

Oral Histories of the Post-1965 Lives of Asian Americans in Idaho

The Reminiscences of  
Arun K. Gupta

Asian American Comparative Collection  
University of Idaho  
2020

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Arun K. Gupta conducted by Kathy M. Min on August 5, 2020. This interview is part of the Oral Histories of the Post-1965 Lives of Asian Americans in Idaho project, conducted in partnership with the Asian American Comparative Collection.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The following transcript has been reviewed, edited, and approved by the narrator.

Transcriptionist	GoTranscript transcript reviewed and edited by Kathy M. Min
Narrator	Arun K. Gupta
Interviewer	Kathy M. Min
Session Number	1
Location	Virtually through Zoom. Gupta called from Logan, Utah, and Min called from Boise, Idaho.
Date	August 5, 2020

**00:00:03**

Q: Today is August 5th, 2020. I'm Kathy Min, the interviewer, and I'm speaking with Arun, the narrator. We're both calling over Zoom but we're both based in the Boise area. And the proposed subject is an oral history of Arun's life for the Asian American oral history project. So the first question is what is your full name?

Gupta: My full name is Arun, middle name initial K, last name Gupta, G-U-P-T-A.

**00:00:33**

Q: And when and where were you born?

Gupta: I was born in a town in North India called Bijnor, B-I-J-N-O-R.

**00:00:47**

Q: What state is that in?

Gupta: That's Uttar Pradesh. It literally means “northern province.”

**00:00:58**

Q: What is your current occupation and/or educational background?

Gupta: Current, you said?

**00:01:05**

Q: Yeah, current.

Gupta: I'm retired now. I have a bachelor's and master's in mechanical engineering and an MBA in marketing.

**00:01:27**

Q: Do you have any siblings?

Gupta: Yeah, I have a brother and he's back in India. He's a doctor.

**00:01:37**

Q: Very cool. Is he older or younger?

Gupta: He is younger.

**00:01:41**

Q: By how many years?

Gupta: Four.

**00:01:46**

Q: Cool. Is he still working then?

Gupta: Yes.

**00:01:54**

Q: Maybe just tell me a little bit about what your childhood in India was like, what it was like with your parents and your family.

Gupta: My father was a professor of physics in different colleges in Rajasthan, which is another state, and my mother was a housewife. We were just—[clears throat]—sorry, middle-class background. My father and mother, they both concentrated more on our studies than games and so on and so forth, so we were always busy with studies. Every summer, I went to my grandma's place and I remember good times over there. A rural setting, very homely. We played, sat under the fruit trees, ate the fruits. Just an average growing up, nothing too exciting or too abnormal, anything like that.

**00:03:27**

Q: Yeah. And remind me what year you were born.

Gupta: Say that again. Can you—let's see, the volume—if it can go up a little bit?

**00:03:34**

Q: Yes. Is that better?

Gupta: Yes.

**00:03:37**

Q: Okay. I was asking, can you remind me what year you were born?

Gupta: 1950.

**00:03:44**

Q: Oh okay. That's, I guess, kind of an interesting time period in just world history, with the partition of India, World War II and such, end of British colonization.

Gupta: Well, World War II was finished. India had gotten independence in 1947. The country was just starting to build.

**00:04:11**

Q: I guess, with those historical trends in mind, did any of those impact your upbringing or your lifestyle growing up?

Gupta: Well, yes. The government at that time, because they just got independent, there were limited resources, so everyone in India was taught to be frugal, not waste things, manage under the limited resources and not waste things. I guess one thing that when I came here, I saw a lot of waste in America, the disposable consumer society. But in India, everything, you preserved it and tried to make it last. It was not [economic] depression like they had here but it was still a different culture in that sense. Then we had, in my childhood, a couple of wars. One with Pakistan and one with China. That brought the country together and again, to work with limited resources. So I was always brought up as a thrifty child, not to waste things and make them last.

**00:05:52**

Q: Do you know what years your parents were born?

Gupta: My father was born 1917 and my mother was born in 1925.

**00:06:09**

Q: Did they ever tell you about their life growing up and their life before you?

Gupta: Oh yes. I remember my grandfather was a very pious man and every day, he used to spend a couple of hours in his worship reading the scriptures. I remember that on my father's side. He would go to the local railway station and distribute hymn notes or songbooks to the

passengers. Then on my [maternal] grandmother's side, she was a widow but she taught me a lot of things. Very, very, again, pious, respectable lady. And she used to tell us a lot of stories. On my father's side, the family comes from a very holy town called Mathura, where Lord Krishna appeared, so there's a lot of religiosity and spiritually coming from that background.

**00:07:44**

Gupta: And then from my mother's side, my grandfather had a lot of agricultural land, and so I was exposed to that. We had a couple of cows in our own home to provide milk and all that on my grandmother's side. Both on my mother's grand[father's] side, they had a pretty good lineage of small kings and some wealthy landowners and were very cultured. My grandfather on my mother's side was a lawyer, very good lawyer.

**00:08:38**

Gupta: And then on my father's side, it was middle-class background but again, very spiritual. I remember my grandmother getting up every morning, 4:30, five o'clock, and doing—we call it kirtan. Singing of hymns using small symbols and so on and so forth, and keeping all the fasting and worship, and so on and so forth. Very simple, spiritual background on both sides. On my mother's side, we didn't live too far from the River Ganga or Ganges. And so that was also an influence, going to the river, taking baths, and all that stuff.

**00:09:42**

Q: I was also interested—your parents, I think, also lived through a really interesting time in India's history where they were in the last days of British colonialism and then they were also in their 20s and 30s for Indian independence, so I was wondering if you know what that transition of government was like for them?

Gupta: Well, things were a lot more orderly. The British, they ruled with a heavy hand in some ways. Things were a lot more disciplined, I guess, at that time when they were growing up. Things were nice depending on which part of India you lived. There was enough food, not too expensive. I think most people lived in a very friendly atmosphere. The Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians, they all lived together and they appreciated each other.

