460 --> 00:03:16.739

(JR) whose patient was a professor at REC Surathkal,

00:03:16.760 --> 00:03:23.589

(JR) so he was able to check with him to see the standing for BITS Pilani with REC Surathkal, and that professor

00:03:23.670 --> 00:03:32.540

(JR) luckily told my dad that if I liked Pilani I should stay back because Pilani was really a good school. And

00:03:33.040 --> 00:03:47.959

(JR) I, I really have to thank my dad because had did not been for him, I would have probably been forced to pack up and come back to REC Surathkal. I don't think it would have been bad as a school environment, but I really think the time I went to BITS Pilani,

00:03:48.400 --> 00:03:56.260

(JR) the system of education at BITS Pilani really helped me shape my own thinking a lot, because

00:03:56.320 --> 00:04:02.709

(JR) it was for the first time I was actually getting exposed to the different communities from within India itself.

00:04:02.780 --> 00:04:16.039

(JR) I was keen on in, you know, mixing with other communities, but I had never had a chance being in Coimbatore. I did meet with Gujaratis and Marathis, and Saurashtrians. But it was the first time I was actually

00:04:16.209 --> 00:04:22.410

(JR) coming across people from Orissa and Nagaland and Mizoram. I mean that,

00:04:22.430 --> 00:04:27.900

(JR) I think BITS really gave me an opportunity to get to know people from the rest of the,

00:04:28.080 --> 00:04:31.620

(JR) the rest of the country. So it was a little microcosm, so

00:04:31.640 --> 00:04:34.650

(JR) I really have to thank BITS Pilani for giving me that

00:04:34.740 --> 00:04:37.949

(JR) sort of a platform to play on.

00:04:38.090 --> 00:04:44.040

(JR) And what really drew me there was also another friend of mine who was from,

00:04:44.140 --> 00:04:48.529

(JR) from BITS Pilani, but he was from Coimbatore. He actually told me before I left

00:04:48.780 --> 00:04:52.579

(JR) that it's in the middle of a desert but once you're on the campus

00:04:52.850 --> 00:05:00.090

(JR) it's like a paradise. So that's all I remembered. So once, so by trip to Pilani was also

00:05:00.240 --> 00:05:02.230

(JR) luckily for me,

00:05:02.770 --> 00:05:05.429

(JR) a few years before that, '73,

00:05:05.570 --> 00:05:14.550

(JR) I had represented Tamil Nadu at the Republic Day parade in Delhi. So that gave me an opportunity,

00:05:14.570 --> 00:05:22.639

(JR) two years before I left for Pilani, to really understand train travel, long distance train travel

00:05:22.690 --> 00:05:24.749

(JR) from Coimbatore to Delhi,

00:05:24.770 --> 00:05:32.900

(JR) which actually in those days was taking 2 days and 2 nights.

(I) Wow. (JR) So yeah it was, it was quite an experience.

00:05:33.220 --> 00:05:40.480

(JR) And so I was prepared for that, you know...some of my friends who ended up coming to Pilani,

00:05:40.560 --> 00:05:49.619

(JR) their parents were also traveling with them, so there was always some chaperone with us, so it was not that risky. Delhi was not a safe place, which I

00:05:49.780 --> 00:05:51.349

(JR) soon came to know.

00:05:51.410 --> 00:05:56.900

(JR) Because on one of our trips to Pilani, when we got down in Nizamuddin

00:05:57.060 --> 00:06:06.170

(JR) and took...we were ready to take a taxi to ISBT (Inter-State Bus Terminal) from where we took the buses from

00:06:06.310 --> 00:06:08.069

(JR) the terminals to,

00:06:08.550 --> 00:06:10.509

(JR) to Pilani.

00:06:10.910 --> 00:06:18.509

(JR) That driver apparently got out of line, and he got beat up by a whole bunch of other taxi drivers. That's the first time I saw

00:06:18.660 --> 00:06:22.509

(JR) how unruly Delhi could be, you know, and

00:06:22.680 --> 00:06:25.759

(JR) but we managed to get through that. And

00:06:26.000 --> 00:06:31.399

(JR) the...Pilani, you know, was a great atmosphere in the sense

00:06:31.510 --> 00:06:46.580

(JR) all of us were residential scholars, and we had to interact, learn to interact. We all came from different parts of the country, so we brought our own little culture, micro cultures. So we got to experience what others,

00:06:46.930 --> 00:06:50.099

(JR) in terms of food, you know,

00:06:50.160 --> 00:06:55.430

(JR) music and dance, and all that stuff and philosophy also in a large way.

00:06:56.930 --> 00:06:58.840

(JR) But for me,

00:06:59.560 --> 00:07:01.969

(JR) the idea of

00:07:02.030 --> 00:07:12.269

(JR) my undergraduate was all driven by my interest in electronics. Which, as a high school student, I was so fascinated

00:07:12.450 --> 00:07:21.120

(JR) that I wanted to understand "how do radios work?" Because, you turn a knob and you're able to pick up signals and you get different stations,

00:07:21.300 --> 00:07:32.450

(JR) and you can play music out of something which looks like a black box, it's a box with black box inside. There's nothing visible in terms of how this whole thing is coming together.

00:07:32.910 --> 00:07:34.540

(JR) So electronics

00:07:34.580 --> 00:07:46.059

(JR) was a motivational factor for me to stick it out in Pilani. So, educationally I was motivated. Culturally, I was motivated. And it really gave me an opportunity to start

00:07:46.790 --> 00:07:47.650

(JR) sort of

00:07:47.950 --> 00:07:54.630

(JR) learn how to become an adult, you know. It was like

00:07:54.680 --> 00:08:09.489

(JR) you know, yes, we as students in any college, any especially residential scholars, you know, there's a lot of experimentation going on. Definitely, you know, there was no,

00:08:09.500 --> 00:08:18.160

(JR) no restrictions in that sense, although you know it was restricted. So, you know, you couldn't have alcohol in the campus and all that. But those were mostly

00:08:18.670 --> 00:08:22.700

(JR) on the, on the books. But how it got regulated was,

00:08:22.750 --> 00:08:31.850

(JR) it's very hard. But so I think we, we figured out how to self regulate ourselves and learn how to become adults. And the interesting part is

00:08:32.390 --> 00:08:34.410

(JR) even after, I mean it's been,

00:08:34.490 --> 00:08:36.179

(JR) it's been what

00:08:36.799 --> 00:08:41.540

(JR) 42 years now since we graduated. I graduated in 1980.

00:08:41.750 --> 00:08:44.220

(JR) In next month,

00:08:44.780 --> 00:08:49.900

(JR) about 140 of my classmates are getting together

00:08:49.970 --> 00:09:06.559

(JR) in Jaipur as a reunion, class reunion. And we still meet and we still enjoy each other's company. I just recently came back from Australia. I have lots of my classmates in Australia.

00:09:06.920 --> 00:09:07.810

(JR) And

00:09:08.230 --> 00:09:25.390

(JR) they have their spouses actually look at us in awe, and wonder what's going on with these guys, haven't they ever grown out of their teenage years? In some ways, yes. Because, you know, we still remember a lot of the good times we had, and that's the one time in our life

00:09:25.640 --> 00:09:35.139

(JR) where we as a group stayed together for 5 years, and 5 is not small, you know, and especially as you're starting to

00:09:35.440 --> 00:09:37.010

(JR) you know, become an adult.

00:09:37.140 --> 00:09:38.170

(JR) And so

00:09:38.920 --> 00:09:41.120

(JR) I think a lot of that thing shaped

00:09:41.230 --> 00:09:43.970

(JR) my thinking, my values.

00:09:43.990 --> 00:09:50.250

(JR) my perception of reality, what you know, what I should consider important, what I

00:09:50.280 --> 00:09:52.120

(JR) don't have to consider important.

00:09:52.290 --> 00:09:54.470

(JR) Because even in Pilani,

00:09:54.580 --> 00:10:06.190

(JR) they left it mostly on the kids to decide on what classes to take, which professors to attend, and whether we should go to a class or not, there was no attendance required.

00:10:06.270 --> 00:10:15.820

(JR) And so a lot of that responsibility was taught by way of education itself, and that I'm really thankful for, because that's

00:10:16.430 --> 00:10:18.890

(JR) taught me how I want to treat

00:10:18.990 --> 00:10:24.449

(JR) my own progress, career, and things like that. So, even at that time

00:10:24.740 --> 00:10:26.940

(JR) as we were graduating,

00:10:27.160 --> 00:10:29.489

(JR) almost 80% of my class

00:10:29.620 --> 00:10:31.369

(JR) wanted to come to the U.S.

00:10:31.420 --> 00:10:35.080

(JR) And I didn't know why, because I was from a small town.

00:10:35.270 --> 00:10:38.230

(JR) I had, you know, I had heard about

00:10:38.480 --> 00:10:40.859

(JR) U.S. because I had a pen pal.

00:10:40.900 --> 00:10:43.460

(JR) And this girl was in,

00:10:43.500 --> 00:10:49.090

(JR) she used to live in Kansas. We used to write quite frequently to each other.

00:10:49.140 --> 00:10:53.729

(JR) And I got connected to her through at that time, U.S...

00:10:53.960 --> 00:10:55.920

(JR) you know, what is that thing

00:10:56.060 --> 00:11:02.170

(JR) USIS and (I) USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services)?

00:11:02.620 --> 00:11:08.260

(JR) Yeah, and then they had an America something magazine was there. So I used to subscribe in Madurai.

00:11:08.480 --> 00:11:13.930

(JR) I was in my seventh grade or eighth grade, I think. Seventh; sixth grade.

00:11:13.980 --> 00:11:20.900

(JR) That's when I got connected. So I had some idea about the U.S. as a country.

00:11:21.060 --> 00:11:28.730

(JR) My mother's oldest; My older sister was at that time resident in the U.S.,

00:11:28.920 --> 00:11:38.060

(JR) because her husband was a teaching professor, he was a professor, visiting professor at Rhode Island. So, we had some idea about U.S.

00:11:38.230 --> 00:11:50.229

(JR) I couldn't say that, yeah, we knew everything about the U.S. I didn't even know all the different states, even today I don't think I know all the different states. I've visited many of them.

00:11:50.430 --> 00:11:51.210

(JR) But,

00:11:51.520 --> 00:11:58.539

(JR) but, so that's the background I had when I came to Pilani, but many of my classmates

00:11:58.640 --> 00:12:02.199

(JR) were, in their final years, were already preparing

00:12:02.320 --> 00:12:13.390

(JR) to write the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and GRE (Graduate Record Examinations). I didn't even know what a GRE, what a TOEFL was. But since everybody was writing I said, okay, let me also write. So I also wrote

00:12:13.730 --> 00:12:15.419

(JR) and I

00:12:15.460 --> 00:12:26.469

(JR) got my marks. And then I, I thought that was the end of it. But then I found out, no, you have to again, now you have to pick the school, and you have to apply to each school, and you will send in the application fee.

00:12:26.560 --> 00:12:30.160

(JR) And soon I said, no, this doesn't make any sense to me.

00:12:30.290 --> 00:12:34.220

(JR) Why am I? I just, I just finished five years of college.

00:12:34.390 --> 00:12:37.740

(JR) I'm supposed to have some skills that I can

00:12:37.900 --> 00:12:40.909

(JR) take into the market. Why am I again,

00:12:40.960 --> 00:12:47.370

(JR) you know, writing again another exam. And why am I going overseas? What's the, what's the objective? I couldn't quite

00:12:47.390 --> 00:12:48.820

(JR) come to terms with it.

00:12:48.870 --> 00:12:52.539

(JR) And by then I got a job, full time job in,

00:12:52.590 --> 00:12:54.960

(JR) in India. It's a,

00:12:55.230 --> 00:12:58.589

(JR) in Baroda, there was a company called ORG Systems.

00:12:59.530 --> 00:13:00.570

(JR) And,

00:13:00.810 --> 00:13:08.320

(JR) as luck would have it, you know, in '75 and all these companies were packed and shipped out of India. All the multinationals,

00:13:08.520 --> 00:13:13.849

(JR) IBM. IBM had gone, Coca-Cola had gone. So most of the jobs are gone in these

00:13:13.910 --> 00:13:15.400

(JR) big companies

00:13:15.560 --> 00:13:18.410

(JR) and so small companies that come up because of that.

00:13:18.620 --> 00:13:30.800

(JR) Companies like ORG Systems, HCL, it all happened simply because, or what is that CMC, Computer Maintenance Corporation. All that happened because

00:13:31.010 --> 00:13:32.579

(JR) of the fact that

00:13:33.020 --> 00:13:35.100

(JR) IBM had left a huge vacuum

00:13:35.140 --> 00:13:39.590

(JR) and that was getting filled up, and I had a job with ORG Systems.

00:13:39.610 --> 00:13:45.519

(JR) And Tata (corporation) was also hiring a ton of people, and through the campus interviews many of us also had,

00:13:45.790 --> 00:13:51.659

(JR) had jobs. Most of the guys in my class, what they were doing is they were picking up the jobs,

00:13:51.890 --> 00:13:59.590

(JR) but they'd applied for the U.S. universities. [inaudible] hang around for, for six months or so.

00:13:59.630 --> 00:14:17.359

(JR) And then they'll join the fall semester. And so I, as I started digging up I found out, no, there's more money to be spent. Then I have to get more money to spend on my master's program. It didn't make any sense to me, because I ultimately I'll have to go

00:14:17.730 --> 00:14:19.950

(JR) go back to my dad and

00:14:20.090 --> 00:14:38.409

(JR) sell them the idea of me going overseas and him financing again. And BITS Pilani was not cheap, because my dad was not making all that money, because my dad used to work for the government medical at that time. He was making reasonable money for us to manage, but

00:14:39.480 --> 00:14:42.369

(JR) he never told me, but eventually I found out when

00:14:42.410 --> 00:14:45.949

(JR) I had settled down here and he was visiting me. He used to tell me

00:14:46.310 --> 00:14:47.870

(JR) how he,

00:14:47.930 --> 00:14:56.730

(JR) you know, even 200 rupees a month was not a small money at that time for him, and our mess bill used to be 300 bucks.

00:14:56.750 --> 00:15:02.200

(JR) And I used to think, oh shit, I never bothered. I used to enjoy my mess, mess

00:15:02.360 --> 00:15:04.930

(JR) feasts, right? So,

00:15:06.080 --> 00:15:10.559

(JR) so I made a quick decision. I said, no, I just I don't, I don't want to

00:15:10.850 --> 00:15:15.060

(JR) go through the process again. I'll just pick up the job. So,

00:15:16.230 --> 00:15:18.450

(JR) it's around that time

00:15:18.790 --> 00:15:25.310

(JR) I got to know more about the U.S. I would still say it's not to the extent that I

00:15:25.360 --> 00:15:27.370

(JR) I thought I knew enough about.

00:15:27.390 --> 00:15:28.550

(I) Hmm.

00:15:28.890 --> 00:15:31.630

(JR) And I clearly didn't have any idea what

00:15:31.930 --> 00:15:48.879

(JR) "Silicon Valley" per se. Did not know. I wouldn't say I was, I was a, I knew everything about Silicon valley or anything like that. I, in fact, actually, even at that time I knew more about Kansas and Virginia and all that stuff because of the, and Rhode Island, because

00:15:48.900 --> 00:15:53.670

(JR) of my aunt having been to Rhode Island. We had seen some pictures of that.

00:15:53.920 --> 00:15:56.220

(JR) I didn't know anything about San JosÃ©.

00:15:56.370 --> 00:16:01.700

(JR) In fact, I didn't even know any of the history behind why San JosÃ©

00:16:01.720 --> 00:16:09.210

(JR) was spelled the way it was spelled, and pronounced differently. So all of that happened much later.

00:16:09.370 --> 00:16:11.360

(JR) But I picked up my job.

00:16:11.470 --> 00:16:12.970

(JR) And,

00:16:13.030 --> 00:16:16.080

(JR) and I decided that's it, I'm just gonna

00:16:16.280 --> 00:16:18.980

(JR) see what I can do. Because, you know,

00:16:19.090 --> 00:16:20.560

(JR) the,

00:16:21.190 --> 00:16:28.060

(JR) the reason is, I was so fascinated by electronics at that time. And when I moved to Pilani also,

00:16:28.320 --> 00:16:39.790

(JR) my plan was to do something in the electronic space, you know, actually manufacture some, something electronics in India. And so,

00:16:40.600 --> 00:16:43.660

(JR) while I was there in the campus itself,

00:16:44.880 --> 00:16:46.290

(JR) you know, there was a lot of

00:16:46.470 --> 00:16:51.260

(JR) friends were trying to build their own stereo amplifiers. And,

00:16:51.380 --> 00:16:57.930

(JR) in fact, my friend and I, who the two of us actually hung around quite a bit, and in fact,

00:16:58.120 --> 00:16:59.539

(JR) as luck would have it,

00:16:59.690 --> 00:17:05.839

(JR) he, his parents and my parents had known each other. This I did not know until I landed in Pilani.

00:17:06.119 --> 00:17:07.420

(JR) And,

00:17:07.730 --> 00:17:13.460

(JR) he had also gone to Republic Day parade. I had also gone to Republic Day parade.

00:17:13.560 --> 00:17:18.059

(JR) And it turned out his name was Vinod, and there was a guy in my,

00:17:18.130 --> 00:17:27.150

(JR) during my time of visiting Republic Day parade, and I had a guy from Sainik school (military school in India) with that same name in my tent.

00:17:27.460 --> 00:17:41.929

(JR) And he had a peculiar behavior where he used to go to sleep with his full uniform, so that when he woke up in the morning he didn't have to get dressed up. Because we had to, we were all woken up at 4 in the, 4:30 in the morning.

00:17:42.020 --> 00:17:50.289

(JR) Because 5:30 we had to finish breakfast and have to be, 5:30 we had to finish our tea and have to be at the parade ground.

00:17:51.020 --> 00:17:52.749

(JR) And so this gu,

00:17:53.100 --> 00:18:00.630

(JR) except the beret, he will wear all his uniform and go to sleep. And so on the first day when I came to Pilani, somebody

00:18:00.850 --> 00:18:05.799

(JR) you know we were all, you know, we were all young, 16 year olds, 17 year olds.

00:18:06.240 --> 00:18:21.329

(JR) Actually 18, right? Yeah. 18 year olds, 16, 17 years old. We're just chatting with each other, and I mentioned that I, you know, that I'd been to Delhi before for Republic Day parade. And in fact, the interesting part was

00:18:21.730 --> 00:18:25.089

(JR) that my group, the group in which I went,

00:18:25.210 --> 00:18:33.730

(JR) we ended up winning the banner. You know, every year its the competition for different states, and for third year in a row

00:18:34.100 --> 00:18:41.859

(JR) Tamil Nadu had won the banner. So we get to keep the banner. So I was in that group that came back with the banner.

00:18:44.040 --> 00:18:49.689

(JR) So I said, oh I got to meet this guy. Because we know the fellow. Because I know this guy, he's the guy.

00:18:49.750 --> 00:18:50.590

(JR) So we

00:18:51.700 --> 00:18:58.439

(JR) So I was trying to understand more about, you know, the guy said, "No, he's in that, he's just in that room right now, we can go check him out."

00:18:58.720 --> 00:19:00.220

(JR) So,

00:19:00.390 --> 00:19:07.950

(JR) but I went and looked at, looked at him. "No, no, this is a different Vinod." So I'm now, completely confused.

00:19:08.000 --> 00:19:08.880

(JR) I said,

00:19:08.900 --> 00:19:11.740

(JR) "Did you go for Republic Day parade?" He said, "Yeah."

00:19:12.350 --> 00:19:13.400

(JR) And

00:19:14.020 --> 00:19:15.860

(JR) "are you from Sainik?" He said, "Yeah."

00:19:16.300 --> 00:19:16.970

(JR) And,

00:19:17.150 --> 00:19:32.980

(JR) nothing seems to add up. He doesn't look like the same Vinod. So we finally resolved everything a few years later that, he had actually gone in '74, I had gone in '73. And there was the other Vinod,

00:19:33.010 --> 00:19:42.960

(JR) also was from Sainik, but the different Sainik, not the Sainik for me, the campus that he was from. But, during that process we figured out

00:19:43.480 --> 00:19:44.880

(JR) that his dad

00:19:44.960 --> 00:19:48.769

(JR) was a medical officer in Anaimalai, near Coimbatore.

00:19:49.030 --> 00:19:50.220

(JR) And,

00:19:50.260 --> 00:19:56.139

(JR) and he was my father's colleague. I mean they were all actually in different

00:19:57.000 --> 00:20:01.769

(JR) tea plantations, but they are all medical officers. So they knew each other.

00:20:02.080 --> 00:20:11.740

(JR) And then I found out, his mother and my mother had grown up in the same town in Kerala, Palakkad, and they knew each other. So, so we became,

00:20:11.760 --> 00:20:19.749

(JR) you know, sort of close friends and the families used to; so, during vacations we used to plan things together.

00:20:20.070 --> 00:20:21.789

(JR) So now, finally,

00:20:22.580 --> 00:20:26.379

(JR) he was also interested in electronics. I was interested in electronics.

00:20:26.500 --> 00:20:27.600

(JR) And

00:20:27.720 --> 00:20:32.360

(JR) in the final year, he got into, I got into pure electronics

00:20:32.630 --> 00:20:34.670

(JR) and he got into

00:20:34.810 --> 00:20:39.539

(JR) instrumentation, and so he had access to a lot of labs

00:20:39.570 --> 00:20:43.070

(JR) throughout the year. He could go in any time.

00:20:43.730 --> 00:20:48.430

(JR) So he and I decided we make stereo amplifiers, one for each of us.

00:20:48.650 --> 00:20:53.719

(JR) So we actually got a circuit, the Philips circuit that was available.

00:20:53.900 --> 00:20:55.030

(JR) And

00:20:55.400 --> 00:20:57.719

(JR) we used his lab,

00:20:58.230 --> 00:21:03.020

(JR) etched out 5 PCBs (printed circuit board), 2 for him, 2 for me, 1 for spare.

00:21:03.270 --> 00:21:05.130

(JR) And we started making the,

00:21:05.270 --> 00:21:06.840

(JR) the amplifier.

00:21:07.030 --> 00:21:09.589

(JR) And when we built the amplifier,

00:21:10.450 --> 00:21:11.389

(JR) and when we

00:21:11.550 --> 00:21:13.510

(JR) tried to turn on

00:21:13.870 --> 00:21:15.120

(JR) the amplifier,

00:21:15.340 --> 00:21:29.129

(JR) things kept blowing up. You know, there was one transistor that kept blowing up, and we didn't know what was going on. So I, you know, I told Vinod, "Hey Vinod, let's see if what these, these guys are teaching us in class

00:21:29.540 --> 00:21:37.270

(JR) actually is true or not. Let's analyze it." That year, we were actually learning about power amplifiers.

00:21:37.320 --> 00:21:38.880

(JR) And

00:21:38.990 --> 00:21:51.730

(JR) what was blowing up was one of the power transistors. So, there are different classes of amplifiers. We were taught there's A, B, C, and D, and E, and all that different types of amplifiers.

00:21:52.280 --> 00:21:53.200

(JR) So,

00:21:53.740 --> 00:21:56.249

(JR) so we sat there, and

00:21:56.310 --> 00:21:59.390

(JR) in the middle of the night, we analyzed

00:21:59.460 --> 00:22:03.709

(JR) and we found out that there was a printing error in the circuit diagram.

00:22:03.740 --> 00:22:06.470

(I) Oh!

(JR) And so,

00:22:06.710 --> 00:22:12.190

(JR) it was printed as a 100 ohms (unit of electrical resistance) where it should have been 1,000 ohms.

00:22:12.770 --> 00:22:14.970

(JR) And so we said, okay.

00:22:15.330 --> 00:22:16.630

(JR) Let's assume

00:22:16.710 --> 00:22:28.930

(JR) that is a mistake. Let's try it out. We already blown two transistors by then. Said, okay, let's put another one. Let's change this time, but let's change the resistor from 100 ohms to a 1,000 ohms

00:22:29.150 --> 00:22:30.739

(JR) and let's try it out.

00:22:31.470 --> 00:22:33.500

(JR) And we tried out

00:22:34.560 --> 00:22:38.219

(JR) and it didn't burn up. At least, no smoke,

00:22:38.240 --> 00:22:39.470

(JR) no fire,

00:22:39.730 --> 00:22:49.189

(JR) and we got it up to the point where we thought, okay, this is good, and we plugged in the cassette and played the music, and it came out playing.

00:22:49.470 --> 00:22:52.990

(JR) And that was just a, such a revelation for a,

00:22:53.200 --> 00:22:55.460

(JR) you know, for a 19-year-old kid.

00:22:55.520 --> 00:22:58.250

(JR) Sitting in there and things working

00:22:58.990 --> 00:23:11.739

(JR) literally with your own hand. And at that moment I decided, no, I don't care. You know, I'm gonna, I don't need to go anywhere. I'll build a, I'll just build amplifiers in India and sell it.

00:23:11.800 --> 00:23:22.140

(JR) Because, it's not easy, you know. And so between him and I, we were just, you know, we partied that night. But that was a real trigger point where

00:23:22.400 --> 00:23:25.750

(JR) I said, okay, whatever they're teaching in the classroom

00:23:25.880 --> 00:23:27.829

(JR) is definitely valid.

00:23:27.910 --> 00:23:36.260

(JR) It's just the fact that you'll never run into situations to test it out, and that was one moment for me. And I said,

00:23:36.520 --> 00:23:46.179

(JR) ah, okay, so I need, it's not about getting your scores, you know, and getting your marks. It's about, do these things have value in life? Yeah, they do have value in life.

00:23:46.200 --> 00:23:47.579

(JR) And so I said,

00:23:48.360 --> 00:23:57.309

(JR) that's why when guys were actually applying for the universities, I didn't really care much. Eventually I said, no, this gave me more

00:23:57.350 --> 00:24:04.749

(JR) confidence saying, let me pick a job, gain some confidence about how to run a business or something, and then eventually get into my own

00:24:04.950 --> 00:24:09.070

(JR) gig, you know, because I really wanted to build my own amplifiers.

00:24:09.120 --> 00:24:14.080

(JR) And, at that time, this is I was in the fourth year.

00:24:14.910 --> 00:24:18.250

(JR) And music is a big thing. Everyone likes music.

00:24:18.370 --> 00:24:30.620

(JR) But what makes music even better is when you mix it with technology, right? And so, when you have creativity and technology coming together, there's so many possibilities. And I said,

00:24:30.970 --> 00:24:32.920

(JR) at that time analog

00:24:34.200 --> 00:24:36.850

(JR) technology sounded really good,

00:24:36.900 --> 00:24:38.959

(JR) amplifier sounded good.

00:24:39.070 --> 00:24:40.670

(JR) And then, lo and behold,

00:24:40.740 --> 00:24:45.799

(JR) you know, finally we got exposed to computers and into microprocessors.

00:24:46.400 --> 00:24:52.170

(JR) Once I got exposed to microprocessors, and I also got exposed to microprocessors at my

00:24:52.700 --> 00:24:55.370

(JR) project in, in Delhi,

00:24:55.430 --> 00:24:58.620

(JR) which we did for Department of Electronics, where

00:24:58.660 --> 00:25:09.709

(JR) another friend of mine and I, again this friend now lives in Seattle. He and I did a project together where we were trying to replace radar systems with

00:25:09.740 --> 00:25:11.889

(JR) cameras and optical tracking.

00:25:12.170 --> 00:25:13.190

(JR) So,

00:25:13.230 --> 00:25:20.640

(JR) it...could actually sense an object and as the object moved, and you keep the camera moving in that direction. So

00:25:20.770 --> 00:25:26.710

(JR) we're really talking '79, okay, this is very early technologies. And so he and I

00:25:27.270 --> 00:25:33.859

(JR) really got into it. But once I, I got a taste of both analog and digital,

00:25:34.850 --> 00:25:36.340

(JR) I said,

00:25:39.010 --> 00:25:40.600

(JR) the digital actually

00:25:40.730 --> 00:25:45.440

(JR) opens up much more things because you can program

00:25:45.600 --> 00:26:05.570

(JR) anything you want it. Whereas in the analog, the programmability is much smaller in scope. It's much simpler and nicer, but digital just makes everything possible. So the, when we got exposed to microprocessors, I said, oh, wow, that's what I want to do. And ORG Systems job was about that.

00:26:05.900 --> 00:26:08.629

(JR) I said, I don't need to go anywhere. I can be here.

00:26:09.550 --> 00:26:23.680

(JR) And that 3 years that I was with ORGS Systems, I got to meddle with a lot of computer systems in India. And in India at that time you couldn't import much, so there was a lot of manufacturing, local manufacturing going on.

00:26:24.250 --> 00:26:41.450

(JR) But you know it's just, in India it was moving at a very slow pace. As luck would have it, I got a job with Tata Elxsi in Singapore. In fact, Tata and Elxsi had sort of signed an agreement together. Tata wanted to set up a company in

00:26:41.550 --> 00:26:43.690

(JR) in India, but the Government

00:26:43.900 --> 00:26:51.329

(JR) had some issues, and the U.S. Government was not willing to export that technology to India because of India's

00:26:51.570 --> 00:26:54.390

(JR) close affinity to Russia.

00:26:56.360 --> 00:26:59.370

(JR) All said, eventually Tata picked up

00:26:59.610 --> 00:27:02.310

(JR) Singapore is the spot to set it up.

00:27:02.790 --> 00:27:03.960

(JR) And

00:27:04.320 --> 00:27:06.580

(JR) I got my,

00:27:06.690 --> 00:27:08.459

(JR) I was interviewed.

00:27:08.560 --> 00:27:16.550

(JR) I was probably the third or the fourth batch of employees that Tata Elxsi was hiring into the Singapore operation.

00:27:17.060 --> 00:27:20.660

(JR) So I interviewed in 1983.

00:27:21.880 --> 00:27:22.890

(JR) And

00:27:22.990 --> 00:27:27.469

(JR) sometime in August I think, July-August timeframe.

00:27:28.160 --> 00:27:36.280

(JR) And I got my, my offer in October, and that November I got my ticket. They sent me a ticket.

00:27:36.370 --> 00:27:39.090

(JR) And now,

00:27:39.130 --> 00:27:40.589

(JR) all I had to do is

00:27:40.770 --> 00:27:45.329

(JR) just pack up and leave, because at that time I was working for a company,

00:27:45.380 --> 00:27:49.289

(JR) not ORG Systems, because I had already left ORG Systems

00:27:49.370 --> 00:27:53.810

(JR) and joined a home computer system called,

00:27:54.060 --> 00:27:56.050

(JR) company called AECO.

00:27:56.750 --> 00:28:12.440

(JR) And, they were building these Tandy Radio Shack computers where it's mainly playing games, and you can do simple things on your computer, on your TV at home. It didn't need a monitor. And when, when I got the job offer from

00:28:12.690 --> 00:28:18.869

(JR) Tata Elxsi, I was really excited, because now I'm going from these home computers to

00:28:19.210 --> 00:28:30.139

(JR) mini super super mini computers. You know, that's like, I'm just jumping ahead like many, many, many generations in technology. And I said, okay, that makes a lot of sense.

00:28:30.600 --> 00:28:32.069

(JR) I'm ready to go.

00:28:32.520 --> 00:28:33.990

(JR) Took the offer.

00:28:34.120 --> 00:28:35.540

(JR) Quit from there.

00:28:35.560 --> 00:28:37.729

(JR) And by then, you know,

00:28:38.010 --> 00:28:42.230

(JR) interestingly, in June of that year is when I got married.

00:28:42.260 --> 00:28:58.869

(JR) June of '83, I got married. My wife was from Baroda, and Baroda is where I started my job with the ORG systems. She and I were neighbors. We ended up dating for about a couple of years, and then I got married

00:28:59.040 --> 00:29:00.170

(JR) in June.

00:29:00.290 --> 00:29:03.340

(JR) July-August, I got the interview.

00:29:03.510 --> 00:29:06.230

(JR) October, I got the offer

00:29:06.350 --> 00:29:07.490

(JR) and the ticket.

00:29:07.540 --> 00:29:09.529

(JR) I got the ticket in November.

00:29:09.720 --> 00:29:14.520

(JR) So in December I left the country for the first time.

00:29:14.840 --> 00:29:16.770

(JR) And went to Singapore.

00:29:16.890 --> 00:29:19.490

(JR) And when I was leaving, at that time,

00:29:19.680 --> 00:29:22.070

(JR) still foreign exchange was a

00:29:22.350 --> 00:29:23.890

(JR) highly restricted.

00:29:24.030 --> 00:29:30.189

(JR) So you could only take 25 U.S. dollars or something like that. And,

00:29:30.600 --> 00:29:44.170

(JR) but the exchange rate was quite interesting. I think I went back and looked at my passport. It was like 18 rupees to a dollar or something like that.

(I) Wow! (JR) 18 rupees to a dollar. But you could only take

00:29:44.500 --> 00:29:51.599

(JR) 25 dollars and some cents. There was some limitation of how many rupees, or how many dollars you can...

00:29:51.690 --> 00:29:53.360

(JR) So,

00:29:54.090 --> 00:30:01.510

(JR) went to Singapore, and my wife joined me the year after that, in '84.

00:30:01.620 --> 00:30:06.000

(JR) And then we were there for, for a good three and a half years.

00:30:07.200 --> 00:30:13.749

(JR) And somewhere during that period, and I was working with Elxsi, Tata Elxsi.

00:30:14.050 --> 00:30:16.209

(JR) And most of my colleagues

00:30:16.240 --> 00:30:20.689

(JR) who came in to work for Tata Elxsi were actually sent to Elxsi in San JosÃ©,

00:30:21.370 --> 00:30:23.210

(JR) And they used to come back,

00:30:23.610 --> 00:30:26.849

(JR) you know, once the training was done.

00:30:26.970 --> 00:30:33.510

(JR) In many cases, what happened is, they didn't come back. They actually ended up staying in San JosÃ© itself.

00:30:33.670 --> 00:30:40.259

(JR) And that kept creating vacancies in Tata Elxsi in Singapore, and so there was a constant flux of people

00:30:40.460 --> 00:30:42.030

(JR) coming to Singapore.

00:30:42.600 --> 00:30:46.520

(JR) But I was probably one of the last ones to come in there, because after that

00:30:46.730 --> 00:30:50.659

(JR) there was less people being sent to U.S.

00:30:51.160 --> 00:30:54.340

(JR) And so the first time I really started

00:30:54.370 --> 00:30:56.969

(JR) learning more about Silicon Valley was

00:30:57.780 --> 00:31:02.250

(JR) sometime in a '82, I would say. '81, '82; '82.