**00:11:11**

Gupta: The British—well, there are many sides to the story. There's always that Britain, [wherever] they ruled, they divide and rule, divided communities. At least the part that I lived in there was a lot of peace and harmony. My parents used to compare sometimes what it was when we were under the British governance and when we became independent. After independence, there was a little bit indiscipline [sic]. People, they felt free and so they felt they could do anything. So things became a little bit chaotic in society. My parents appreciated in some ways

the discipline that we had in the British rule. But I never knew that part. I was born after it, so beyond that.

**00:12:22**

Q: Yeah. What was school like for you as a child? Do you have favorite and least favorite subjects? And did you have any hobbies growing up?

Gupta: My father realized the value of [English], that we should learn English. So he always educated us in English-medium schools. And at that time they were all Catholic missionary schools. So even though I'm a Hindu, I went to Catholic schools for my education. Because of that, I had a good command of English, which I think was the right thing for my father to do. When I came to America, I was able to adjust. There was no language issues.

**00:13:37**

Gupta: So the schooling was nice. These private missionary schools had a better standard of education. They didn't openly try to convert people. I never felt that here. At home, we had a very spiritual language. I never felt that I was being influenced by their Christian religion. But I also appreciated or, at least, I realized that because of that multicultural background, it was easy for me to adjust to the conditions when I came to the US, and able to understand better, the lifestyle here.

**00:14:35**

Q: Did you grow up only learning English, or did you also learn other languages?

Gupta: I know my language. We spoke Hindi at home and even in the social circles. Only when I went to school, we had studies in English.

**00:14:55**

Q: So both of your mom and dad, did they more often speak Hindi at home, or English, or it was really both?

Gupta: My dad spoke both Hindi and English. My mother, mostly Hindi but she understood English, but she never spoke too much.

**00:15:17**

Q: And then did you have any hobbies growing up?

Gupta: Yeah. I collected stamps for a while. One thing that was kind of unique, I got liking to—what do you call it? General knowledge? GQ? So I was always up on the facts. I had a scrapbook with all the photos of all the leaders of the whole world. I could tell you all the

capitals and who was the prime minister and president of which country. I could recognize half of the flags, which flag was from what country. It was more studious hobbies. I was not too good at games. I didn't play too much. Or listen to the radio and so on and so forth. So it's mostly those kind of hobbies, more on the studious side.

**00:16:31**

Q: And then I think you said you had a mechanical engineering degree?

Gupta: Yeah.

**00:16:39**

Q: Did you get that in India?

Gupta: Partly in India. Most Indians, they migrate after they have finished college, after their basic degree.<sup>1</sup> But I came to USA in the middle of my basic degree.

[INTERRUPTION]

**00:17:04**

Gupta: So I came here at an early age at the age of about 18 and a half. And I had been in college only for two years in India. Generally there's a four-year degree for the bachelor's. That is a very interesting part of my life. I'd gotten an International Rotary Club scholarship as a goodwill ambassador from India to the US.<sup>2</sup> That's a one-year scholarship. My father had worked very much with me to get that scholarship. That's what brought about the change that I came to US and stayed here.

**00:18:04**

Gupta: Half of my degree in mechanical was in India and the other half was in the US in Kansas. Manhattan, Kansas. That's where I finished my BS. And then I did very good, so they gave me an assistantship to do master's. Then I got a job here [in the US], and then I also did part-time, in the evenings, MBA. Then I switched over to marketing. I never felt I was good at mechanical engineering even though I had it. Because, people here—I came from a rural background so I didn't know too much of mechanical. For me, it was a subject I had to study. And here, people grow up with cars and refrigerators, and they're so mechanical right from day one. You probably could understand.

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<sup>1</sup> Arun came to the US in the middle of his basic degree.

<sup>2</sup> Paul P. Harris formed the first Rotary Club in Chicago in 1905. By 1921, Rotary clubs operated on every continent, excluding Antarctica. The first Rotary club in India opened in 1919. From Rotary International in Great Britain & Ireland, "The History of Rotary," accessed January 8, 2021, <https://www.rotary-ribi.org/upimages/clubfiles/1053/The%20History%20of%20Rotary.pdf>.



**00:19:09**

Gupta: So I felt I always had shortcomings. I could not compete with them in that sense. They knew more than I did. Because as they grew up from childhood, people here know about cars, what the engines are, what's air conditioning. Now in India, we have cars and refrigerators. My home has both of them, but when I grew up, there was no refrigerator. My father had a motorcycle. That was the extent of the mechanical stuffs we had in our homes. I never felt comfortable being a mechanical engineer in the US, so I switched. There's my switch. I worked in marketing from the age of 30.

**00:20:10**

Q: I think I'll ask a few follow-up questions.

Gupta: Sure.

**00:20:15**

Q: Why did you choose to study mechanical engineering then?

Gupta: Very good question. In India, those times when I was growing up, if you were good in school, if you got all As, first division, then you were expected to go into engineering. At that time, mechanical engineering was at the top. At that time, the computers were not even there. Computers came in '80s, and we're talking about late '60s.

**00:21:02**

Gupta: If you were very good in school, after graduating high school, you were expected to become mechanical engineering, even if you didn't have the aptitude. If you're a little bit less, then you're supposed to take electrical, and if you're a little bit less than you go to civil. And then if you could not hack the science side, then you went to be becoming a doctor, take biology. Then if you were really not good at studying, then you went into commerce and then history and arts. That was the order. I think many countries still do that. Now things have changed. If you're good at it or if you want to make money, you go to computers, IT.

**00:21:55**

Gupta: Actually, right now, a young student I know, and he's in mechanical engineering, and he's having a hard time finding a job as a mechanical engineer. Everyone wants to hire IT guys or data processing. And so, things change like that. That's the cultural shift that happened throughout the world.

**00:22:22**

Q: And then, why did you decide to go to the US? What reasons were pulling or pushing you there?

Gupta: Initially, I had no desire to come to US. [Arun came] because of the scholarship. My father had gone to England. He had gotten his Ph.D. from England. Those times the British government sponsored him to go to England to get his Ph.D. in physics. He was aware of the Western world and he appreciated many things. When he heard of the scholarship, he wanted me to get that experience. I got the scholarship and I was here for one year, but then I could also see the value of staying here and, you know, chase the American dream. More than my father, my mother wanted me to be here and become successful. That's why.

**00:23:36**

Q: It sounds like you were saying you initially didn't want to come to the US and then you—

Gupta: Well no. It's not that I did not. It's just like it never went through your mind. You were happy at home.

**00:23:49**

Q: I see. And then what you're saying is mostly the idea of the American dream that's started to change your mind on—

Gupta: Well, when I came here. After I came here. Before that, I didn't know what the word American Dream meant. You know what I'm saying? It's just you're happy at home. I was happy. I'm more of a family man. I like family. I like being in the family. I'm not an extrovert wanting to go out to bars or anything like that. Homely person.

**00:24:26**

Q: So I guess I was just wondering if there was a particular event or experience that made you want to stay in the US.

Gupta: Like I said, when I got the scholarship, I came here. Part of [the requirements for getting] this scholarship was [that] over the weekends, I was supposed to go in my region in Kansas, surrounding areas, to address Rotary clubs. Give them some idea of the Indian culture, Indian background, and also in that process, appreciate [the US culture also]. So I stayed at many farm families. Kansas is mostly rural Midwest. I visited a lot of small communities. And they're very friendly, very open. Made some friends and so I started to appreciate the lifestyle, the openness. And at that time, America was a lot more clean, a lot more open, a lot more uniform. There was not really too much, "You're a foreigner, you're immigrant." I think those kind of things that are going on right now, they were not there.

**00:26:03**

Gupta: And I could see—and then because I did the education here, I actually went back [to India]. My father wanted me to get a job [in India]. The learning experience and things that I learned over here were not applicable over there [India] and so I found myself a misfit there now because of my education. I got a higher education but it was not the same type that the industries over there were looking for. And so then things start to shape up here for my future, so it made more sense to stay here. And I was here studying about four, five years, so I had become comfortable with the lifestyle. So one thing led to the other. There was no preconceived plan. Just things happened.

**00:27:11**

Q: And then what year did you come to the US?

Gupta: I came here in January of '69.

**00:27:19**

Q: And how long were you in Kansas for?

Gupta: Kansas, I was there from '69 until—let's see, Kansas and then Missouri is the next state. I was in that area from '69 to almost the end of '79. So about 10 years.

**00:27:47**

Q: What led you to Missouri?

Gupta: Hmm?

**00:27:54**

Q: What led you to Missouri?

Gupta: The next big city from Manhattan, Kansas, which was a school town, was Kansas City, Missouri, a big metropolis. The job was there. A small heating, ventilating, air conditioning company hired me to be a designer of mechanical systems. So I was there with them. They were nice. Then I moved on to Des Moines, Iowa, for about one year. Then I got married. Then, my wife, she wanted to get a degree in journalism so she was accepted by Northwestern. It was in Chicago so I moved there. She got a degree in journalism, master's in journalism. Then I found a job in Chicago, Chicago area. That's the progression.

**00:29:08**

Q: Wow. So you've kind of been all over the Midwest?

Gupta: Midwest, and I visited—this is a side note. I do like to travel. I do like to explore things, national parks. I have visited all the 50 states of United States. I appreciate and I've been to almost all the big cities. With my marketing job, I had a lot of chance to travel. I finally ended up in Boise and I like Boise very much.

**00:29:47**

Q: When did you make the switch to marketing?

Gupta: I made the switch in, I'll say, 1981, '82.

**00:30:00**

Q: And then I know you've lived in a lot of different places, but I guess, we can start with Kansas. What was the area you lived in Kansas like?

Gupta: Kansas was all rural. Manhattan at that time had a population of about 30,000, and 20,000 were students and the rest 10,000. Like a typical school town. Kansas City was big. Kansas City is still nice. Kansas City is, if I had to leave Boise, I would go back to Kansas City. It's a very nice town. Kansas City was metropolitan, more commercial, but still had a rural touch because Kansas bordered it. Missouri is also rural. I liked that flavor in Kansas City.

**00:31:12**

Gupta: Then I moved to Des Moines. Des Moines was also rural, Iowa. Then, Chicago was big. Chicago, I think of all the big cities, [if Arun had to move to one, he would move to Chicago]. LA was just too humongous. I've been to Seattle also. New York City is too impersonal. Detroit, I've been there, I didn't like it. So anyway, I don't know if I'm answering your question or not, but yeah.

**00:31:50**

Q: Yeah, I mean, anything you say is always a good answer. But I guess I'm interested in what your living conditions were like. Were you in houses, apartments, suburbs, in the cities, things like that?

Gupta: I always, until I'd moved to Chicago, until then, I was living in apartments, nice apartments, two bedrooms. I never lived in a one-bedroom. I always wanted two bedrooms if I had guests, and so and so forth. I always lived in nice—actually, in Manhattan, Kansas, I pledged a fraternity. I lived there. That was a good experience, different experience compared to the other industrials who come through.

**00:32:47**

Gupta: But at the time in Kansas City, when I was there, the city was growing and there were a lot of apartment buildings that were coming up. I went and stayed in one apartment building that was new and have one year lease, and then some other complex would open. They would attract the new tenants, like giving some incentive, maybe one month's rent-free, and I would just jump in to get a new complex.

**00:33:23**

Gupta: I did buy a small townhome towards the end of my stay in Kansas City. That was my first sort of ownership. It was not a house, just a townhome. Because of my frugal backgrounds, I never really wanted huge, sprawling houses and all that stuff. I was by myself. I could never care for a big house. My wife is also like that. She said, "I'm not going to spend my time cleaning five bedrooms or keeping track of them." We always had nice apartments and then smaller homes. Nothing splashy but nothing rundown either. They were nice.

**00:34:19**

Q: Well, when and how did you meet your wife?