00:31:02.920 --> 00:31:06.009

(JR) I was in Singapore, I mean I was in Bangalore, because

00:31:06.160 --> 00:31:08.990

(JR) I got transfer, I took a transfer from Baroda

00:31:09.370 --> 00:31:11.550

(JR) when I was working with ORG systems,

00:31:11.880 --> 00:31:13.450

(JR) and I went to Bangalore.

00:31:13.990 --> 00:31:16.740

(JR) One of my, one of our family friends,

00:31:17.420 --> 00:31:18.979

(JR) close relatives

00:31:19.570 --> 00:31:21.759

(JR) who was Sri Lankan,

00:31:22.410 --> 00:31:24.080

(JR) they used to live in the valley.

00:31:25.240 --> 00:31:28.799

(JR) And they had relocated back to Sri Lanka.

00:31:29.240 --> 00:31:32.000

(JR) So that, through them is the first time

00:31:32.170 --> 00:31:35.609

(JR) I had an idea of what the valley even looked like.

00:31:36.170 --> 00:31:47.139

(JR) I never even looked up pictures. I don't know why, but I was not interested, because I didn't even know if I'll ever come here. There was no such plans.

00:31:47.580 --> 00:31:49.490

(JR) And Bangalore, when my wife

00:31:49.610 --> 00:31:54.029

(JR) when, after we got married and we settled down in Bangalore,

00:31:54.260 --> 00:31:59.030

(JR) it was like, it's like, okay, let's make a life here, you know.

00:31:59.060 --> 00:32:01.550

(JR) And I was still thinking about

00:32:01.710 --> 00:32:03.710

(JR) going it out on my own.

00:32:03.950 --> 00:32:09.439

(JR) Maybe build something in the home computing or in the medical technology space.

00:32:10.430 --> 00:32:13.470

(JR) I never thought of this. But when I came to

00:32:13.630 --> 00:32:15.280

(JR) Singapore

00:32:15.750 --> 00:32:20.780

(JR) then I got a lot more information about the Valley, right because

00:32:22.930 --> 00:32:26.849

(JR) I had friends who were coming to the Valley and coming back.

00:32:27.550 --> 00:32:29.030

(JR) Still,

00:32:29.590 --> 00:32:34.379

(JR) we had a very, it's a very romantic view. It's not about the view that

00:32:34.700 --> 00:32:37.270

(JR) it...you still have

00:32:37.370 --> 00:32:38.439

(JR) a very

00:32:38.880 --> 00:32:45.199

(JR) sort of messed up view of U.S. right, because it's like, oh, it's like Disneyland.

00:32:45.450 --> 00:32:46.650

(JR) It's like, oh,

00:32:47.040 --> 00:32:48.919

(JR) it's almost like

00:32:49.570 --> 00:32:58.059

(JR) one of my uncles, my dad's oldest brother on one of my visits back, he sat me down. This man

00:32:58.150 --> 00:33:02.090

(JR) very learned fellow, and he used to read everything.

00:33:02.220 --> 00:33:03.050

00:33:03.230 --> 00:33:06.119

(JR) And he was, he was talking to me.

00:33:06.320 --> 00:33:11.430

(JR) He was so funny, he said one of his nephews had visited the U.S.

00:33:11.570 --> 00:33:14.799

(JR) and he was telling him, I believe,

00:33:15.360 --> 00:33:18.980

(JR) "Grandfather, U.S. is like paradise."

00:33:19.370 --> 00:33:20.310

(JR) And

00:33:20.430 --> 00:33:21.340

(JR) so he

00:33:22.010 --> 00:33:33.250

(JR) so apparently my grandfather, I mean, my uncle asked him, "Why do you say so?" He said, "Oh, it's so easy. You just walk up to a machine and put a coin, and you can get whatever you want, you know."

00:33:33.530 --> 00:33:38.590

(JR) It's like, you want milk, you get milk. You want Coke, you get Coke, you know.

00:33:38.710 --> 00:33:47.000

(JR) So, and he was comparing that to a situation in India at that time, it's like, man, you go to the store and you're willing to pay, and you still can't get

00:33:47.060 --> 00:33:49.879

(JR) things that you want, you know. And,

00:33:50.430 --> 00:33:55.640

(JR) and so ,I had to explain to him, no, it's not as simple as that.

00:33:55.760 --> 00:33:56.630

(JR) And

00:33:56.690 --> 00:34:00.370

(JR) for me, leaving even, you know, Singapore itself

00:34:01.060 --> 00:34:06.529

(JR) presented itself so different from what I was used to in India. Right? I grew up

00:34:08.610 --> 00:34:10.349

(JR) in India for the first what

00:34:10.380 --> 00:34:11.839

(JR) I came to

00:34:11.909 --> 00:34:14.330

(JR) Singapore in '83.

00:34:14.500 --> 00:34:20.549

(JR) So I was, I came to Singapore when I was 25, 26 or so. 26, I think.

00:34:21.130 --> 00:34:36.219

(JR) So the first 26 years I'd seen nothing other than that cities and towns in India. I've been to Bombay. I've been to Calcutta. I've been to Delhi. I've been to Chennai. I've been to different parts of Kerala.

00:34:36.449 --> 00:34:37.370

(JR) You know,

00:34:37.590 --> 00:34:46.500

(JR) that's roughly the view I had, and I had done five years worth of train trips from Coimbatore to

00:34:46.739 --> 00:34:50.829

(JR) you know Delhi and back. And so my perception about,

00:34:51.300 --> 00:34:55.360

(JR) you know, cleanliness, organization, all that was

00:34:55.810 --> 00:34:58.240

(JR) based on what I'd seen for the

00:34:58.460 --> 00:35:00.990

(JR) 25 years of my life. And then,

00:35:01.670 --> 00:35:04.509

(JR) when I landed in Singapore it was just a shock.

00:35:04.620 --> 00:35:05.430

(I) Hmm.

00:35:05.830 --> 00:35:08.700

(JR) Everything was neatly laid out, clean.

00:35:09.070 --> 00:35:12.689

(JR) And so we got used to that, you know, it was like,

00:35:12.760 --> 00:35:14.399

(JR) oh, this is pretty cool.

00:35:14.880 --> 00:35:16.279

(I) Yeah.

00:35:16.330 --> 00:35:20.080

(JR) Everything is reliable, dependable, predictable.

00:35:20.440 --> 00:35:26.649

(JR) And, but my wife was not very happy there, because the political system there was pretty messed up.

00:35:27.180 --> 00:35:33.429

(JR) You know, Lee Kuan Yew was a complete dictator. You know, as much as people,

00:35:33.510 --> 00:35:37.900

(JR) if you value only economic growth, then,

00:35:38.410 --> 00:35:40.580

(JR) then yeah, Singapore is the place to

00:35:40.650 --> 00:35:45.610

(JR) reside. But if you, if you are the kind of person who actually wants some,

00:35:46.650 --> 00:35:53.139

(JR) if you value human freedom, humanity, human rights. You know,

00:35:53.920 --> 00:35:56.850

(JR) social values, things like that,

00:35:57.550 --> 00:36:09.730

(JR) you may actually question that a little bit more, right? Because, and so, somewhere in the second or third of my stay in Singapore, my wife was already starting to say, "You know what?

00:36:09.990 --> 00:36:27.430

(JR) If you're gonna have a family, this is not the place I want to have it in." I said, "Oh, okay. It makes sense." I mean, for me it doesn't matter. For me, my focus was I want to be in

electronics. I want to do things I want to do. Whether it's India or Korea, I didn't care much, you know. Because I knew my

00:36:27.440 --> 00:36:32.530

(JR) circles would be built around that, and then I can see how to build culture around that.

00:36:32.670 --> 00:36:36.229

(JR) And during that time, when we were in Singapore,

00:36:36.590 --> 00:36:43.560

(JR) I had the opportunity to go and live in Seoul, South Korea for 6 months. In,

00:36:43.840 --> 00:36:49.619

(JR) in 2 trips. So once I went for 3 months, came back for 2 weeks, and then went again for 3 months.

00:36:50.040 --> 00:36:58.079

(JR) And during that time I made a lot of good friends. I got to know them, and their culture. Got a little, you know, learn more about the history.

00:36:58.220 --> 00:37:04.089

(JR) I had no knowledge that South Korea was a colony of Japan.

00:37:04.160 --> 00:37:13.920

(JR) And, you know, the relationship with Japanese and the South Koreans. I learned a lot, and I enjoyed, that was also an opportunity for me to

00:37:15.360 --> 00:37:27.129

(JR) you know, understand and appreciate their food, their culture. Really enjoyed it. I mean, I could, I could tell you. But I was young also, 26, 27. Like 27, 28, maybe.

00:37:28.230 --> 00:37:29.279

(I) So,

00:37:29.410 --> 00:37:48.730

(I) Sorry to interrupt. So during this time, when you did mention a bit about having heard a little bit about Silicon Valley, but not much really. Right, so during your time in Singapore, is that

when you were beginning to learn more about Silicon Valley, and then you're going to make the move, or

00:37:48.830 --> 00:37:54.929

(I) did it just happen organically that you were anyway ready to move out of Singapore, and an opportunity arose?

00:37:55.080 --> 00:38:03.030

(JR) No, actually it was, it was at that, when we reach Singapore is when I'm getting exposed. And actually I had the

00:38:03.170 --> 00:38:07.820

(JR) I had the hope, that I'll be also sent to Elxsi in San JosÃ©.

00:38:07.850 --> 00:38:15.640

(JR) Because everyone before me had gone to Elxsi in San JosÃ©. Everyone, every single person except me.

00:38:16.220 --> 00:38:18.959

(JR) So I thought I will be coming here.

00:38:19.020 --> 00:38:23.020

(JR) And that'll give me an opportunity to check out what this place looked like.

00:38:23.300 --> 00:38:25.470

(JR) I had no knowledge. Nothing.

00:38:25.820 --> 00:38:27.930

(JR) The one thing I knew was

00:38:28.300 --> 00:38:35.450

(JR) that if it comes down to computer, computer architecture, there were only two parts in the country in the U.S.

00:38:35.590 --> 00:38:38.939

(JR) that made sense. One is Boston. The other one is

00:38:39.600 --> 00:38:41.240

(JR) Silicon Valley.

00:38:41.290 --> 00:38:43.570

(JR) And for some reason,

00:38:44.100 --> 00:38:54.239

(JR) I never; I looked at Boston. Yeah, MIT is there, from a university standpoint. I never even thought of Stanford in the Silicon Valley.

00:38:54.480 --> 00:38:57.860

(JR) for me, Elxsi mattered more. Right?

00:38:57.920 --> 00:39:01.099

(JR) And so I wanted to come to Elxsi in San JosÃ©.

00:39:01.180 --> 00:39:03.859

(JR) And since that did not happen,

00:39:05.320 --> 00:39:09.219

(JR) I was just still thinking, you know, if I ever went to the U.S.,

00:39:09.640 --> 00:39:12.410

(JR) we're going to go to Silicon Valley, because by that time

00:39:13.150 --> 00:39:15.740

(JR) two of my classmates

00:39:15.940 --> 00:39:21.650

(JR) who had settled in the U.S. One was actually in Southern California, in Diamond Bar.

00:39:21.690 --> 00:39:24.139

(JR) The other one was in Oregon.

00:39:24.720 --> 00:39:31.670

(JR) Neither of them are from the Valley, but they were giving me all ideas about, you know, hey, why are you rusting

00:39:31.730 --> 00:39:34.280

(JR) in Singapore? You should come to

00:39:34.320 --> 00:39:35.500

(JR) the U.S.

00:39:35.580 --> 00:39:39.379

(JR) Come to Oregon, come to L.A., and things like that.

00:39:40.980 --> 00:39:47.179

(JR) And my brother by then had actually come to the U.S. in, I think he came here

00:39:47.570 --> 00:39:52.159

(JR) almost 7 years before I, no, 6 years before I did.

00:39:53.290 --> 00:39:59.629

(JR) And he went to Kansas, and he stayed in Boston, and he stayed in Harvard area.

00:39:59.870 --> 00:40:02.640

(JR) He studied at Kansas State University.

00:40:02.920 --> 00:40:03.879

(JR) And

00:40:04.180 --> 00:40:13.790

(JR) he was exposed to all that winter and all that. And in 1987, early 1987, or '86 I think, '86, he moved from

00:40:13.880 --> 00:40:16.290

(JR) Boston to L.A.

00:40:16.510 --> 00:40:17.250

(I) Hmm.

00:40:17.430 --> 00:40:19.509

(JR) '86 or '85.

00:40:19.640 --> 00:40:24.290

(JR) And he felt it was the best move he did. Because he said, man, the weather I cannot.

00:40:24.440 --> 00:40:30.650

(I) Yeah.

(JR) And so the weather was also kind of playing into all this. And,

00:40:30.940 --> 00:40:33.689

(JR) and my wife's brother, my brother-in-law

00:40:33.820 --> 00:40:37.640

(JR) had picked up, you know, he had finished

00:40:37.740 --> 00:40:40.939

(JR) his college in borough, in Gujarat,

00:40:41.040 --> 00:40:43.710

(JR) and he was working with Zenith in Bombay,

00:40:43.790 --> 00:40:47.680

(JR) and he got to a point where he said he wants to go do his master's,

00:40:47.900 --> 00:40:54.019

(JR) and I don't know who advised him, but he actually decided to go for a Cal State University.

00:40:54.530 --> 00:40:56.559

(JR) So in some sense he

00:40:56.610 --> 00:41:00.720

(JR) sort of influenced my thinking, because he

00:41:00.810 --> 00:41:03.270

(JR) he decided to go Cal State.

00:41:03.580 --> 00:41:10.940

(JR) And I think he had a friend in Chico who referred him, and so he ended up going to Chico.
And

00:41:11.010 --> 00:41:12.639

(JR) so I also decided,

00:41:12.670 --> 00:41:14.870

(JR) I'm going to California anyway.

00:41:15.260 --> 00:41:26.539

(JR) By then there was enough things about California, right? There's songs about California, impressions about California. But I don't think, you know, we were still too young to have all this

00:41:26.630 --> 00:41:28.390

(JR) master plan about

00:41:28.990 --> 00:41:33.810

(JR) why California? Why not the other places, right?

(I) Right.

00:41:34.040 --> 00:41:34.689

(JR) But

00:41:34.850 --> 00:41:37.689

(JR) the technology part of it was very, very

00:41:37.860 --> 00:41:41.149

(JR) important, and it was the driving factor in some sense.

00:41:42.130 --> 00:41:47.029

(JR) And, and when you talk about technology it is all in the Valley, right?

00:41:47.280 --> 00:41:58.019

(JR) At that time, HP was the biggest name in town, right? HP was there. And so

(I) Yeah. So as you're talking about HP, let me ask you some. And you have been, you have started commenting on that. So,

00:41:58.240 --> 00:42:01.220

(I) so when you were coming to California, so

00:42:01.240 --> 00:42:10.469

(I) what did Silicon Valley look like at that time, or what it meant to you at the time? And now that you see it over all these years?

00:42:10.490 --> 00:42:17.069

(I) Does it mean the same thing to you still, Silicon Valley? Or how has it changed for you?

00:42:17.980 --> 00:42:20.959

(JR) Silicon Valley...

00:42:21.200 --> 00:42:27.030

(JR) I mean the fact that silicon has lost its glamour, right. I mean, when we initially came

00:42:27.750 --> 00:42:33.180

(JR) I mean it was all the semic; it's the chip right, when you started making that chip

00:42:33.340 --> 00:42:35.600

(JR) and putting more

00:42:35.650 --> 00:42:39.190

(JR) complex algorithms into the chip.

00:42:40.700 --> 00:42:43.630

(JR) That, no other place in the world had it.

00:42:44.040 --> 00:42:45.560

(I) Hmm. (JR) And

00:42:45.650 --> 00:42:56.009

(JR) making that PC board, right? No other place in the world did it like the way they did it so efficiently here. And it was, and it was like, it was science

00:42:56.020 --> 00:43:05.930

(JR) but it looked like an art form, right, because it's a PC board. It's like a piece of art, you know. And you look at a chip inside, it's a piece of art, but it's all science in there.

00:43:07.090 --> 00:43:09.309

(JR) So, when we came,

00:43:10.080 --> 00:43:12.960

(JR) it, honestly, I'll tell you this much.

00:43:13.060 --> 00:43:15.669

(JR) Our first flight into

00:43:15.730 --> 00:43:16.700

(JR) L.A.,

00:43:16.740 --> 00:43:19.359

(JR) was a complete shock

00:43:20.130 --> 00:43:34.130

(JR) because it was a complete let down. Right?

(I) Okay. (JR) Complete shock, because first of all, my wife and I were living like little King and Queen in Singapore. Right? They had given us this

00:43:34.350 --> 00:43:36.640

(JR) bungalow.

00:43:36.670 --> 00:43:48.189

(JR) Singapore. Most people live in apartment comp-, you know, like these little one flat, you know, flat in a condominium that is about 14, 15 floors. I mean the

00:43:48.700 --> 00:43:56.690

(JR) 12th or 13th floor in the back, no visibility. Instead, we were actually in a 4-bedroom,

00:43:56.900 --> 00:44:01.019

(JR) independent house, where I had a porch to park my car.

00:44:01.400 --> 00:44:04.489

(JR) And we lived in luxury throughout

00:44:04.600 --> 00:44:05.830

(JR) those 4 years.

00:44:06.080 --> 00:44:07.560

(JR) And from that,

00:44:07.840 --> 00:44:11.459

(JR) when we, when we packed up and left, we had about 4 bags.