Gupta: This is traditional, arranged marriages. We got married in 1977. I was here. My parents told me that it's time to get married, and they had picked out two, three different families. Then I did get a chance to see the girls from those three, four families. This was just about the time India started to open, where in the very traditional sense, you did not even see your prospective wife or husband till the day of marriage.<sup>3</sup> But in this case, by the time of the '70s, the boy and the girl—especially since I was in the US, they knew it was more liberal—I was able to talk to my prospective wives. Find out about them or like a lunch or dinner, nothing extensive, maybe one-hour or two-hour conversations.

**00:35:44**

Gupta: And so I talked to my wife in Delhi, and at least in the first go around, I was okay with it. But she wasn't sure if she wanted to come to America, even though she was very well-educated. And she wanted to—actually, she was very much influenced by, at that time, I tell people, by Mao Zedong in China and she really wanted to go to China of all the places.

**00:36:25**

Q: Wow.

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<sup>3</sup> Under “modernization theory,” Western researchers predicted that as India modernized, its institutions of marriage would come to resemble Western-style marriages where “young people choose their spouses.” However, in India, modernization is linked to shifting—“rather than declining”—practices associated with arranged marriage, such as greater spousal choice for women, more opportunities to meet before the wedding day, and more intercaste marriages. Nevertheless, “[a]rranged marriage is clearly not headed towards obsolescence any time soon.” From Keera Allendorf and Roshan K. Pandian, “The Decline of Arranged Marriage? Marital Change and Continuity in India,” *Popul Dev Rev.* 42, no. 3 (September 2016): 435-464.

Gupta: Yeah. That is very true. But then, she was convinced by her elder sister and her father, maybe she should try America. She finally said yes out of pressure from the family. She came here, we lived happily thereafter.

**00:36:53**

Q: Did you sponsor her immigration?

Gupta: When we got married, at that time, there was no issues in terms of getting visas and all that stuff. I got married and the US government gave me—she came within three weeks of our marriage to the US.

**00:37:16**

Q: Then, I know you've been in a lot of different cities and places around the US, but how did you find communities and friends in these new places?

Gupta: It's all through my work. We traveled for sightseeing, for vacations, but in terms of picking—like I said, the first major move was when I moved to Chicago, so she can go through college. But then I had a job in the suburb in Chicago and that company over there was a big company. They moved me to LA. They had bought a new small company [there], and they wanted me to go to LA. So they facilitated our move. Then in LA, after I was there for two years, then that company that they had bought, we found out that they had kind of misled the buyers. And so that division of that company was shut down. So then, I had no job and then I found—well, with my expertise and all that stuff, got a job with Hewlett-Packard in Boise. That's how I came to Boise. I've been here ever since then.

**00:39:11**

Q: Very cool. I think maybe before we talk a little bit more about Idaho, I'm just wondering, did you ever look for or feel a part of Indian communities, for example, in the places you've lived before Idaho?

Gupta: Yes. Almost every town had India Association where all the Indians—at that time, there were not too many Indians. And so the ones that they were there, they always stayed as a group, social circles. And so Chicago, we were part of a group, and Kansas City also. Actually, compared to the other Indians, because of my experiences in the fraternity house and because I had come alone and had [been to American homes] when I had that Rotary scholarship, I had more American friends in that sense than most Indians.

**00:40:26**

Gupta: Indians, they didn't have too much outside contact, but we did, both me and my wife. My wife, because she was a journalist, she was out and about interviewing. So she picked up on the American culture also. So both of us, I would say 75 percent times with Indians, but 25 percent times we had American friends and we did [spend time with them].

**00:40:56**

Q: And then did you and your wife ever become US citizens?

Gupta: I became a US citizen in 1982, I believe. She became a lot of afterwards just out of a personal choice.

**00:41:21**

Q: I guess the years that you were in the US were quite interesting as well.

Gupta: It was the end of the Vietnam War.

**00:41:30**

Q: Right, yeah. I'm wondering if that was something that—just all the national, social tensions and whatnot, if those were things that you were experiencing.

Gupta: Yeah, that's interesting. I went through the period when there was shooting at Kent State in Ohio, if you remember that. You're a history major, right, are you?

**00:41:49**

Q: Yes.

Gupta: Vietnam War started to wind down because when the first student was killed by the troops at Kent State in Ohio, that led to the American people to start thinking about their involvement.<sup>4</sup> Then I saw the moon landing in July. That was a very good experience, I guess. I was very fascinated. July of '69, I don't know how many of you know that. I was glued to the TV, black and white TV, in the evening, like ten o'clock at night. Neil Armstrong landed there.

**00:42:45**

Gupta: I went through that part, the riots, the demonstrations. Also, the Beatles were very popular at that time. George Harrison, "My Sweet Lord," and all those songs, I liked that. There

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<sup>4</sup> On May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guardsman opened fire on Kent State University students protesting the US involvement in the American War in Vietnam, killing four students. The Kent State Shooting "reached national and international fame as news media outlets quickly spread the story. It led to a nationwide student strike involving an estimated four million students that forced hundreds of colleges and universities to close." From Craig S. Simpson, *Above the Shots: An Oral History of the Kent State Shootings* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2016), 11-13, 17.

was lot of cultural upheaval at that time, but I was more on the sidelines, just more an observer. I never smoked, never drank, never took drugs. I just watched in fascination.

**00:43:25**

Q: And then, tell me about a typical family dinner, either growing up, or through time. I think any answer is fine.

Gupta: A typical Indian dinner, you have chapatis; flatbread, fresh made by mother or by my wife; one sort of bean soup, dals, you call it lentils; and then some curried vegetables. Maybe, a little bit of rice and some yogurt to go along. And then a fruit or something, a small dessert afterwards, just very typical still to this day.

**00:44:14**

Q: Yeah. Is that something that changed for you over time, for example, when you were living by yourself?

Gupta: No. When I was living there myself, I didn't have time to make chapatis so I ate a lot more bread. But curry was still there, the sabzi, we call it. When I was single, I befriended some married families. They would invite me over the weekends so that would fulfill my desire for other things. They would eat more elaborately. Then when we got married. But when we had children, and then my wife—because children always grew up in this society—so she learned how to make pizzas and cakes and all that stuff. We always ate mostly at home, not too much outside.

**00:45:08**

Q: Tell me more about the move from LA to Boise. And your early—and what year did you get to Boise?

Gupta: Came to Boise in the fall of 1986.

**00:45:23**

Q: Wow, that's quite early.

Gupta: Yes. When I came to Boise there were only about, I think, seven or eight Indian families.

**00:45:33**

Q: I guess, it's not a big number, but that's probably more than I expected.

Gupta: Oh really? Actually, there were six from India. There was one family that actually was of Indian origin but they were from Guyana, South America. There was one, I believe, that was



Mauritius, I believe, something like that, of Fiji, I forget now. There were only seven or eight families.

**00:46:08**

Gupta: In fact, that was one reason why my wife actually, initially, didn't want to move to Boise. LA was big and she had friends. We had took initiation into a Hare Krishna temple, church over there. And so we had devotee company over there. She didn't want to move because Boise had no temple and Boise was out in the middle of nowhere. She actually had refused to move. And then my father wanted me to move because the company was good, and I had a good job, and he said I should move because of that, professionally, and to support the family. We had two sons that were just born, four and two, so she was worried about them growing up in an isolated, all white, all Caucasian community, without the Indian culture. And so—go ahead.

**00:47:35**

Q: Oh, no, you can continue.

Gupta: We came to a compromise. She said, “I'll move, but I would like to open up or start a group of whoever the Indians are, and open up a gathering that we could have every week where we could expose our children to the Indian religion, worship, and so on and so forth.” [Arun agreed.] And that, as you'll see, led to where we are now, because she was more instrumental than I was. When we came here, we had our preaching center in our own home. It grew and then we built a temple. Are you in Boise right now or you're somewhere else?

**00:48:40**

Q: I'm in Boise, yeah.

Gupta: If you want, I can show you, that may enhance your experience when you write. Right now, I'm visiting my son in Logan, Utah, but I will be there [Boise] this coming Sunday evening. I'll be there through Friday afternoon and then I'm coming back to Logan.

**00:49:16**

Q: Oh, you're calling from Logan right now?

Gupta: Yeah. Doesn't matter, does it?

**00:49:22**

Q: No, I just thought you were in Boise.

Gupta: I think you may like to see that. It may enrich your report when you write. Now are you just going to just submit this and you're not going to write a report, just curious, are you going to embellish it?

**00:49:45**

Q: Yeah, I'm not sure yet. I think, for now, the only concrete plan is to just put it in the archive, nothing further.

Gupta: Oh, really.

**00:49:55**

Q: Yeah, I haven't decided, because I might do it for my senior thesis, but I'm just not sure.

Gupta: I see, okay. If you have the time and you want to call me on the phone, I can personally give you a tour. Our home is still there and how it grew and added up. Now we have a very nice temple and cultural center and our own little park. It's like a little bit mini India right in Boise.

**00:50:32**

Q: Thank you so much.

Gupta: Give me a call.

**00:50:33**

Q: That's amazing.

Gupta: Maybe Monday evening or Wednesday evening. Tuesday, we have a festival at the temple, we'll be very busy. It'll a little bit crazy. I mean, we'll follow all the protocols of social distancing, all that stuff. But Monday evening would be light. I can take you out a little bit, or Wednesday evening, or Thursday evening. If you have it, just give me a call.

**00:51:06**

Q: Thank you. Yeah, I think I am also trying to keep socially distant and just not interact with people in person these days.

Gupta: Yes, I understand that.

**00:51:17**

Q: Yes, but that's very kind of you. I'll look at my calendar probably after the call and let you know. Thank you so much. But yeah. So you were saying you got to Boise in 1986. You're just one of eight Indian families in the area, and then your wife is pushing to have a temple in the

area. Maybe if you just want to keep walking through your life, tell me about what it was like settling in Boise and tell me how your life developed, especially with your kids also growing up at that time too.

Gupta: We came in '86 and my wife always wanted to live near the university. That's where most action is now. Boise is growing by leaps and bounds, but there was a time when you could go from one end of Boise to another end in like 30 minutes. Boise was outdoorish. All the people who lived here were outdoorish. In the weekends, it was even more quieter than the weekdays because everyone was out in Sun Valley or in the parks or outside hunting or doing something.

**00:52:52**

Gupta: And so we—it was a typical, conservative town at that time, but very nice. I don't recall any incident where I felt like somebody looked down on me or something like that. Actually, Boiseans appreciated—they always felt that they didn't have diversity. So at that time, at least, and for many years, they appreciated when somebody of a different cultural background moved in. They always appreciated us.

**00:53:45**

Gupta: My wife knew just about everyone in town at that time, and we would be part of all the celebrations the city had representing India or representing our faith. We went to elementary schools, because my kids were that age, to talk about India as part of the history, geography, or [other] sessions. We invited others from the university and schools [to come] to our little preaching center, spiritual center, to study and understand our culture. So that took place all the time and it still does. We have always been welcome and we still are welcome in town.

**00:54:51**

Gupta: Then we opened our [temple in 1999]. We grew and grew. We opened our cultural center five years ago [in 2016]. The lieutenant governor, now he is governor Brad Little, he came for inauguration. He was supposed to stay for 15 minutes and he ended up staying for two hours. He loved everything and talked and everything else. Yeah. Boise and Idaho, they've always welcomed us, for sure. I can't speak for others. They've been good friends and neighbors, to everyone and so on.

**00:55:36**

Q: Yes, very cool. And then was your wife continuing to work as a journalist while in Boise?

Gupta: Hang on. Say it again.

**00:55:50**

Q: Was your wife continuing to work as a journalist in Boise?

Gupta: No, she quit once [we had children]. We homeschooled our children, so she was busy then. We also opened an Indian restaurant in town but we closed that. It was just too much [work]. But for about eight years, we had an Indian vegetarian restaurant in downtown, and then she was homeschooling the kids, and then we were managing the temple. But she used all her assets, being a journalist in terms of training to be in the society to be able to mix [with people] and write and everything else. She's a writer.