00:44:11.800 --> 00:44:13.189

(JR) And in the bag

00:44:13.220 --> 00:44:32.580

(JR) I had packed up my personal computer that I'd bought in Singapore. It was a "clone." I said, that's going to be valuable, I don't know how, but I guess it's going to be. My wife said, all these utensils are going to be valuable. I said, okay, so in 2 bags we pack that, in the remaining 2 bags is all, you know, clothes and bags and what not.

00:44:33.150 --> 00:44:34.940

(JR) And when we landed in L.A.,

00:44:36.410 --> 00:44:39.710

(JR) it was a nightmare. I'd never seen an airport as,

00:44:39.830 --> 00:44:40.729

(JR) as

00:44:40.900 --> 00:44:44.039

(JR) crowded, as disorganized,

00:44:44.140 --> 00:44:48.549

(JR) and there was a lot of yelling and screaming going on.

00:44:48.770 --> 00:44:58.009

(JR) Whereas, you've been to Singapore, have you?

(I) No, I have not been to Singapore, no.

(JR) Oh my god, it's so beautifully organized. And

00:44:58.250 --> 00:45:02.580

(JR) you don't even see anything. Everyone's so quiet. Everything moves so smooth.

00:45:02.740 --> 00:45:13.959

(JR) And from there to this, it was just a shock. Then, when my, my brother actually drove, drove us from L.A. to Chico.

00:45:14.590 --> 00:45:18.819

(JR) And the drive, most of the driving we did in the middle of the night.

00:45:20.190 --> 00:45:21.430

(JR) And so,

00:45:21.450 --> 00:45:25.890

(JR) and he had one of these old Nissan, NS Nissan

00:45:26.350 --> 00:45:30.819

(JR) car, which had a, it's a 2-seater.

00:45:31.060 --> 00:45:35.419

(JR) And so my wife and I sat at the back, and he, he and his friend sat in the front.

00:45:35.600 --> 00:45:37.919

(JR) And after putting all the bags,

00:45:38.070 --> 00:45:43.430

(JR) you could see the glass and through the glass you could see the moon up in the sky, and

00:45:43.520 --> 00:45:51.849

(JR) really that left a lot of impressions for us, because as we were driving up on the freeway, to, up to Chico

00:45:51.980 --> 00:45:57.740

(JR) on both sides, it's just vacant lands. I never seen that much

00:45:58.670 --> 00:46:15.019

(JR) vacant lands in my life before, right. 25 years in India. In Kerala, you go from one village to the next village. There's nothing. Everything is connected, dot, dot, dot. Right? And in Tamil Nadu, you could see some open space, but nowhere in India

00:46:15.470 --> 00:46:20.329

(JR) for that you, you could have come across such vast lands.

00:46:20.400 --> 00:46:25.120

(JR) And when the sun, when the moon is up there in that in that light,

00:46:25.440 --> 00:46:31.729

(JR) it's just unbelievable. And this is early, this is January, so freaking cold.

00:46:31.850 --> 00:46:34.100

(JR) I had to keep telling my brother,

00:46:34.170 --> 00:46:38.769

(JR) increase the heat, increase the heat. It is almost freezing in the back, you know.

00:46:39.240 --> 00:46:40.100

(JR) And

00:46:41.300 --> 00:46:42.470

(JR) coming from

00:46:42.990 --> 00:46:47.330

(JR) the first trip I came, made to the Valley

00:46:47.610 --> 00:46:50.340

(JR) was actually in the month of March, I think.

00:46:50.840 --> 00:46:52.120

(JR) March of

00:46:52.360 --> 00:46:53.580

(JR) '87.

00:46:54.370 --> 00:46:57.399

(I) Hmm. (JR) And the reason I made that trip was,

00:46:57.520 --> 00:47:10.990

(JR) I was coming for an interview at the, at Elxsi for a summer job, and that summer job was all arranged by my manager from Singapore, the general manager from Singapore.

00:47:11.220 --> 00:47:22.880

(JR) He actually connected with, connected me to the VP of engineering at Elxsi here in San JosÃ©, and so I think we had a there's a break, right? What break is that?

00:47:23.180 --> 00:47:35.530

(I) Spring break. (JR) Spring break, right? That's March, I think.

(I) Yes, yes. (JR) Yeah. So spring break, everyone's going somewhere. I came to the Valley for the first time to pick my summer job.

00:47:36.000 --> 00:47:41.520

(JR) And that has a little bit of backstory actually, honestly, because Elxsi

00:47:41.820 --> 00:47:46.740

(JR) was on this DARPA net, right? So Tata Elxsi was also on a DARPA net.

00:47:46.790 --> 00:47:51.669

(JR) We all had, so all of these guys were on email system

00:47:51.690 --> 00:47:53.299

(JR) long before

00:47:53.570 --> 00:47:56.700

(JR) email system became public, right?

00:47:57.340 --> 00:47:58.250

(JR) So

00:47:58.560 --> 00:48:00.599

(JR) when I was leaving

00:48:00.780 --> 00:48:04.580

(JR) Tata Elxsi in Singapore in '87,

00:48:05.120 --> 00:48:08.330

(JR) I went and once I got my visa and my

00:48:09.930 --> 00:48:12.169

(JR) passport and everything clear,

00:48:12.710 --> 00:48:17.899

(JR) I went to my general manager there in Tata Elxsi in Singapore to tell him,

00:48:17.960 --> 00:48:21.959

(JR) hey Pat, here's the situation. I got my admission at

00:48:22.070 --> 00:48:24.279

(JR) California State University, Chico.

00:48:24.490 --> 00:48:26.260

(JR) And I'll be leaving.

00:48:26.280 --> 00:48:30.580

(JR) My classes start on the 17th of January

00:48:30.820 --> 00:48:33.069

(JR) and I'm planning to leave on the 13th.

00:48:33.140 --> 00:48:36.810

(JR) But between now and then I'll help you out and everything.

00:48:37.260 --> 00:48:39.200

(JR) He was so upset.

00:48:39.370 --> 00:48:41.370

(JR) He said,

00:48:41.510 --> 00:48:43.990

(JR) because the reason he was upset is,

00:48:44.050 --> 00:48:47.280

(JR) I was supposed to go to China that month.

00:48:47.340 --> 00:48:53.600

(JR) The Beijing University where we were installing our computer there, and I had

00:48:54.040 --> 00:49:02.499

(JR) and by the way, I don't know how much you know about the Elxsi computers, at that time Elxsi computers were one of those things just below Cray (supercomputer manufacturer).

00:49:03.450 --> 00:49:08.679

(JR) So we were in the super computing segment. So it's very specialized

00:49:08.740 --> 00:49:15.089

(JR) processors meant for defense, meant for simulations, different simulations and things like that.

00:49:15.300 --> 00:49:17.670

(JR) So I was supposed to go and install it.

00:49:17.830 --> 00:49:26.200

(JR) In fact, I'd gotten my Chinese visa. And so I went to him, told him that. And I said, you know Pat, I don't want to let you down.

00:49:26.810 --> 00:49:28.799

(JR) I'll be happy to go to China,

00:49:29.700 --> 00:49:34.520

(JR) and I'll install the machine also, I just have to be in California on the 17th.

00:49:34.650 --> 00:49:38.599

(JR) So as long as I can leave China by the 13th or 14th,

00:49:38.830 --> 00:49:39.689

(JR) I'll be

00:49:40.010 --> 00:49:45.959

(JR) perfect. So instead of buying me a round trip ticket from here to China and back,

00:49:46.020 --> 00:49:49.859

(JR) would you be open to actually buying me a ticket to China

00:49:49.940 --> 00:49:52.130

(JR) and then from China, from Beijing

00:49:52.310 --> 00:49:53.229

(JR) to

00:49:53.450 --> 00:49:54.800

(JR) Los Angeles?

00:49:55.220 --> 00:50:08.639

(JR) So he...got upset. He said, what the hell are you negotiating with me for? Okay, you're anyway leaving. I don't need any, I'll figure it out, he said.

00:50:09.180 --> 00:50:12.000

(JR) So he asked me to go. I was

00:50:12.070 --> 00:50:13.479

(JR) working away

00:50:13.630 --> 00:50:15.040

(JR) and

00:50:15.290 --> 00:50:23.409

(JR) I kept, I kept at it, you know, because I wanted to make sure that the machine is ready for installation, and for the big configuration for the university.

00:50:23.760 --> 00:50:25.080

(JR) So I was doing that

00:50:25.450 --> 00:50:31.589

(JR) on the, on the 10th of January I think. The 13th I was going to leave. The 10th of January,

00:50:33.050 --> 00:50:34.169

(JR) he...

00:50:34.460 --> 00:50:43.519

(JR) so I had actually gone in the middle of that. But a few days later I went to him, and I said, you know most of us who are in Singapore, we were considered to be expatriates.

00:50:44.110 --> 00:50:46.599

(JR) So there is a package for expatriates.

00:50:46.750 --> 00:50:57.280

(JR) "Would you mind?" Because I was trying to, I was trying to collect as much money as I can.

(I) Yeah. (JR) Now I'm going to be a student, so I need some cash, and

00:50:57.480 --> 00:51:03.160

(JR) and I'm a married man coming here with my wife, so I need some more extra cash.

00:51:03.520 --> 00:51:08.220

(JR) So I went to Pat, and it's like, you know, I had a very friendly conversation

00:51:08.580 --> 00:51:11.250

(JR) and he, and I said, you know this is,

00:51:12.190 --> 00:51:17.940

(JR) you know, I know you, you know, these expats got this, those expats got that.

00:51:18.160 --> 00:51:19.310

(JR) Would you mind

00:51:19.740 --> 00:51:21.860

(JR) considering something for me?

00:51:21.910 --> 00:51:23.929

(JR) I know I'm not going back home.

00:51:24.100 --> 00:51:25.870

(JR) I'm going for education.

00:51:26.060 --> 00:51:27.139

(JR) Would you mind?

00:51:27.250 --> 00:51:33.070

(JR) So he said, he went and looked up, took my, you know, folder

00:51:33.130 --> 00:51:44.199

(JR) and all of these contracts were sitting in manila folders. Mine was the thinnest one. He pulled it out, there was one single sheet. It was the original offer and nothing else. He said, Japan,

00:51:44.300 --> 00:51:47.150

(JR) I don't even have a contract with you for anything.

00:51:47.220 --> 00:51:52.889

(JR) So I said, okay, I just tried Pat, nothing more. So I went back,

00:51:52.970 --> 00:51:59.500

(JR) kept working. Few days later, which was I think around the 10th or so, he came down. He called me.

00:51:59.620 --> 00:52:05.770

(JR) I was in the computer room, and he called me, he said, Jayan, we're all thinking we want to take you out for lunch today.

00:52:06.360 --> 00:52:07.909

(JR) I said, oh, okay.

00:52:07.940 --> 00:52:10.280

(JR) I didn't know why the change of

00:52:10.450 --> 00:52:20.450

(JR) heart. He took me, so he took me, it was really nice, you know. He took me out, and he said, you know I've seen, I've dealt with people in the past

00:52:20.640 --> 00:52:26.609

(JR) who say they're quitting, and they quit, and they walk away. They'll just drop everything, they won't even care.

00:52:26.640 --> 00:52:33.440

(JR) I've had guys in the U.S. particularly, they won't even care. They'll just say, I'm quit and they'll go.

00:52:33.680 --> 00:52:38.430

(JR) You completely turned my head upside down. I didn't know what to do with you, because

00:52:38.500 --> 00:52:42.689

(JR) you said I'm, I'm quitting on such and such date, but I'll be working till then.

00:52:42.890 --> 00:52:44.400

(JR) And you're working here.

00:52:44.430 --> 00:52:46.350

(JR) And so

00:52:46.400 --> 00:52:47.740

(JR) I've never seen this.

00:52:47.810 --> 00:52:52.430

(JR) And so we had lunch. At the end of the lunch he gave me a 5,000 dollar check. He said,

00:52:52.710 --> 00:52:55.299

(JR) I know you don't have a contract,

00:52:55.370 --> 00:52:56.069

(JR) but

00:52:56.260 --> 00:52:58.069

(JR) because of the way you work,

00:52:58.090 --> 00:52:59.900

(JR) let this be towards your

00:52:59.960 --> 00:53:06.560

(JR) first semester fees, you know.

(I) Oh, that's so nice. (JR) It was really nice. And I looked at it and said,

00:53:06.720 --> 00:53:11.459

(JR) first I didn't know, he gave me an envelope, opened up, 5,000 U.S. dollars? Oh,

00:53:11.500 --> 00:53:12.370

(JR) okay.

00:53:12.390 --> 00:53:17.009

(JR) Now, I had closed all my bank account. Everything was done.

00:53:17.410 --> 00:53:31.500

(JR) Now, I didn't know what to do. So eventually, I think I ended up, when I opened my U.S. bank here, that's when I deposited that check I think. Or something, or I deposited there at...it was, now I don't recollect the details.

00:53:31.740 --> 00:53:41.970

(JR) But the interesting part was, it was such a change of heart for him. And the fact that he decided to give me that check, because it was under his authority,

00:53:42.570 --> 00:53:58.490

(JR) really meant a lot. And, and then he asked me, what are you doing for, in summer. I said, I don't know Pat. My goal is to really do all my courses, finish as quickly as possible, because I don't want to waste too much money.

00:53:58.770 --> 00:53:59.700

(JR) And

00:54:00.260 --> 00:54:07.990

(JR) you know I'm, I'm gonna try and get to PhD. He's like, are you kidding me? I'm a PhD, it's useless, he says.

00:54:08.030 --> 00:54:14.750

(JR) Don't do, you know, why you, why don't you go do a summer at Elxsi? You might like it.

00:54:15.450 --> 00:54:21.189

(JR) I said, oh, okay. I'll, I'll try that. And so in some ways Pat was,

00:54:21.650 --> 00:54:29.099

(JR) he took the initiative to connect me to the, he didn't have to. In the month of February,

00:54:29.270 --> 00:54:30.919

(JR) he sends an email

00:54:31.080 --> 00:54:36.350

(JR) sitting in, by then, you know I had gone more than a month now.

00:54:36.530 --> 00:54:41.700

(JR) We were not even in touch with each other. He takes the initiative,

00:54:42.750 --> 00:54:46.079

(JR) sends an email to the VP of engineering here, Len Shar.

00:54:47.010 --> 00:54:48.149

(JR) Connects me.

00:54:48.590 --> 00:54:49.310

(JR) Then,

00:54:49.790 --> 00:54:52.040

(JR) Len reaches out to me.

00:54:52.480 --> 00:54:54.129

(JR) And luckily,

00:54:54.340 --> 00:54:58.969

(JR) they are on an email system, and all the schools are also on the email system.

00:54:59.720 --> 00:55:05.310

(JR) I'm just looking at the stroke of luck, right? Because, if it was not the email system, I don't think

00:55:05.650 --> 00:55:07.989

(JR) things would have happened as quickly as it did.

00:55:09.160 --> 00:55:12.469

(JR) And February I, we confirmed, and then

00:55:12.640 --> 00:55:18.419

(JR) Len actually invited me to come and meet them in the month of March, during the, during the holidays.

00:55:18.650 --> 00:55:25.240

(JR) So I came for my interview. That's the first time I was actually driving into the Valley.

00:55:25.380 --> 00:55:26.370

(JR) Because

00:55:26.520 --> 00:55:27.970

(JR) remember, when we,

00:55:28.650 --> 00:55:31.270

(JR) when my brother drove me up to Chico,

00:55:31.320 --> 00:55:34.149

(JR) we were on Highway 1-, Highway 5.

00:55:34.790 --> 00:55:39.650

(JR) Never touched the Valley. You just went down around the Valley, all the way up north.

00:55:40.230 --> 00:55:54.450

(JR) And, by the way, Chico, if you have never been to Chico, it's another beautiful spot. It's a, have you ever been to Chico?

(I) No, I've recently heard about Chico. So I want to go.

(JR) Yeah, it's a camp-, there's a campus there. It's in the Butte County.

00:55:55.790 --> 00:56:00.399

(JR) It's, it's beautiful, it's...rural. It's so rural.

00:56:00.700 --> 00:56:06.459

(JR) And so we enjoyed us, it's very slow moving, small, quaint. In fact,

00:56:06.650 --> 00:56:08.709

(JR) the town there

00:56:09.270 --> 00:56:15.189

(JR) looked somewhat like, you know, the Palo Alto what used to look like 35 years ago,

00:56:15.540 --> 00:56:21.869

(JR) that's how that town looks now. If you go and see the...town, where the Chico town is.

00:56:22.230 --> 00:56:25.339

(JR) It's small roads, small houses.

00:56:25.920 --> 00:56:26.850

(JR) So

00:56:27.160 --> 00:56:29.399

(JR) it was a shock for me when we,

00:56:29.930 --> 00:56:39.650

(JR) when I went to Chico, I looked at the homes. I said, because I was coming from Singapore, right? Singapore is like modern, very modern, metropolitan town.

00:56:39.890 --> 00:56:42.079

(JR) And now from there, I'm down there

00:56:42.180 --> 00:56:45.729

(JR) into a sort of a village like area.

00:56:46.100 --> 00:56:48.049

(JR) And then, when we

00:56:48.220 --> 00:56:50.290

(JR) when we came down to...

00:56:52.760 --> 00:56:56.149

(JR) and actually Chico is north of Sacramento.