**00:56:42**

Q: And then is there a reason why you decided to homeschool your kids?

Gupta: Yeah Just the public education, the public schools didn't really—all the indiscipline. We are vegetarians. Culturally and spiritually, we're vegetarians from day one, and the fact that in India we value good education or higher standards. And so, Idaho, there are a lot of people who homeschool, so she really got the idea from some neighbors at that time.<sup>5</sup> She wanted to do it and was successful.

**00:57:43**

Gupta: I have two sons, they never went to high school nowhere, but both my sons graduated from BSU with honors. They both went to college at the age of 12 and 13, and they were done by the time that most students come into colleges at the age of 18, 19. My elder son received the highest education award in the BSU called the Silver Medallion and he was valedictorian for the graduating class. My younger son was also similar, being a senior in college, graduated, and then they both went to Oxford to do their PhDs. So they were finished with most of their education by the time people get finished with their bachelor's.

**00:58:46**

Q: Wow, very cool. Do you know what it was like for them to go to college at quite a young age?

Gupta: Well, they were pretty mature. She trained them well. We were both confident, because we had raised them nicely, that they would not do anything that I would not do. I guess you can say, Krishna, God, or luck, or fortune, or whatever. Both of us were never put to shame by them, there were no midnight calls to "Take your son away."

**00:59:37**

Q: Awesome. I think it's really cool that you've been in Boise for so long. I was wondering if you can tell me some of the ways that it's changed over the years since you've been here.

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<sup>5</sup> Idaho has some of the least homeschooling regulations in the US. From Jessica Huseman and Lena Groeger, "Homeschooling Regulations by State," *ProPublica*, August 27, 2015, <https://projects.propublica.org/graphics/homeschool>.

Gupta: Well, it's gotten a lot more bigger and now it's starting to become a little bit more—but still Boise, I think it has this culture. Everyone who moves—many Californians and people from other states are moving in—but those who move in, they over time gradually appreciate and pick up the local culture. You can still go to the city hall in Boise, people will talk to you, help you in the mayor's office and other places. You can still walk into the governor's office, which I've done, and just go shake hands with the governor and he'll ask you what we can do for you.

**01:00:39**

Gupta: But Boise right now is growing very fast. Home values are going up really crazy. So I'm lucky I have my home, and I cannot afford to buy a new one, I guess. Though the crime is still very less. And people who move here, they moved here because of that culture. I don't think we have too many drugs or other kinds of nonsense stuff. But Boise is very nice, very clean. I tell people Boise is like LA in terms of climate, but without its problems. The climate in Boise is very nice. We have four distinct seasons, but summer is long. The daylight savings time—people who come to Boise always wonder, in summertime, the sun is up to about 10 o'clock. I don't know if you've noticed that or not.

**01:01:46**

Q: Yeah.

Gupta: This is your first visit to Boise or you've been here before?

**01:01:53**

Q: I did elementary, middle, high school in Boise. I was born in Nampa.

Gupta: Oh, really. So your parents are here?

**01:02:01**

Q: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Gupta: Oh, okay. So they can tell you, I guess. Are they in Emmett by chance, or they're not?

**01:02:11**

Q: Yeah. Yeah, they're immigrants [sic].

Gupta: Yes, because I had a colleague at HP, Rich Suyehira, I think he's still around. But his parents lived in Emmett and he was of Japanese descent. And their experience was a little bit different. I think his parents went through the camps in Washington. But he, like me, we appreciate Boise. Boise is a nice town. I have no complaints. I really don't.

**01:02:44**

Q: And then, I'm also interested in how the Indian community, since you obviously have been such a huge part of it, I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about how the Indian community has changed over time in Boise.

Gupta: Yes. Like other places, the Indian community has changed. At one time, the Indians who were here who had gotten a job here at HP, Micron, and they settled here. They're not too many of those. Then, starting about middle of the '90s or late '90s, the flux of all the IT Indians, Indians with IT degrees, they started to come in. HP hired them and then Micron. The character of the company has changed, so that these were what I call the—I have a term, it's not derogatory, but “technical gypsies.” They come in for project, these projects are outsourced. They come in, they have a two-year project that they have to do for state or for the HP. And so they come with their two suitcases, they live in an apartment, when the project is done, they move on. So the community [now is] more a mobile community. Not too many people who wanted to have roots in Boise.

**01:04:17**

Gupta: But I do know, because they all came to temple, that when they left, they were very sad. Boise was always, probably one of the best places they have visited in the US. And the temple was part of it, they said. That's what made them feel very comfortable, longing for their own home [in India] that they've forgotten. Any of them did all sorts of things to stay in Boise as long, because they wanted their children to grow up in Boise as best as possible, so they could go to the experience of the temple and all the cultural—we still do a lot of cultural programs. Indian dances, teachers who teach them, so on so forth. So the temple became sort of a glue and people who got glued didn't want to be unglued. I said, only about 15 percent, 20 percent of the people in the community who have their roots here. The rest of them are very mobile. That's what has changed.

**01:05:39**

Q: Yes. Could you also tell me a little bit more about what it's been like working with the temple, really seeing it from its beginnings to how it is today?

Gupta: That is—I plan to write a book on it.

**01:06:00**

Q: Oh, yes.

Gupta: It is the best part of my life. It is something that I never expected I would do. I did very well because of help from Krishna because I could feel that inner guidance. I don't know how to summarize that. There's so many, you can say, miracles or happenings.

[INTERRUPTION]

**01:06:38**

Gupta: But it was a lot of hard work, it was very focused. Both of us and both my children too, we lived for the Sunday services. Work through Monday to Friday; most people on Saturday, Sundays go out to have fun. But we worked and lived [for Sunday services called Sunday feasts]. [Even] now we have the Sunday program. We had a Friday program, Sunday service, and we lived for them. We look forward to—and that took a lot of [work], still is.

**01:07:21**

Gupta: Now, I've sort of given up the temple management duties. Honestly, this is the first vacation I've taken in years. I just gave the temple management to the local devotees in the community. My son is also part of that management board. Both me and my wife have totally given up, because we are both to the point where I think we have done enough and now somebody else has to take the baton and run. But it was our work, it was our entertainment, it was our life, it was our everything. We have no regrets, we thoroughly enjoyed it.

**01:08:19**

Gupta: Everyone, I think people I talked to, everyone has a wish, a desire, a wish, to give something back to the community, but they cannot or they don't know how. In this case, my whole family feels very fortunate that we have been able to do that. It is very self-satisfying. I would not trade it for anything else. I took early retirement in 2005 from HP so I could devote full time to the temple.

**01:09:07**

Q: Yeah, and you mentioned that it was something you had never really pictured yourself doing earlier in life. I was wondering—

Gupta: Say again. Please speak loudly.

**01:09:16**

Q: Sorry. You were saying that working at a temple is not something that you had envisioned yourself doing when you were younger. And I was just wondering, why was that?

Gupta: When was that?

**01:09:30**

Q: Oh. Why was that something that wasn't [unclear]?

Gupta: Oh, no. My father never opened [a temple]. We all went to temple in India, but my father was a professor. He worked all his life. My mother was a housewife, so my wife became a housewife, because of the children, and I just worked at HP. So I never dreamed that I would do this. It's divine intervention, I guess.

**01:10:10**

Q: And are there—maybe if you want to share any favorite memories of the temple that you've experienced?

Gupta: Oh, there are so many. There are so many. Every day is a memory. I think I remember, it's like—in fact, if you want, if somebody looks up the archives of the *Idaho Statesman*—every five, six months, we were on the front page. This is the time when people used to read newspapers. No, I'm just joking.

**01:10:44**

Gupta: But if you drive by the temple, there's a big metallic dome. And [after] that dome was built, then it was installed on top of the building. And so, the dome was actually built in Pocatello, then it was brought over here in a truck. And when we lifted it to the top of the building, the contractor had to hire a crane, and the crane lifting the dome and putting [it on the top] was right on the front page of the *Statesman*. It was like a wild thing for everyone.

**01:11:30**

Gupta: When we opened the temple [August of 1999], the temple was jam packed. If the firemen would've been there, they would have to evacuate it. It was full. I mean, the temple was over its capacity on the day it opened. 500 people showed up. The mayor did the inauguration. It was jam packed. People appreciated it. It was even beyond our dreams that people would welcome this thing in the community. It was a big event. It was a big event. The dome went early but when the temple actually opened, two months later, the *Statesman* again, did a full, two-page coverage on it. All the TV channels and everyone came and really celebrated with us. That was such a nice addition to the community.

**01:12:36**

Gupta: When Idaho celebrated their 125th year—this is in the, what is it? Early 1989, '90-something—and we were part of the parade, the *Statesman*—they had a picture of us, of all the people in the parade. The two kids that were so endearing. And they had the Indian students, they were playing, they were sitting in the back of a truck. And my wife in a sari and I was in Indian traditional clothing. There are other pictures but they had ours too very prominently. And



so we were part of the city, July 4th celebrations, every year, for the last [25] years. We always have a float that represents the temple. People always appreciate it.

**01:13:35**

Gupta: So yeah, we enhanced the cultural and the diversified spiritual landscape of Boise and the part of the interfaith council and we do things together. The interfaith council has a Thanksgiving service and we are part of that. All those things can go forever. So that was 1999 when the temple inaugurated, but then in 2016 we built the cultural center, because the cultural center was needed for the Indian kids and community to do other things. The temple didn't have room for all the other activities, to learn and to dance and this and that. And that time too, the governor came and people just came and looked at it. So yeah, so many things.

**01:14:44**

Q: Yeah. Very, very cool.

Gupta: We're done?

**01:14:53**

Q: Almost—I think we're probably 30 minutes out, I think. Yeah. On a bit of a different line of questioning, I know you've said Boise has always been a very friendly place to live in, but I'm wondering, in your time in Boise, have you ever encountered stereotypes or discrimination or anything like that?

Gupta: Say again, I missed the end.

**01:15:17**

Q: Sorry, sorry about that. I was saying, I know you said that Boise has always been a very friendly community for you. I'm just wondering, in Boise or in Idaho, have you ever encountered stereotypes or discrimination?

Gupta: To be honest, I haven't, and I'm not saying that for the sake of saying it. I know some other communities have gone through it, and I cannot speak on their behalf, but that has not happened to us. We were so afraid that we would not get a building permit. Boise is a religious town, you find churches on every street corner, so on, so forth. But the city gave us approval twice, when the temple opened in 1999 and again in 2016. We ourselves were surprised, and I would have to think really hard to even come up with something that was close to discrimination. Honestly, I cannot.

**01:16:56**

Gupta: We used to go to the mayor's office to get permissions to do things. And my wife would walk in and she would come back within half an hour. She got the permission. BSU has been very nice. We're right next to BSU and we have done cultural programs over there. We have done programs in the city parks. We do what we call Festival of India. We did a very nice Festival of India in the auditorium at BSU. It was totally full.

[INTERRUPTION]

**01:17:32**

Gupta: Maybe it's me that I always look at things positively. I cannot think of any bad experiences.

**01:17:44**

Q: That's good to hear. It sounds like obviously Indian community is really important for you. I'm wondering, are there other ways you find community with people who aren't Indian, like friends who are not Indian, things like that?

Gupta: And let me tell you, it's not just being Indian. It's the fact that I'm also by faith, Hindu, but the Hare Krishna sect of Hinduism, and so we also represent that as part of the spirituality. And so I would say 25 percent of all our congregation is local Boiseans—Caucasians, couple of Hispanics, couple of Blacks, Afro-descent. So from that perspective, the temple is not just Indian Indian. There are genuinely other devotees of different cultures, backgrounds, colors, nationalities, who are part of it.