00:56:57.120 --> 00:57:00.470

(JR) So you have to come through Sacramento. Still you're,

00:57:00.530 --> 00:57:05.480

(JR) most of the time you're on highway, and so, freeway right? So all the time you're just

00:57:05.670 --> 00:57:08.320

(JR) you're impression about the country is

00:57:08.640 --> 00:57:14.530

(JR) there's no towns, it's all freeways everywhere. Just up and down freeways. It's like the first

00:57:14.660 --> 00:57:26.419

(JR) 3 days that we were in, 2 days we were in L.A., my brother used to say, okay, let's go. We'll say, okay, where are we going? Okay, we're going to go have some dosa or idli or something like that. We jump into his car

00:57:27.010 --> 00:57:38.549

(JR) and all I see is freeways. And then suddenly there is an exit. Then we are in a restaurant. So you don't have a perspective, it's completely, it's all concrete everywhere.

00:57:38.770 --> 00:57:39.549

(JR) So

00:57:39.610 --> 00:57:44.160

(JR) when we were coming back, for the first time driving into the Valley,

00:57:44.310 --> 00:57:45.680

(JR) for the first time,

00:57:45.810 --> 00:57:49.330

(JR) you know, as when we got off that

00:57:49.540 --> 00:57:51.600

(JR) I-5, I think.

00:57:52.030 --> 00:57:55.950

(JR) And then got off onto SR-152 and I-680

00:57:56.820 --> 00:57:59.010

(JR) is the first time

00:57:59.140 --> 00:58:04.459

(JR) I started seeing sort of orchards on either side.

00:58:05.050 --> 00:58:07.419

(JR) And so when you're coming down

00:58:07.550 --> 00:58:18.569

(JR) on that 680, you see a lot of orchards, water. Ah, this is nice. It was quite different than what we had seen in L.A.

00:58:18.700 --> 00:58:21.089

(JR) and what we had seen in

00:58:21.250 --> 00:58:29.880

(JR) in this place, you know, even Chico is very rural. You do see a lot of farmlands and things like that. But this looks like very manicured thing.

00:58:29.940 --> 00:58:33.919

(JR) But when we got to the Valley, inside the Valley, like

00:58:34.230 --> 00:58:36.289

(JR) you could see that

00:58:36.630 --> 00:58:48.849

(JR) most of the buildings were very unassuming, honestly. I mean it's not like, cause I was used to Singapore, right? Everything is ostentatious. Lots of glass, lots of tall buildings.

00:58:49.210 --> 00:58:51.609

(JR) There's a level of ostentation

00:58:51.650 --> 00:58:52.750

(JR) in

00:58:52.780 --> 00:58:55.359

(JR) in Singapore at that time.

00:58:55.890 --> 00:58:58.180

(JR) Whereas the Valley looked like

00:58:58.300 --> 00:58:59.559

(JR) very sort of

00:58:59.700 --> 00:59:03.630

(JR) played down, right? I mean, most buildings are only two levels.

00:59:03.810 --> 00:59:13.880

(I) Hmm. (JR) In fact the, in fact, Elxsi was in on Trade Zone Boulevard, which is now in Milpitas, it's close to Milpitas. Milpitas and San JosÃ©,

00:59:14.090 --> 00:59:20.220

(JR) on Lundy and Trade Zone Boulevard. And that building was just two levels and didn't look anything

00:59:20.960 --> 00:59:28.539

(JR) sort of fascinating. It looked very simple, clean, very simple doors. And I had gone in, gone in to meet the

00:59:28.590 --> 00:59:33.609

(JR) for the interview. I had the interview and I also met Gene Amdahl. I don't know if you know Gene Amdahl.

00:59:35.900 --> 00:59:46.030

(JR) Gene Amdahl was the guy in IBM, who made IBM 360, and then he came out and built his own company called Amdahl, which is now part of

00:59:46.090 --> 00:59:54.469

(JR) Fujitsu, I think, something like that. And Gene Amdahl is a legend, so I met him. That was, so for me, he was like

00:59:54.730 --> 00:59:56.440

(JR) it's like, oh my god, these

00:59:56.740 --> 00:59:58.770

(JR) very unassuming places,

00:59:59.210 --> 01:00:09.990

(JR) outside the building, here's not a soul to see. You know, inside, it's bubbling with energy, right? Because you can collab, there's so much work going on, people are constantly discussing.

01:00:10.050 --> 01:00:15.269

(JR) So my first impression was, yeah, I like this place. (I) Hmm. (JR) Because

01:00:15.550 --> 01:00:17.749

(JR) it doesn't have

01:00:18.650 --> 01:00:20.090

(JR) you know, nothing looks

01:00:20.510 --> 01:00:36.679

(JR) so in your face. Everything looks so nice blended in the, in the thing. Most today, of course, you see buildings are, you know, 14 floors and 15 floors. All glass. Things have changed. Yeah. Still, some parts of the

01:00:36.830 --> 01:00:41.690

(JR) area still is maintained like that. Like, for example, if you go on

01:00:41.780 --> 01:00:45.139

(JR) if you are on I-880,

01:00:45.760 --> 01:00:47.389

(JR) actually, on

01:00:47.560 --> 01:00:52.490

(JR) on 80, 880 yeah. If you're going down to San JosÃ©,

01:00:52.560 --> 01:00:55.399

(JR) you will see a lot of the buildings on the sides

01:00:55.580 --> 01:01:04.379

(JR) which are 2, only 2 levels. Those were the buildings. In fact, some areas are still like that. On SR-237, you will see buildings that are only 2 floors.

01:01:05.290 --> 01:01:15.460

(JR) You go on Tasman Drive, you'll see 2 floors. That was the code at that time. You couldn't build more than 2 floors.

(I) Right. (JR) Everything was spread out. It was more like a [inaudible]

01:01:15.480 --> 01:01:16.379

(JR) So,

01:01:16.610 --> 01:01:18.140

(JR) I had a very

01:01:18.220 --> 01:01:19.080

(JR) I mean,

01:01:19.320 --> 01:01:23.659

(JR) it didn't intimidate me. It was like welcoming, you know, it was like "Ah."

01:01:24.380 --> 01:01:29.529

(JR) It's not like the first time I landed in Singapore that I felt like, "Oh my god. I better

01:01:29.900 --> 01:01:31.560

(JR) watch out

01:01:31.680 --> 01:01:32.950

(JR) for everything."

01:01:33.000 --> 01:01:42.979

(JR) Because chewing gum was a problem in Singapore. You know, long hair was a problem in Singapore.

(I) Wow. (JR) Maggi (instant noodles brand) pans was a problem in Singapore.

01:01:43.160 --> 01:01:46.309

(JR) Whereas, when we were coming into the Valley, it was like, "Oh.

01:01:46.550 --> 01:01:51.039

(JR) I like it." And then when I met the guys in the office

01:01:51.080 --> 01:01:52.619

(JR) and they took me out

01:01:52.650 --> 01:01:59.480

(JR) for lunch and things like that, as I kept meeting different people. And the one big advantage I had

01:01:59.730 --> 01:02:05.900

(JR) is, I was so familiar with the machine and the technology and the architecture. So that part

01:02:06.360 --> 01:02:15.179

(JR) they, you know, I was in sync with them. But I was, I was from a completely different culture, from a different background.

01:02:15.400 --> 01:02:17.200

(JR) I was

01:02:17.370 --> 01:02:20.659

(JR) starting to sort of figure things out.

01:02:21.040 --> 01:02:27.589

(JR) But...the first impression was, I liked it. It was a place

01:02:27.620 --> 01:02:30.560

(JR) where I could call home. It was not

01:02:30.640 --> 01:02:47.499

(JR) Yeah, yeah, that part was, and it was not like when you go to Boston and things like that. There's a, there's a different feeling, [inaudible]. Everything was spread out, right?

(I) Right. I mean, and geographically also, right? Because it's a bigger,

01:02:47.570 --> 01:03:07.309

(I) wider state.

(JR) Yeah, wider state. Yeah. And sunnier state, wider state. And it's [inaudible], everything is big, right?

(I) Yes, yes. So you know, you mentioned the expatriate thing. So I'm going to pull that part out in connection to the, this particular project's focus.

01:03:07.320 --> 01:03:25.420

(I) So you are, like you said, you are, you know, you were very much in sync with the technology in this area. And, that's where you felt at home almost immediately, because you were; although the, like you said, that the cultural experience was different because you came from a different world so to say.

01:03:25.570 --> 01:03:27.580

(I) So, having said that,

01:03:27.620 --> 01:03:30.470

(I) as an Indian,

01:03:31.050 --> 01:03:34.280

(I) you know, coming to Silicon Valley at a time when

01:03:34.860 --> 01:03:44.139

(I) there are many innovators. Some innovators who were probably of Indian origin, or maybe they are more in number now. And you are somebody coming in with a lot of

01:03:44.160 --> 01:04:03.419

(I) solid, you know, professional experience as an Indian engineer, right? Who is coming into this area. And Silicon Valley is already getting to that point for which it will become, it has become so famous, right? So in that sense, do you identify yourself as a Desi of Silicon Valley,

01:04:03.510 --> 01:04:06.250

(I) and what does that mean to you?

01:04:06.720 --> 01:04:08.980

(JR) Desi of Silicon Valley...

01:04:10.790 --> 01:04:19.589

(JR) Yeah, you can't take it out. I mean I'm, you know, it's almost impossible, right? Because there are still parts of me that are still Desi. I mean I don't think,

01:04:21.370 --> 01:04:22.189

(JR) but

01:04:22.750 --> 01:04:26.829

(JR) I like to assimilate also, you know, it's like, because I

01:04:27.080 --> 01:04:37.030

(JR) see I come from an immigration, immigrant family, right, in some sense. Because even though I'm a Malayali, I was in, I never grew up in Kerala.

01:04:37.070 --> 01:04:38.220

(JR) So my

01:04:38.450 --> 01:04:40.300

(JR) first experience

01:04:40.640 --> 01:04:51.830

(JR) as a child has been one of an immigrant, right? So, but in some, some sense right? I grew up in Tamil Nadu, but culture is not exactly the same.

01:04:52.040 --> 01:04:53.710

(JR) You kind of appreciate

01:04:54.110 --> 01:04:58.909

(JR) what it brings for you, right? I mean it actually helps you become a better person than

01:04:59.180 --> 01:05:01.109

(JR) being completely

01:05:01.550 --> 01:05:08.589

(JR) put in a sort of a cocoon, right? And you find strength in that cocoon and once you're out of that you feel

01:05:10.020 --> 01:05:13.180

(JR) vulnerable. But for me,

01:05:13.890 --> 01:05:16.720

(JR) I don't know, I've managed to

01:05:18.050 --> 01:05:29.509

(JR) I have a lot of, in fact, predominantly our friends are all Desi friends. But our behaviors are Desi friends. But when you, when it comes to

01:05:29.550 --> 01:05:34.029

(JR) the food side of it, much broader.

01:05:34.070 --> 01:05:42.629

(I) Hmm. (JR) Much much broader, because you know I, if you ask me what's my, what's my favorite meal? I would say, sushi.

01:05:42.870 --> 01:05:46.319

(JR) But that's, now, I don't know

01:05:46.360 --> 01:05:51.369

(JR) that'll, that'll take me away from being a Desi, you know. Because what's my

01:05:51.430 --> 01:05:58.789

(JR) you know, favorite big meat? It'll be stake, you know. So that actually makes me a little

01:05:59.160 --> 01:05:59.930

(JR) sort of

01:06:00.120 --> 01:06:05.199

(JR) turning in a different direction. But having said that, I still very much

01:06:06.560 --> 01:06:10.419

(JR) consider myself a Silicon Valley Desi.

01:06:10.500 --> 01:06:17.400

(JR) Because I think it's, it's because of our relationship and our association that we were able to get this far.

01:06:17.830 --> 01:06:20.549

(JR) So there is a huge value for that. By the way,

01:06:20.610 --> 01:06:27.680

(JR) your point about me coming to the Valley, one more reason that actually got me

01:06:28.420 --> 01:06:29.790

(JR) sort of

01:06:30.120 --> 01:06:34.540

(JR) more in line with coming to the Valley and not somewhere else,

01:06:34.570 --> 01:06:35.700

(JR) is because

01:06:35.870 --> 01:06:38.069

(JR) one of the founders of Elxsi

01:06:38.290 --> 01:06:45.629

(JR) was a BITS, was an Indian in origin, and he was a BITSian (BITS Pilani alumni). He is my senior.

01:06:46.470 --> 01:06:59.550

(I) So that connection, also. (JR) That connection and I met him when I was in Singapore. He's such a sweet guy. In fact, he, just before we went to Australia I went and met my wife and I went

01:06:59.560 --> 01:07:17.290

(JR) and met him. His name is Thampy Thomas. And Thampy and Ratan Tata are very good friends.

(I) I see, okay.

(JR) That's how the Tata Elxsi comes into play. They, so Thampy, and so the three founders of Elxsi, one was Thampy,

01:07:17.320 --> 01:07:21.390

(JR) and the other one is B. Kumar, and third is Joe Rizzi.

01:07:21.670 --> 01:07:27.100

(JR) And Joe Rizzi actually went and started a venture fund, I think

01:07:27.330 --> 01:07:28.169

(JR) Mac,

01:07:28.260 --> 01:07:35.989

(JR) I forget the name of the venture fund. B. Kumar still is consulting on his own. His wife is Mythili Kumar, she's very well known

01:07:36.100 --> 01:07:39.740

(JR) dancer, Bharatanatyam dancer in the Valley.

01:07:40.110 --> 01:07:42.149

(JR) And B. Kumar is an

01:07:42.170 --> 01:07:50.129

(JR) absolute authority on multi-processing. He consults for all these guys, the big guys. He and Len Shar

01:07:50.210 --> 01:07:51.279

(JR) Thampy,

01:07:51.610 --> 01:07:55.739

(JR) he's the guy who came up with this whole multiprocessing architecture, because

01:07:56.150 --> 01:07:58.069

(JR) when he was in Stanford

01:07:58.180 --> 01:08:03.240

(JR) he found out that the...machines they were using at that time

01:08:03.710 --> 01:08:05.970

(JR) were extremely slow for simulation.

01:08:06.180 --> 01:08:07.029

(I) Hmm.

01:08:07.070 --> 01:08:14.509

(JR) And then Elxsi was born out of that idea. I met Thampy when I was in Singapore, working with Tata Elxsi.

01:08:14.530 --> 01:08:15.970

(JR) And

01:08:16.109 --> 01:08:20.710

(JR) it was Thampy, Joe Rizzi and Tata had come, Ratan Tata, so I had a

01:08:20.939 --> 01:08:28.949

(JR) fantastic opportunity to meet him, and that's when it further strengthened my thinking, saying, I've always wanted to do something on my own.

01:08:29.859 --> 01:08:31.029

(JR) Here's a guy

01:08:31.060 --> 01:08:33.560

(JR) who's actually started, and this is a company

01:08:34.020 --> 01:08:36.970

(JR) he started and Ratan Tata is his partner?

01:08:37.020 --> 01:08:44.819

(JR) This is amazing. So maybe that's what I should do. I should actually go to Silicon Valley, because I could probably do something there.

01:08:44.890 --> 01:08:47.380

(JR) So, so that was the

01:08:47.890 --> 01:08:53.429

(JR) so I think if you look at that, most of us who came

01:08:53.920 --> 01:08:58.939

(JR) to the Valley through Tata Elxsi, we now meet every, every year, every

01:08:59.060 --> 01:09:15.070

(JR) few months we meet for lunch. And in fact, we talk to each other. We say, it's all because of Thampy. We call ourselves the Elxsiods. All because of Thampy, we're all here in the Valley. So there is a Desi connection. So I do, and see, and then, and then through that

01:09:15.399 --> 01:09:20.530

(JR) you extend through the cultural networks and all that stuff.

(I) Right. (JR) But I think

01:09:20.710 --> 01:09:31.780

(JR) I think the single foundational block for us was really the...affinity to technology, and what we can do with technology. We had the skills

01:09:32.069 --> 01:09:39.409

(JR) but we didn't have all the knowledge, and the knowledge is continuously being built up, right?

(I) Right. (JR) And so, if you had a good group of people,

01:09:39.910 --> 01:09:40.990

(JR) and now,

01:09:42.210 --> 01:09:48.830

(JR) that group has grown quite large, and it's continuously growing. So, so the Desi, I don't think I will

01:09:49.160 --> 01:09:57.499

(JR) ever sort of abandon that feeling. It is there.

(I) Of course. (JR) But you can always grow out of that also, continuously.

01:09:57.710 --> 01:09:59.059

(I) Sure, sure. Yes.

01:09:59.210 --> 01:10:04.599

(I) Yes, I think because I was talking to a few other you know interviewees, and many of them were saying that, that

01:10:04.860 --> 01:10:09.710

(I) you know, it's a fine balance I think, you know, on

01:10:09.950 --> 01:10:12.749

(I) you know, the assimilation bit.

01:10:12.910 --> 01:10:28.440

(I) You know, in a good sense, and also maintaining your own cultural identity in a good sense. But not overdoing probably one or the other, because then you lose something in the way.

01:10:28.490 --> 01:10:32.039

(JR) Exactly, I don't...like that. Because you're, you know that

01:10:32.610 --> 01:10:35.909

(JR) that's like, that's like the what do you, what do you call that?

01:10:37.240 --> 01:10:40.590

(JR) War paint, right. It's like painting,

01:10:40.680 --> 01:10:47.180

(JR) you know, getting yourself painted for a war. When you overdo it, it actually starts

01:10:48.630 --> 01:10:55.520

(JR) starts pushing the other cultures away, right? Why do that? And then, here's the other thing, the interesting part is

01:10:56.340 --> 01:10:58.860

(JR) both my sons are married,

01:10:58.880 --> 01:11:07.039

(JR) and if you look at the theme that both of them chose was a Desi theme, right? They could have chosen anything. Nothing, we were not

01:11:07.250 --> 01:11:08.549

(JR) preventing them from doing

01:11:08.630 --> 01:11:15.809

(I) You mean, you mean during their weddings?

(JR) Yeah, their wedding is all, the 3-day, the

01:11:15.860 --> 01:11:19.360

(JR) Mehndi, and you know

01:11:19.430 --> 01:11:21.150

(JR) Sangeet, and

01:11:21.190 --> 01:11:22.110

(JR) you know,

01:11:22.290 --> 01:11:24.679

(JR) what is that, Haldi (turmeric).

01:11:24.720 --> 01:11:25.540

(I) Hmm.

01:11:25.680 --> 01:11:32.520

(JR) All that and the wedding. And my second daughter-in-law, she's actually an Italian, and she wanted the same thing. So

01:11:32.560 --> 01:11:33.500

(JR) so if

01:11:33.960 --> 01:11:40.029

(JR) if we, without having to push all that, if we are able to draw people in

01:11:40.160 --> 01:11:57.689

(JR) then why, why bother? You know, I over emphasize it, right?

(I) Yes, yes, I think like what you're saying is, if you welcome more, I think you retain yours too.

(JR) Exactly, and if you go into the Hindu philosophy is just that, right? (I) Correct. (JR) We actually

01:11:57.920 --> 01:12:01.860

(JR) gave a lot of value for learning, absorbing,

01:12:01.920 --> 01:12:05.050

(JR) and that's how you build a knowledge. There's no reason to

01:12:05.130 --> 01:12:06.019

(JR) sort of

01:12:06.380 --> 01:12:11.500

(JR) put your stake in the ground and say this is the only truth, and nothing but the truth, right?

01:12:11.540 --> 01:12:14.449

(JR) There's no real reason to do that. And this place has been,

01:12:14.630 --> 01:12:19.030

(JR) has welcomed us, and we've done a lot for this area.

01:12:19.260 --> 01:12:20.630

(JR) It was not easy.

01:12:21.360 --> 01:12:31.989

(JR) And there was a lot of, a lot of people have faced discrimination, no doubt. Even Thampy has faced, I know that. Even though he was the founder of the company.

01:12:32.130 --> 01:12:37.910

(JR) But he faced it outside of the region, but even within the region that you'll face it.

01:12:37.950 --> 01:12:41.630

(JR) But those things, you know, over time will

01:12:41.790 --> 01:12:44.449

(JR) sort itself out.

01:12:44.560 --> 01:12:45.629

(JR) But I think

01:12:45.980 --> 01:12:50.829

(JR) we, I think Desis are far more comfortable

01:12:51.360 --> 01:12:54.579

(JR) to...

01:12:54.620 --> 01:12:56.150

(JR) you know, openly

01:12:56.230 --> 01:12:59.959

(JR) expose their culture now, than what it was

01:13:00.110 --> 01:13:02.430

(JR) 25 years ago, 30 years ago.

01:13:02.660 --> 01:13:10.699

(JR) A lot of, a lot more easier to expose, you know. (I) Is it because of the growing size of the population here?

01:13:10.910 --> 01:13:20.780

(JR) Not just that, it's also that the non-Desi community has accepted that and finds a real fascination towards that.

01:13:22.070 --> 01:13:32.449

(I) How did that fascination grow, you think?

(JR) I think it's just the, it all started in the offices I think, right? Because I have friends who are

01:13:32.470 --> 01:13:36.080

(JR) both Caucasians and Chinese and Koreans.

01:13:36.110 --> 01:13:36.950

(JR) And

01:13:37.020 --> 01:13:54.020

(JR) many of them like Indian foods. Many don't like Indian foods. Many are fascinated, and they want to learn also. Because they find, you see, if you show a lot of integrity in what you do, show a lot of depth in what you're offering,

01:13:54.050 --> 01:13:59.869

(JR) then they want to listen to you, right? So you have to give more before you can ask them.

01:14:00.180 --> 01:14:03.950

(JR) Because we are in a foreign land.

01:14:03.970 --> 01:14:04.870

(I) Sure.

01:14:04.990 --> 01:14:06.029

(JR) And so,

01:14:06.240 --> 01:14:12.640

(JR) to me it looks like it all started with the office, and then slowly extended to our neighborhood. (I) Hmm.

01:14:12.870 --> 01:14:22.589

(JR) And then from neighborhood to now, I mean at the city level it's pretty clear, you know. Of course, that's also why might bring in other forms of

01:14:22.770 --> 01:14:27.419

(JR) retaliations also. So we have to be very careful about that. You know, how far you wanna...

01:14:27.680 --> 01:14:31.629

(JR) You have to balance that. So I don't think it's just the size.

01:14:31.740 --> 01:14:35.999

(JR) In fact, if any, the size could have actually created a

01:14:37.920 --> 01:14:41.409

(JR) you know, you know,

01:14:41.840 --> 01:14:43.590

(JR) some sort of a

01:14:44.100 --> 01:14:51.330

(JR) negativity towards that, right? Because people would have reacted negatively to that, because it's over

01:14:53.140 --> 01:14:55.010

(JR) population of Indians here.

01:14:55.240 --> 01:14:56.380

(JR) Hasn't happened.

01:14:56.450 --> 01:14:59.699

(I) Hmm. (JR) Hasn't happened. But it can happen.

01:14:59.750 --> 01:15:03.469

(JR) You have to be very careful about that, because, you know there's a limit, right?

01:15:05.050 --> 01:15:09.110

(I) Yeah. (JR) And I think as long as you

01:15:09.180 --> 01:15:14.050

(JR) engage in the local community, they also, and that's why, you know, if you look at it

01:15:14.190 --> 01:15:16.950

(JR) each time when I started a company,

01:15:18.570 --> 01:15:21.949

(JR) we did a puja in the office.

01:15:22.020 --> 01:15:27.370

(JR) And everyone attended.

(I) Hmm. (JR) And these are non-Desis,

01:15:27.700 --> 01:15:29.750

(JR) also attended.

01:15:30.370 --> 01:15:37.980

(JR) And they understood that this is what we're doing is purification ceremony. And

01:15:38.580 --> 01:15:40.260

(JR) there were people who said, yeah.

01:15:40.380 --> 01:15:52.369

(JR) They didn't have any, but I can, I clearly remember in the early days, that is, I'm talking about the right when I come in like '87 through the '95s, maybe.

01:15:53.010 --> 01:15:55.269

(JR) You could see things were still,

01:15:55.730 --> 01:15:56.570

(JR) you know.

01:15:56.840 --> 01:15:58.920

(JR) There was, there was a lot of

01:15:58.940 --> 01:15:59.910

(JR) you know,

01:16:00.040 --> 01:16:03.629

(JR) doubts about who Desis are, right?

01:16:04.080 --> 01:16:17.069

(JR) I mean, because a lot of that was coming from the time when there was a lot of investigation into the motels, right? Motels owned by Patels. So they thought, okay, this is another mafia that's coming in.

01:16:17.310 --> 01:16:19.220

(JR) And people never understood that

01:16:19.560 --> 01:16:23.350

(JR) Indians, when you can't be put into one box, because

01:16:23.420 --> 01:16:27.799

(JR) Indians come from different parts of India with their own microcultures.

01:16:28.480 --> 01:16:30.590

(JR) And now more people are aware of it,

01:16:30.700 --> 01:16:39.300

(JR) and it's fascinating when you tell them which part of the, which part of India you're from. They know more geography now.

01:16:39.370 --> 01:16:40.300

(I) Yes.

01:16:40.480 --> 01:16:59.610

(I) Yes, yes I see that. So another thing that we have noticed here is, so I'm relatively new to the Bay Area, right? I've visited before, but you know living is fairly new to me. But one thing that I've noticed is say, for example, all these art forms, right? You know, Carnatic dance, Carnatic music, Hindustani music, you know.

01:16:59.690 --> 01:17:17.639

(I) Painting schools, right? And various, and of course, the Cultural Association, the Tamil Association, the Bengali Association, the Marathi Mandal. You know, it's like it's all over. Like, as a statistical figure, and you may know this, like this year itself we had 22 Durga Pujas.

01:17:17.650 --> 01:17:28.770

(I) So, I mean I think it says a lot about how varied and how the density of the population, right, in the area. But

01:17:28.780 --> 01:17:47.970

(I) having said that, you know all of these associations, they have their, you know annual events. You know, people, students, kids are learning the art forms. They're performing. They have excellent teachers. They're going through the rigor of the art form. In addition to doing very good in school, doing all their track and field and their soccer. They're doing all of this, right?

01:17:47.980 --> 01:18:00.169

(I) So, my question would be that why do you think the Desi culture, you know, through all these arts forms, you know, the restaurant scene and everything. Why is it so vibrant in Silicon Valley? It just can't only be the numbers.

01:18:00.390 --> 01:18:02.679

(I) Why is it so vibrant here?

01:18:03.290 --> 01:18:05.169

(JR) I think it's

01:18:06.260 --> 01:18:08.720

(JR) the numbers do make...

01:18:08.740 --> 01:18:14.050

(JR) make a difference, but I think it has been going on for a long time.

01:18:15.400 --> 01:18:23.929

(JR) Even when we came, like I told you, you know. B. Kumar's wife, she's a well accomplished dancer. And so many of these

01:18:24.680 --> 01:18:29.409

(JR) "tech" guys' spouses tend to be artists,

01:18:29.480 --> 01:18:31.609

(JR) interestingly. And

01:18:32.240 --> 01:18:35.350

(JR) they start off very small by offering

01:18:35.520 --> 01:18:40.340

(JR) classes to their friends and neighbors. Desi neighbors, right?

01:18:40.680 --> 01:18:47.139

(JR) And before you know it, it becomes a big school, you know. 15, 16 students.

01:18:47.280 --> 01:18:48.380

(JR) It

01:18:48.920 --> 01:18:57.409

(JR) I, you know, I don't know if there is, there is probably some non-Desi kids coming, but it's, most of these art forms are still

01:18:57.490 --> 01:19:02.709

(JR) attended by Desi kids, second generation Desi kids.

01:19:02.770 --> 01:19:15.319

(I) Yes, yes. But why is it, why is it so vibrant, though? Why, for example, Carnatic music it's, I've read it that Carnatic music apparently flourishes in the Bay Area and it's only second to Chennai

01:19:15.460 --> 01:19:16.860

(I) around the world.

01:19:17.110 --> 01:19:23.149

(I) Yeah. (JR) No, the Tamil Association and the Tamil, by the way, they are good friends of mine.

01:19:23.320 --> 01:19:27.519

(JR) Fine arts, the Tamil Fine Arts Association?

01:19:27.570 --> 01:19:28.269

(JR) Hmm.

01:19:28.640 --> 01:19:30.499

(JR) You know, why is that?

01:19:30.660 --> 01:19:37.469

(JR) That's a good question. I don't know, I never thought of. See the Tamil Brahmins, they hang out quite closely.

01:19:37.810 --> 01:19:50.870

(JR) For them, it's not even the food that matters. Maybe the coffee matters, I guess. They're very good friends of mine. By the way, my first manager at Elxsi, Devda Raghavan,

01:19:51.710 --> 01:19:55.190

(JR) he's a Tamil Iyengar Brahmin.

01:19:55.370 --> 01:19:59.179

(JR) He grew up in West Bengal, Calcutta.

(I) Oh, okay.

01:19:59.210 --> 01:20:02.430

(JR) The man, the man is so interesting. He says,

01:20:02.590 --> 01:20:03.450

(JR) Jayan,

01:20:03.500 --> 01:20:05.469

(JR) I dream in Bengali.

01:20:05.560 --> 01:20:12.610

(I) Oh, I want to talk to him.

(JR) You should talk to him. He's a fascinating guy. His wife, Suda,

01:20:12.730 --> 01:20:21.829

(JR) she grew up in Bombay, speaks fluent Gujarati. But having said that, at home, their food

01:20:21.950 --> 01:20:27.549

(JR) is very Tamil Brahmin food, and their, their son

01:20:27.680 --> 01:20:32.410

(JR) actually was a big time into violin.

(I) Oh wow, mhm. (JR) So

01:20:33.080 --> 01:20:35.870

(JR) I don't know why, because neither of them,

01:20:36.030 --> 01:20:38.260

(JR) I think neither Suda nor Raghavan

01:20:40.050 --> 01:20:44.930

(JR) ever did any of that art form, but somehow they wanted to keep it alive.

01:20:45.070 --> 01:20:47.889

(JR) And the kids were willing to take it, and

01:20:47.930 --> 01:20:50.439

(JR) and he actually did quite well.

01:20:50.690 --> 01:20:56.770

(JR) So, yeah. Sorry.

(I) No, sorry. So you're saying they are the founders of Fine Arts Association,

01:20:57.290 --> 01:21:02.599

(I) founders or the...?

(JR) I think Raghavan, I don't know if he is a founder, he may, he may very well be one of the

01:21:02.810 --> 01:21:06.200

(JR) early guys there. And his

01:21:06.260 --> 01:21:10.469

(JR) his sister is also, sister is also in the finance, I think.

01:21:10.590 --> 01:21:24.419

(JR) They keep conducting it, every year they conduct. And Mythili, you can look her up, Mythili Kumar.

(I) Yes, I've heard her name.

(JR) Yeah, she, she's been here since, see, I came in '87. They've been here since

01:21:24.590 --> 01:21:27.289

(JR) '79, 70s.

01:21:27.540 --> 01:21:28.460

(JR) And

01:21:28.680 --> 01:21:39.640

(JR) I think she has been teaching ever since, you know. First they start teaching their kids.

(I) Right. (JR) Okay. So she has, I think 2 or 3 daughters. I think they were teaching the daughters.

01:21:39.780 --> 01:21:51.119

(JR) Because at that time classes were not there, and as the more and more population came, you know, more Indians came. Elxsi itself more, you know, if there are a lot of Desis,

01:21:51.170 --> 01:21:55.770

(JR) their daughters who want to look for a place to go dance.

01:21:56.520 --> 01:21:59.710

(JR) Similarly, I have a friend down the street,

01:21:59.810 --> 01:22:03.220

(JR) Krishna Shankar and Radhika Shankar. Radhika is a

01:22:03.400 --> 01:22:16.889

(JR) big time dancer. She has 3 daughters, all 3 daughters she taught, and she teaches many more. And she goes every year to Chennai, because she goes back to her school for their

01:22:16.930 --> 01:22:22.089

(JR) the Arangetram, every year there's some, some type of Arangetram that they have to go and do.

01:22:22.240 --> 01:22:23.730

(I) Right. (JR) I think

01:22:24.640 --> 01:22:28.730

(JR) I don't know why, but there is, you know, the especially

01:22:29.020 --> 01:22:32.959

(JR) I've seen in the Carnatic, you know, whether it's a

01:22:33.870 --> 01:22:35.420

(JR) the Tamil Brahmins,

01:22:35.540 --> 01:22:37.169

(JR) they have retained that

01:22:37.210 --> 01:22:46.809

(JR) the Carnatic, you know, Bharatanatyam, and the Carnatic singing and vocal, as well as the instruments. (I) Right. (JR) They've kept it alive.

01:22:46.890 --> 01:22:47.740

(JR) And that

01:22:47.870 --> 01:23:04.710

(JR) and they conduct these in the, in the temples, right? Temples, for occasions. So there's always some reason to practice this. Because there's a way to perform. So it's a...see if you, if you have a performing arts that you don't have a time

01:23:04.720 --> 01:23:15.259

(JR) to showcase it, then what's, what's the point?

(I) Right, right. (JR) So I think the temples became the venues, and the temples also was very well organized. Right? I mean, if you go and see the

01:23:15.410 --> 01:23:20.000

(JR) temple in Livermore. My

01:23:20.060 --> 01:23:22.850

(JR) my friend is no more, he was very active.

01:23:22.930 --> 01:23:26.970

(JR) And they used to conduct that, and he to get his kids to be involved in that.

01:23:28.560 --> 01:23:30.609

(JR) So I don't, I think the

01:23:30.900 --> 01:23:36.340

(JR) I don't know if that if this will carry onto the next generation, I doubt it. I have my doubts, because

01:23:36.630 --> 01:23:40.230

(JR) I'm looking at what's happening. It may not, it may fizzle out.

01:23:40.360 --> 01:23:42.579

(I) Hmm. (JR) But then

01:23:42.750 --> 01:23:45.640

(JR) it may actually have a larger

01:23:45.710 --> 01:23:46.940

(JR) interest.

01:23:47.270 --> 01:23:53.999

(I) Hmm. (JR) Initially, it was all Tam-Brahm (Tamil Brahmin) groups. But now it's other Indian

01:23:54.140 --> 01:23:57.829

(JR) kids are also picking that up, and

01:23:57.880 --> 01:24:07.749

(JR) sooner or later it'll go out of that, you know it'll be.

(I) Right. (JR) You could even become a local mainstay of non-Desi kids who are interested in this thing.

01:24:07.760 --> 01:24:21.590

(I) Right. Like, another form of classical music, just like Western classical music. It can be another form of classical music, yeah.

(JR) Exactly and I think there's also a possibility, like for example,

01:24:21.610 --> 01:24:25.129

(JR) my younger son's classmate

01:24:25.350 --> 01:24:30.890

(JR) was this kid, he's a kid called Sid Sriram. He's now a big time singer in India.

01:24:31.000 --> 01:24:36.449

(I) Oh, okay.

(JR) He sings with A.R. Rahman (famous record producer). The kid graduated from

01:24:36.670 --> 01:24:44.199

(JR) Mission San Jos  High School, went to Berklee Music in Boston.

01:24:44.240 --> 01:24:49.290

(JR) And now he sings, in fact, that "Srivalli" that movie,

01:24:49.420 --> 01:24:57.780

(JR) he's the guy who sang in 4 different languages, I think, 4 Southern languages.

(I) Wow. (JR) So he, when he used to come here,

01:24:58.520 --> 01:25:10.059

(JR) I used to talk to him. He and his sister, they are able to blend jazz, English jazz with Carnatic.
(I) Yes. (JR) And they go very well, beautiful.

01:25:10.130 --> 01:25:27.889

(JR) So I used to sit and listen to it, you know. And I like jazz, actually jazz, it's one thing where you can sit and listen to it for hours without getting tired of it, you know.

(I) Yes, yes. In fact, you know pandit Ravi Shankar, right, the sitarist? He was the first person, I think one of the first people, I think who, when he was

01:25:27.910 --> 01:25:34.379

(I) you know, he did a lot to introduce Hindustani classical music to, you know, to the Western world, right?

01:25:34.390 --> 01:25:54.030

(I) And he often compared the raga system (melodic framework in Indian classical music) and the performance to jazz performance because of the improvisation.

(JR) Improvisations, correct. Yeah no, absolutely. And I think you're right, and his 2 daughters are also fantastic. I listen to them, every so often. Norah and Anoushka, you know.

01:25:54.040 --> 01:26:02.180

(I) Yes, yes. So I guess I'll ask you one more question. And you have talked quite a bit about that in in different ways, but

01:26:02.280 --> 01:26:04.269

(I) how does being Desi

01:26:04.700 --> 01:26:12.920

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

(JR) Ah, good question. Actually, interestingly,

01:26:14.450 --> 01:26:17.929

(JR) when we initially came,

01:26:18.730 --> 01:26:29.769

(JR) we were considered to be a reliable workforce when it came to engineering. In fact, I remember in the 80s and early 90s,

01:26:30.280 --> 01:26:34.389

(JR) we were considered to be, yeah, these are good, reliable "techies."

01:26:34.620 --> 01:26:38.550

(I) Hmm. (JR) Give them, they'll do the job. They know how to do it.

01:26:38.780 --> 01:26:42.480

(JR) But we were considered to be very poor managers.

01:26:42.550 --> 01:26:43.620

(I) Hmm.

01:26:43.820 --> 01:26:47.999

(JR) And we were terrible business people. We didn't know how to do business.

01:26:48.160 --> 01:26:49.320

(I) Hmm.

01:26:49.490 --> 01:26:52.289

(JR) I think what happened is somewhere in the

01:26:53.290 --> 01:27:02.340

(JR) mid-90s to early 2000s is when the, the whole perspective started changing. But I still remember the first

01:27:02.650 --> 01:27:12.460

(JR) several years, the first 8, 9, 10 years, and I can imagine what it must have been before that. It's about building that trust, right? I mean, it's about

01:27:12.620 --> 01:27:18.330

(JR) it's...all about building thrust, and the in the first phase as well, it was that,

01:27:19.520 --> 01:27:33.589

(JR) given a technical problem, yeah, we are able to solve that technical problem, right? And so that's where the credibility built up. The next level was really about leadership. How do you build leadership, and

01:27:34.000 --> 01:27:42.509

(JR) it takes time, and most of us, I think many of us never were trained for it. Most of us, I mean, at least I can talk for myself.

01:27:42.690 --> 01:27:47.780

(JR) I never went and did an MBA or something to get trained. Most of my

01:27:47.860 --> 01:27:49.700

(JR) leadership came with

01:27:49.860 --> 01:27:56.669

(JR) watching other programs, reading about it, and actually practicing it in work, you know. And

01:27:57.310 --> 01:27:58.219

(JR) so

01:27:59.340 --> 01:28:01.569

(JR) I, I found that

01:28:02.020 --> 01:28:11.400

(JR) the support, and I still remember the first business that we were starting was in '91. And

01:28:11.970 --> 01:28:15.140

(JR) at that time, I was working for another company.

01:28:15.630 --> 01:28:26.970

(JR) And I had come to that company because my friend, who happened to be a Desi fellow, and he was my senior from college. We both were in Elxsi. (I) Hmm.

01:28:27.260 --> 01:28:31.309

(JR) And we were both toying around with the idea of starting something on our own.

01:28:31.550 --> 01:28:35.920

(JR) We didn't know what. We just kept writing different ideas down.

01:28:36.050 --> 01:28:37.760

(JR) Eventually we join this

01:28:37.780 --> 01:28:39.679

(JR) company and we were there.

01:28:39.970 --> 01:28:41.739

(JR) And we had presented

01:28:42.220 --> 01:28:47.520

(JR) a new chipset for a different space to the management in that company.

01:28:48.250 --> 01:28:50.120

(JR) And what happened is,

01:28:51.890 --> 01:28:53.260

(JR) we found

01:28:53.600 --> 01:28:59.989

(JR) another Indian fellow, his name is Raju. Raju was used to be the CTO for Motorola at that time.

01:29:00.100 --> 01:29:03.990

(JR) And he had just left and joined Ross Technology.

01:29:04.680 --> 01:29:06.800

(JR) And that conversation was

01:29:07.200 --> 01:29:10.219

(JR) the first time we felt like, okay,

01:29:10.440 --> 01:29:17.739

(JR) there might be somehow we can make this work, right? Because until then, I think Indians, when you

01:29:18.040 --> 01:29:22.949

(JR) you know, most Desis when they're going through school and colleges.

01:29:23.090 --> 01:29:25.099

(JR) The one thing I've figured out is

01:29:25.620 --> 01:29:28.439

(JR) most of them get trained on "how to compete."

01:29:28.540 --> 01:29:33.949

(JR) Right? It's about, it's about winning, competing, do anything, win, you know.

01:29:33.990 --> 01:29:35.920

(JR) But they never taught

01:29:36.100 --> 01:29:46.460

(JR) that if you want to win in a bigger way, you need to learn to cooperate and collaborate, you know. So one of the things I learned in Pilani was just that. You know that

01:29:46.690 --> 01:29:50.319

(JR) for the bigger things to happen you need to have

01:29:50.560 --> 01:29:57.820

(JR) a bigger group, and for that bigger group to become powerful is to really be able to collaborate. And so, the first time

01:29:57.890 --> 01:29:59.500

(JR) Raju,

01:30:00.080 --> 01:30:01.360

(JR) we were talking,

01:30:01.620 --> 01:30:04.059

(JR) and I was designing a chip

01:30:04.160 --> 01:30:05.690

(JR) which he could use.

01:30:05.920 --> 01:30:08.259

(JR) And he was the CTO.

01:30:08.280 --> 01:30:11.760

(JR) And for the first time we were also starting to see that

01:30:11.840 --> 01:30:20.759

(JR) we're no longer just the manager and engineering manager. No longer just the Director of Engineering. We got a Chief Technology Officer.

01:30:21.160 --> 01:30:22.099

(JR) And

01:30:22.120 --> 01:30:24.100

(JR) we're also starting to see

01:30:24.340 --> 01:30:25.210

(JR) that

01:30:25.520 --> 01:30:27.799

(JR) physical appearances are no longer

01:30:28.030 --> 01:30:31.069

(JR) that big a deal, you know. It used to be a

01:30:31.370 --> 01:30:37.929

(JR) it used to be a big concern for most Desis, right? So like, how are we being perceived?

01:30:38.140 --> 01:30:40.669

(JR) If you're short vs. tall

01:30:40.800 --> 01:30:45.870

(JR) vs. fat vs. thin vs. skinny. You know, the perception is a huge

01:30:46.080 --> 01:30:50.500

(JR) impediment on your mental growth, right?

01:30:50.570 --> 01:30:51.530

(JR) And

01:30:51.790 --> 01:30:53.689

(JR) I started seeing all that

01:30:54.240 --> 01:30:58.750

(JR) about the '91 is when we actually met, I met Raju,

01:30:59.150 --> 01:31:00.510

(JR) and Raju

01:31:00.740 --> 01:31:01.879

(JR) was telling us

01:31:02.060 --> 01:31:05.669

(JR) guys, we need to figure out how we have to work together.

01:31:05.690 --> 01:31:06.570

(JR) You know.

01:31:06.650 --> 01:31:12.389

(JR) Most people actually know that Indians cannot work together.

01:31:13.220 --> 01:31:18.710

(JR) We have to disprove that. We have to work together. Even though we are not in the same company,

01:31:18.740 --> 01:31:22.160

(JR) we still have to create partnerships.

01:31:22.800 --> 01:31:25.529

(JR) So, I was what, I came to this country

01:31:25.640 --> 01:31:28.239

(JR) when I was 30. That was,

01:31:28.460 --> 01:31:33.360

(JR) I was, that was '87. So I was only 33, 34 years old.

01:31:33.550 --> 01:31:37.430

(JR) So it was, it was just fantastic to hear it from him.

01:31:37.530 --> 01:31:49.870

(I) Hmm. (JR) Because now you could see, yeah, as even two companies, if we collaborate we can actually be more powerful than one of the biggest companies out there. So that was never taught,

01:31:50.010 --> 01:31:58.470

(JR) never taught in India. We knew how to stand together for cultural things, for, but leadership

01:31:58.700 --> 01:31:59.599

(JR) I think

01:31:59.620 --> 01:32:02.050

(JR) I don't think we had

01:32:03.300 --> 01:32:07.749

(JR) much of an opportunity back in India to really

01:32:07.770 --> 01:32:09.190

(JR) sort of

01:32:09.560 --> 01:32:12.630

(JR) practice all that, that leadership capabilities.

01:32:12.820 --> 01:32:14.010

(JR) And the, but the

01:32:14.370 --> 01:32:18.119

(JR) but the partnership and I think it's only after coming here.

01:32:18.160 --> 01:32:24.619

(JR) Because before that you could actually see there was less of that, right? It was only in that timeframe

01:32:25.080 --> 01:32:29.429

(JR) that things like TAI came into being, where

01:32:29.910 --> 01:32:33.589

(JR) these senior executives from different companies were getting together

01:32:33.800 --> 01:32:38.859

(I) Right. (JR) to see, how do we create a platform that will empower?

01:32:39.150 --> 01:32:39.969

(I) Hmm.

01:32:40.240 --> 01:32:46.089

(JR) And so I think it was early 90s is when I started seeing

01:32:46.120 --> 01:32:50.890

(JR) that big change.

(I) Right. (JR) And once that happened,

01:32:51.600 --> 01:33:00.820

(JR) it was being recognized, externally also. It took a while. It was not that straightforward. So from '91 to 2000, now we are seeing

01:33:01.240 --> 01:33:13.200

(JR) you know, CEOs of these multinationals being Desis accepted. Because it is, you know, not you know. Why do people become the CEOs? Because they, the stockholders think

01:33:13.360 --> 01:33:25.089

(JR) that he can go get the team that it works for him, to make the business app and the way it should happen, right? And so it's about team building, it's about leadership, it's about setting the goals.

01:33:25.240 --> 01:33:26.469

(JR) All that

01:33:26.590 --> 01:33:34.480

(JR) I saw coming together something early 90s, not before that. I mean I came here only '87.

(I) Right. (JR) But that 4 years,

01:33:35.070 --> 01:33:41.330

(JR) I observed so much, and I was, luckily, I was in that inflection point, right?

01:33:41.420 --> 01:33:42.599

(JR) And so

01:33:42.620 --> 01:33:46.419

(JR) '91 through '97, I saw so much.

01:33:46.450 --> 01:33:48.669

(I) Hmm. (JR) At 6 years

01:33:48.890 --> 01:33:52.360

(JR) in those two companies that I was with, three companies I was with.

01:33:53.260 --> 01:33:58.220

(JR) You could see, you know, because you know '91 when we started our first company,

01:33:59.790 --> 01:34:00.620

(JR) it was

01:34:00.660 --> 01:34:07.709

(JR) just fascinating for six of us to come together, pull some small amount of money, and actually

01:34:08.260 --> 01:34:15.620

(JR) create a chipset that we sold to the market, and eventually that company got acquired by an alliance summer conductor

01:34:16.410 --> 01:34:20.039

(JR) in 2 years after it got started. So that whole period

01:34:20.060 --> 01:34:21.480

(JR) is when I learned,

01:34:21.590 --> 01:34:26.129

(JR) yeah, you have to show this, and the only way you can do this is if you become,

01:34:26.520 --> 01:34:33.279

(JR) you create partnerships with bigger companies, right? Otherwise it doesn't happen.

(I) Right, right.

01:34:34.170 --> 01:34:36.840

(JR) And so, yeah. So I think.

01:34:37.070 --> 01:34:37.760

(JR) Yeah.

01:34:37.780 --> 01:34:47.139

(I) Yeah. I mean, you know, you have shared so much about your journey here. So when you look back though, and I think you're already commenting on that. So you think,

01:34:47.400 --> 01:34:57.459

(I) do you think the Silicon Valley with its own, you know, unique culture I think of innovation, of you know, doing technology like

01:34:58.880 --> 01:35:01.819

(I) does that influence your identity as a Desi?

01:35:02.410 --> 01:35:06.369

(I) Does Silicon Valley influence your identity as a Desi?

01:35:07.300 --> 01:35:08.599

(JR) Yeah, it does.

01:35:08.860 --> 01:35:10.250

(JR) It does. Yeah.

01:35:10.870 --> 01:35:11.929

(JR) Because,

01:35:14.020 --> 01:35:16.359

(JR) you know, if I had not come here,

01:35:17.480 --> 01:35:21.049

(JR) I always think about it. If I had not come to the Valley,

01:35:22.290 --> 01:35:24.000

(JR) what would I have become?

01:35:24.480 --> 01:35:27.309

(I) Hmm. (JR) And what would I have been doing?

01:35:27.610 --> 01:35:28.829

(JR) I would have still

01:35:29.160 --> 01:35:30.519

(JR) probably

01:35:30.660 --> 01:35:38.500

(JR) been doing, I would have probably still tried to do the things I wanted to do, right, which is, but I would have struggled.

01:35:38.960 --> 01:35:40.550

(JR) I would have struggled,

01:35:41.180 --> 01:35:47.829

(JR) because lot of things that you struggle against are man-made. Nothing natural.

01:35:47.910 --> 01:35:49.929

(I) Hmm. (JR) Nothing natural.

01:35:50.300 --> 01:35:51.940

(JR) It's all

01:35:52.760 --> 01:35:53.910

(JR) big,

01:35:54.400 --> 01:35:57.610

(JR) you know, dogmatic things that people build and,

01:35:58.100 --> 01:35:59.770

(JR) to protect their,

01:36:00.330 --> 01:36:03.140

(JR) to conserve the status quo.

01:36:03.390 --> 01:36:06.680

(JR) The one thing beauty about Silicon Valley is

01:36:06.710 --> 01:36:08.329

(JR) everything is breakable.

01:36:09.000 --> 01:36:11.289

(I) Hmm. (JR) Everything is breakable.

01:36:11.600 --> 01:36:13.400

(JR) Everything is questionable.

01:36:13.800 --> 01:36:26.910

(JR) You don't have to, I'm not talking unethical things.

(I) Sure, yes. (JR) A lot of unethical things that have happened even in the past. I mean, forget Theranos, forget the FDX.

01:36:27.050 --> 01:36:33.420

(JR) Even this Neuralink is gonna completely blow up in his face. But

01:36:33.560 --> 01:36:35.350

(JR) even in the past there have been

01:36:35.540 --> 01:36:40.719

(JR) cases of unethical behavior. I mean, in India when I was growing up,

01:36:40.990 --> 01:36:47.279

(JR) you know, businessmen were considered to be crooks, actually.

(I) Yes. (JR) And so part of my,

01:36:47.300 --> 01:36:56.920

(JR) growing up, I was always thinking I wanted to be a researcher, right? I wanted to find knowledge. Find something new, something interesting.

01:36:57.250 --> 01:37:10.020

(JR) And the reason I never wanted to, and my dad always said, no, you will never be a businessman. You're not fit for being a businessman. And the reason he said that was, he said, to be a businessman in India you have to be a crooked guy.

01:37:10.200 --> 01:37:14.989

(JR) And he's right in many ways. Right? Because you had to be, you had to have a

01:37:15.120 --> 01:37:17.910

(JR) connection with a politician, and you had to,

01:37:18.030 --> 01:37:26.109

(JR) do all kinds of gundagardi (hooliganism in Hindi) to really make that extra money. And the question is, why are you making the money?

01:37:26.310 --> 01:37:32.560

(JR) If the making the money is the ultimate goal, then the best thing is to be a money lender.

01:37:32.620 --> 01:37:50.939

(I) Yeah. (JR) They make, they make the most without doing anything, with doing the least, right? So if money making is the main thing. I don't think it was that. I think, I think that the beauty about Silicon Valley, it has taught me so much which I could not have learned, and I remained

01:37:51.610 --> 01:38:04.470

(JR) in my place, in a comfortable zone, where I could get 3 meals a day, which I've cut it down to one meal a day now. I don't even, I don't even have 3 meals a day anymore.

01:38:04.640 --> 01:38:06.720

(JR) So what it has taught me is

01:38:07.090 --> 01:38:07.950

(JR) that,

01:38:08.020 --> 01:38:12.520

(JR) you know, if you get, if you give anyone too much power, right?

01:38:13.600 --> 01:38:17.430

(JR) Whether it's a single human being, or it's a corporation,

01:38:17.590 --> 01:38:20.110

(JR) it's bad for the society.

01:38:20.400 --> 01:38:21.570

(JR) And that's

01:38:21.690 --> 01:38:23.560

(JR) that's the single

01:38:23.690 --> 01:38:27.490

(JR) value that Silicon Valley has been teaching

01:38:27.960 --> 01:38:30.050

(JR) forever.

01:38:30.120 --> 01:38:31.460

(JR) If you look at it,

01:38:31.610 --> 01:38:41.660

(JR) it's...about that small guy who's gonna come in and break that big, it's the David and Goliath. It's all, it's the story of the David and Goliath, right?

01:38:41.750 --> 01:38:43.410

(JR) And

01:38:43.640 --> 01:38:45.750

(JR) and I like that story, because

01:38:46.370 --> 01:38:48.530

(JR) when you break big monopolies,

01:38:48.580 --> 01:38:51.139

(JR) the small, small guy; everyone

01:38:51.370 --> 01:39:00.290

(JR) succeeds. Everyone wins. In some small way, everyone wins, right? It's the, it's the monopolies. If you remember when

01:39:00.390 --> 01:39:03.159

(JR) when we came here in '87,

01:39:04.480 --> 01:39:08.759

(JR) that '88 is when my first son was born,

01:39:08.840 --> 01:39:13.689

(JR) a single call, 1-minute call to India was 5 dollars/minute.

01:39:14.990 --> 01:39:16.090

(JR) Okay.

01:39:16.120 --> 01:39:17.539

(JR) Now, it's free.

01:39:17.610 --> 01:39:18.570

(I) Hmm.

01:39:18.640 --> 01:39:22.609

(JR) It could not have happened without destroying

01:39:22.630 --> 01:39:29.189

(JR) the monopoly of telephone companies and completely destroying that technology, too.

01:39:29.210 --> 01:39:30.150

(I) Hmm.

01:39:30.210 --> 01:39:40.889

(JR) And so I was in, so in somewhat, it was kind of very interesting. In early 2000, when we were building the chips for the voiceover IP space, I was thinking to myself,

01:39:40.960 --> 01:39:53.730

(JR) my god, what a crazy thing in 20 years, right? I mean '87 to '97 to 2000 and, 2000. Not even 20 years, less than 20 years, right?

01:39:54.100 --> 01:40:02.479

(JR) That whole technology is gone, and guess who benefited? Common man. You and I can

01:40:02.520 --> 01:40:06.680

(JR) talk to our friends and family anywhere in the world, anytime.

01:40:06.720 --> 01:40:07.500

(JR) Right?

01:40:07.990 --> 01:40:08.820

(JR) So

01:40:09.390 --> 01:40:10.910

(JR) we're still paying,

01:40:11.040 --> 01:40:16.349

(JR) but it's much more reasonable, right?

(I) Yes, of course. (JR) So I think, without the Valley,

01:40:16.950 --> 01:40:18.019

(JR) the whole world

01:40:18.060 --> 01:40:21.389

(JR) in fact, the Valley helps the whole world.

01:40:21.640 --> 01:40:29.040

(JR) And it's a single microcosm of representation of the whole world, right? Universe, because you have

01:40:29.060 --> 01:40:33.809

(JR) you have Russians here, you have Ukrainians here. Some of those guys, if you meet them they're

01:40:34.200 --> 01:40:37.809

(JR) super brilliant. (I) Yes.

01:40:37.890 --> 01:40:40.259

(JR) And so, I feel good having come here.

01:40:41.140 --> 01:40:43.890

(JR) Yes, a part of me is Desi,

01:40:43.970 --> 01:40:45.320

(JR) but a part of me

01:40:45.460 --> 01:40:54.939

(JR) is Silicon Valley. And to the logic, and I think when I look at it, I say, yeah my thinking has all changed. My thinking is no longer

01:40:55.410 --> 01:40:56.629

(JR) the way

01:40:56.860 --> 01:40:57.940

(JR) I

01:40:58.090 --> 01:41:00.870

(JR) to begin with, I was a very liberal thinker.

01:41:01.050 --> 01:41:06.919

(JR) Had I not been a liberal thinker, this would have been very hard to accept also. But

01:41:07.340 --> 01:41:11.449

(JR) tech, tech did make a impression on me, saying,

01:41:12.940 --> 01:41:22.449

(JR) technology is constantly destroying the old one, right? Because if you look at semiconductors, without semiconductors, the old transistors would have been around

01:41:22.600 --> 01:41:23.620

(JR) and

01:41:23.710 --> 01:41:28.470

(JR) the smartphones would never have happened. (I) Right.

01:41:28.760 --> 01:41:34.390

(JR) So I, I do think yes, that the Silicon Valley has shaped me

01:41:34.430 --> 01:41:38.199

(JR) and it continues to shape me. And by the way, both my kids,

01:41:38.770 --> 01:41:41.329

(JR) they both were born and raised here

01:41:41.450 --> 01:41:47.329

(JR) and one of them, both of them actually, I told them to go and check out the other parts of the country. And one

01:41:47.350 --> 01:41:49.970

(JR) one went and studied in Cleveland. The other one

01:41:51.780 --> 01:42:11.249

(JR) for his master's went to New York. And they both decided, no Dad, we're coming back. So they were there, you know, there's something about this place which is beyond it's weather, it's probably got the one of the best weather in the world. It's got the worst cost.

01:42:11.260 --> 01:42:18.889

(I) Hmm.

(JR) Part of it, no doubt. But there's always people trying to solve that. Because one thing about the Valley is,

01:42:18.920 --> 01:42:26.629

(JR) they always say, oh, if there's a problem, there's an opportunity. Let's look for how to solve that right? (I) Right.

01:42:26.680 --> 01:42:34.030

(I) Yeah. (JR) I'm very, you know, I think we made the right decision in many ways

01:42:35.160 --> 01:42:36.350

(JR) coming here.

01:42:36.530 --> 01:42:38.899

(JR) And I've enjoyed my life here.

01:42:39.000 --> 01:42:42.589

(JR) I've got lots of friends.

01:42:43.320 --> 01:42:49.570

(JR) You know, and I and I'm very active in my alumni. So that's where I

01:42:49.590 --> 01:43:01.450

(JR) I keep my connection back to India also, right?

(I) Yes of course. So about the Silicon Valley and this will be my last question. So how do you foresee your future or your family's future in Silicon Valley?

01:43:03.000 --> 01:43:12.450

(JR) Family's future, I think I'm gonna leave it to them.

(I) Yeah, and they're here, they're not going anywhere from California. (JR) Doesn't look like that, at least,

01:43:12.510 --> 01:43:14.490

(JR) what we've seen is

01:43:14.570 --> 01:43:17.850

(JR) cost was a big thing for the both of them, but

01:43:18.010 --> 01:43:25.880

(JR) they both have bought homes now. My oldest son lives in San Ramon. My younger son lives in Danville.

01:43:27.000 --> 01:43:29.150

(JR) Sorry, Dublin.

01:43:29.540 --> 01:43:31.019

(JR) Of course, earlier they were

01:43:31.070 --> 01:43:35.609

(JR) more keen on finding a place closer to Palo Alto. Because, you know, we're all

01:43:35.970 --> 01:43:40.369

(JR) influenced by our peers, right?

(I) Yes, yes. (JR) So our peers,

01:43:40.400 --> 01:43:55.179

(JR) you know, they want to live in Palo Alto because world knows "Palo Alto." But Fremont is like, you know, is a village kind of an environment, but guess what, Fremont has a 250-year-old

01:43:55.190 --> 01:44:02.660

(JR) history. (I) Hmm.

(JR) It's a historical town. It's where Mission, the last but first Mission was set up by the

01:44:02.690 --> 01:44:10.329

(JR) Spanish conquistadors, right? So when you, so what the way I look at life now is

01:44:10.820 --> 01:44:11.719

(JR) how,

01:44:11.760 --> 01:44:23.489

(JR) how am I connected to the history of this region? Do I have something here? Can I learn something? As long as I appreciate the weather, the locality, the people.

01:44:23.520 --> 01:44:26.969

(JR) And things will change, keep changing over time.

01:44:27.140 --> 01:44:34.370

(JR) And I'm and I'm still associated with a large number of startups.

01:44:34.970 --> 01:44:42.980

(JR) The next wave of startups, there was an indication that most of this will move out of the Valley because of the cost,

01:44:43.060 --> 01:44:45.860

(JR) non availability of talent.

01:44:46.350 --> 01:44:47.670

(JR) I don't think so.

01:44:48.520 --> 01:44:54.240

(I) So Austin is, Austin is not the next Silicon Valley?

(JR) No, I doubt it. You know, the mindset,

01:44:54.320 --> 01:44:58.739

(JR) see, the mindset is such a powerful thing, right?

01:44:58.900 --> 01:44:59.750

(JR) And

01:44:59.840 --> 01:45:01.280

(JR) what I've noticed with

01:45:01.640 --> 01:45:04.150

(JR) the next generation of kids here,

01:45:05.820 --> 01:45:08.059

(JR) they are also looking to do

01:45:08.480 --> 01:45:15.640

(JR) the next more complex problems to solve, right? And they are looking at it. And so there

01:45:16.390 --> 01:45:19.909

(JR) it's a different platform now, as opposed to then.

01:45:20.130 --> 01:45:33.590

(JR) The money they've, there's more money available. But then the cost of doing those is also more difficult. So there's always going to be some arbitrage. So some of that stuff is going to go out and get down in cheaper places.

01:45:33.740 --> 01:45:35.380

(JR) But then,

01:45:36.040 --> 01:45:39.229

(JR) eventually, if you want to test something out,

01:45:39.260 --> 01:45:47.050

(JR) if you want to do something, it still comes back here.

(I) Right, right. (JR) Yesterday, I was listening to this kid. Two boys,

01:45:47.650 --> 01:45:50.010

(JR) they're both from India.

01:45:50.250 --> 01:45:57.230

(JR) And they, I think they both graduated from Berkeley. One is a ex-Tesla guy. One is a Berkeley

01:45:57.390 --> 01:46:00.399

(JR) and Deloitte, he was a Deloitte.

01:46:00.620 --> 01:46:03.510

(JR) And they are going after personalized heating.

01:46:04.070 --> 01:46:05.019

(I) Hmm.

01:46:05.250 --> 01:46:06.719

(JR) So I said,

01:46:06.990 --> 01:46:10.889

(JR) so personalized heating? Yeah, he said, think of spotlights.

01:46:11.410 --> 01:46:13.030

(JR) How do spotlights work?

01:46:13.150 --> 01:46:14.639

(JR) Same way heating.

01:46:15.370 --> 01:46:18.080

(I) Hmm. (JR) But it'll be a smart heater.

01:46:18.100 --> 01:46:25.400

(JR) So it'll look at your chest temperature and keep that warm enough, so you feel very comfortable.

01:46:25.640 --> 01:46:29.189

(JR) So don't have to heat all the space around you,

01:46:29.210 --> 01:46:33.159

(JR) which is a lot of wasted energy. (I) Right.

01:46:33.450 --> 01:46:41.159

(JR) And so I said, like, what are the areas you're looking at. He said, look at all the outdoor restaurants, the restaurants that have outdoors patio seatings.

01:46:41.660 --> 01:46:47.209

(JR) They're losing money because they have to put patio heaters and this and that. So these guys are,

01:46:47.410 --> 01:46:48.240

(JR) now,

01:46:49.390 --> 01:46:57.019

(JR) how it will all turn out, I don't know. But these are kids who are not even from here, they're from outside. They come, they figure out,

01:46:57.110 --> 01:47:01.700

(JR) and they think this is a problem for the revenue of, of a business

01:47:01.720 --> 01:47:04.260

(I) and they're solving that, right?

01:47:04.380 --> 01:47:05.360

(JR) And so

01:47:05.660 --> 01:47:13.929

(JR) I think this, you know, I think the attraction for Silicon Valley is not going away anytime soon.

01:47:13.960 --> 01:47:14.780

(JR) At least,

01:47:15.500 --> 01:47:20.600

(JR) you know, I'm 65. So I think, I think for the next 20 years.

01:47:20.760 --> 01:47:26.650

(JR) If it changes, there might be minor changes here and there, but the mindset.

01:47:26.710 --> 01:47:32.599

(JR) And the mindset is largely shaped by universities, and

01:47:32.650 --> 01:47:39.700

(JR) the resident, and the neighborhoods around those universities, the ecosystems.

01:47:40.140 --> 01:47:45.510

(JR) I, you know, I could have thought about this, MIT being one of them.

01:47:45.560 --> 01:47:48.490

(JR) But I don't know how it's managed,

01:47:48.570 --> 01:47:53.220

(JR) where there might be another thing, right? I mean, here we can work throughout the year.

01:47:53.550 --> 01:47:55.660

(I) Yes. (JR) Most of the other places no?

01:47:55.990 --> 01:47:59.780

(I) Hmm. (JR) And the talent pool here is like unbelievable

01:48:00.050 --> 01:48:06.110

(I) Even MIT graduates come here, right?

(JR) Yeah! I mean, Harvard graduates. (I) Yes.

01:48:06.340 --> 01:48:14.330

(JR) Right? Mark Zuckerberg packed up and came here and stayed in Palo Alto, right? So, whether it's Mark Zuckerberg

01:48:15.060 --> 01:48:24.089

(JR) or Elon Musk, or it's, it's these two kids out of Rajkot in India. Or this

01:48:24.280 --> 01:48:32.860

(JR) what's the name? Shourya Agarwal, Shourya, who's in Bangalore. He's building a metaverse platform.

01:48:33.970 --> 01:48:39.280

(JR) They're all targeting this area. So, so what happens I've noticed one thing,

01:48:39.700 --> 01:48:42.110

(JR) that the longer you stay here,

01:48:42.470 --> 01:48:55.949

(JR) you take a lot of things for granted, because it's moving at a certain pace. It's a relativity, right? Until you go out and stay for a little while and see, then you get to compare the two, right? And

01:48:56.860 --> 01:48:59.170

(JR) I still remember when it was

01:48:59.420 --> 01:49:03.689

(JR) in the case of chips, right? Chip designs. The reason why

01:49:04.480 --> 01:49:15.369

(JR) nowhere else in the world it happened as fast as it did here. It's the complete ecosystem of chips, right? So if I wanted to make a PC board? Just down the road.

01:49:15.420 --> 01:49:19.679

(JR) And I can get it in 3 days, 5 days. Price difference was there.

01:49:20.290 --> 01:49:21.790

(JR) The chip came back.

01:49:22.340 --> 01:49:28.929

(JR) It didn't work. There was a problem. I could go down the street. Somebody could knock off the cap, the cap,

01:49:29.020 --> 01:49:35.749

(JR) and actually look into the chip and fix it for me the way I wanted it. I can come back and test it out.

01:49:35.800 --> 01:49:38.590

(JR) It works, change the design, and set it up.

01:49:38.740 --> 01:49:43.019

(I) Right. (JR) Where else in the world you can do all that stuff?

01:49:44.120 --> 01:49:45.710

(JR) So, the people here,

01:49:45.840 --> 01:49:47.909

(JR) you know, there is a mindset of

01:49:48.010 --> 01:49:50.080

(JR) can do attitude is there

01:49:50.370 --> 01:49:52.730

(JR) fundamentally. And so,

01:49:52.760 --> 01:49:57.120

(JR) and then when you mix that with young, young blood.

01:49:57.170 --> 01:50:04.730

(JR) And that's what, you know, you look at Apple's early days. The young blood. Whether it's Steve Jobs, it's Steve Wozniak.

01:50:04.950 --> 01:50:12.660

(JR) IBM and all they were, you know, these guys were suited and booted guys. They were used to walking into enterprise and selling

01:50:13.160 --> 01:50:16.420

(JR) huge machines at a very high cost.

01:50:16.480 --> 01:50:25.960

(JR) These were guys who used to sit in their garage and do their little tinkering, right?

(I) Right, yeah. (JR) So I think that attitude

01:50:26.080 --> 01:50:32.269

(JR) is still there in the Valley, I think, and there is an appreciation for that.

01:50:32.390 --> 01:50:34.369

(JR) And there is

01:50:34.510 --> 01:50:36.920

(JR) there's a certain amount of

01:50:37.110 --> 01:50:39.760

(JR) beauty associated with it.

01:50:39.790 --> 01:50:46.289

(JR) I wouldn't call it glamour, but there's a beauty. Because once it gets to a glamour, it's of no value.

01:50:46.350 --> 01:50:54.019

(I) Right. (JR) But there is an appreciation for that, right? For that hard work.

01:50:54.900 --> 01:51:08.499

(I) Yes, wow. (JR) Look at the tool sets that got built here. There's only, there's only three big companies in the world that helps chip companies design chips, right? It's Synopsys,

01:51:08.890 --> 01:51:18.969

(JR) it's Cadence, and it's Mentor Graphics. That's it, three, in the world, that 100% of the chips have to use all those three tools.

01:51:19.020 --> 01:51:19.780

(I) Hmm.

01:51:20.100 --> 01:51:26.780

(JR) Two of them are here. One is in, I think Mentor in Oregon I think. That's it.

01:51:26.900 --> 01:51:29.510

(I) That's it, right.

01:51:29.630 --> 01:51:34.370

(I) Yes, and Jayan thank you very much. This has been fantastic, you know, talking to you

01:51:34.540 --> 01:51:37.419

(I) and thank you for doing the interview for us.

01:51:37.940 --> 01:51:41.709

(JR) You're welcome. Thank you.

(I) Yes, I'm going to stop the recording now.

01:51:42.360 --> 01:51:43.170

(JR) Okay.