**01:19:04**

Gupta: That's why actually the motto of our temple was “for Idahoans.” It was built by Idahoans, except for a couple of things. Everything was built by local labor, regular American carpenters and painters. If you come, and please do come in. We have such a nice ceiling, it's a painted ceiling and it's nowhere to be found in Idaho or even in surrounding areas. It's a piece of art that was done by an American professor [Michael Baltzell] of theater, theatrical arts at BSU. He actually climbed up on scaffolding like Michelangelo, you know, upside down, he painted. We have a stained glass window that was done by an artist [Michael Booth] out of Meridian. He said he had done about 2000 stained glass windows and it was one of the best ones. And everything about it, it was built for Idahoans, by Idahoans. Yes, while it is designed for the Indian diaspora, but the Americans are also part of it.

**01:20:46**

Q: Yeah, very, very cool. I was also wondering if you know how many people are part of the temple.

Gupta: Before the COVID, on a typical Sunday, we would get about a 100 people. And again, about 80, 75 were Indians, and the rest 20 would be from the Americans. [As] a part of service, we always have the vegetarian feast or dinner, lunch, after that. And during the festival times, [the temple has several hundred people]; we have almost like one festival a month. But the biggest festival actually is why I'm coming back to Boise this coming Tuesday, and that is like a Christmas day. It is the appearance day of Lord Krishna. Now, we just have people coming one at a time, but before we get almost a thousand people, Indians and Americans.

**01:22:02**

Gupta: So our biggest festival, we get a thousand people. The other festivals, we get anywhere from 300 to 500. We have festival of lights. People from the community come in to light the lamp of peace. We have—have you heard of the Holi Festival, the festival of colors? [Min nods.] We have that, and people come for that. So anywhere from regular attendance—is about a hundred, because only about 30 percent show up on any Sunday, regularly—but on festival times, special occasions, we have anywhere from 300 to a thousand.

**01:22:41**

Q: Wow, very cool. Then, maybe a rephrasing of the earlier question I had, but how do you feel like your interactions are with people of different cultures, of different faiths? I know you mentioned the interfaith council. So I'm kind of wondering about that.

Gupta: Yeah. That goes up and down. There was a time that the various churches were very open and wanted the interfaith experience. It goes up and down. And then there's time people sort of retreat back. Now in this pandemic, everything's sort of shut down, but overall Hinduism is one of the top three religions in the world and people want to know more about it.

**01:23:49**

Gupta: Like I said before, we have regular visits from high schools. There are teachers who are there, who teach cultural and multi-interfaith things. They know us. And every semester, every year, they call and say, “Can I bring the students?” I say, “Fine.” So we have regular classes coming from Northwest Nazarene [University], from BSU, from Kelly Bishop High School, from other high schools, from the Riverstone [International School]. We are on everyone's list of places to go to learn, so we have regular visitors. We have visitors from the Mormon Church. They have their women's auxiliary group. They come every year, for the last three, four years, ever since they found out we are actually part of the interfaith organization service at Thanksgiving. So yeah. We have preached in jails, and they're convicts or inmates that want the Hindu experience.

**01:25:28**

Q: Yeah, definitely. And how do you see your “identity”? For example, do you see yourself as Indian, American, Indian American, any other, like Asian American? Yeah.

Gupta: I have stopped doing that. Others see me as Indian. But I see myself now, after a long time—I used to feel and I still feel I'm Indian—but on the other hand, I feel like Hare Krishna, I'm representing a faith that I believe in and we have a certain identity. We wear this one necklace of [wood beads], you can say. When I go out in public, I dress as a priest from our faith. In fact, there are people who, once in a while, will see me in Walmart. They look at me. I'll say, “What's wrong?” “Oh, we never see you in jeans, we always see you in your devotional clothing.” I feel very comfortable when people accept me that I can go even sometimes to the florist, or the grocery shopping in my priestly clothes.

**01:26:58**

Gupta: On the other hand, people are amazed at my American accent, but then, on the other side, they see that, I mean, I'm both ways. I can speak in Hindi. If there are two people standing, I can speak to one in Hindi, and the other one in English, almost at the same time. It's not a stereotyped identity. It is a little bit different. I guess then you can say, more like Hare Krishna, the Hare Krishnas are very, very universal. We have sort of Indian thought, but in terms of the daily life, there will be all. In Italy, we look like Italians, if we are in the US, we look like Americans. I can't change my color.

**01:28:00**

Q: Yeah. And then how would you describe the role of gender and/or sexuality in your life or your family's life?

Gupta: That issue has never come up. Everyone is welcome. That really—We do not discriminate against anyone because of their caste, color, creed, sexuality, nationality. Honestly, that has never come up.

**01:28:38**

Q: I think that's cool. Maybe some questions about parenting. So with your kids, did you try to instill any particular values, any particular traditions or beliefs? Also, I don't know if your sons are married already, but if you have expectations about marriage and things like that for your kids.

Gupta: Yes. Both of my sons are professors in world religious histories. The older one actually now is the Charles Redding Chair Chair of World Religions [sic] at Utah State in Logan, where I am right now.<sup>6</sup> He is a very well sought-out speaker throughout the country. He represented the

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<sup>6</sup> The official title is Charles Redd Chair of Religious Studies.

Indians or the Hindus when the Pope came to US several years back.<sup>7</sup> He goes to American Academy of Religion, and is part of committees. My younger son is a little bit younger and he's getting up there. He's also an assistant professor of religion in University of Indiana at Evansville, Indiana. He's also very well in his career, so they both have been instilled, they have imbibed and studied the Vedic religion, culture, scriptures, and understood them. And because of their upbringing here, they also are aware of the Christian values and Jewish values, and so they can speak very fluently and across without any sort of boxing. They're both married.

**01:30:25**

Gupta: They got married in India. Well, one of them, actually, my elder daughter-in-law is from Kenya, of Indian descent. They both have sons and daughter, and those are also growing up in our tradition. But they're not, in terms of—isolated. If you talk to them, you'll see them, very regular kids. They go out and play and do things. Again, they understand both the languages, English and in our own dialect. I have nothing to complain. [And they are also learning Sanskrit.]

**01:31:41**

Q: Yeah. And then, you've obviously been in the US for a very long time. I'm wondering if you have feelings towards the US as a whole, and if those feelings have changed or remained the same now, compared to when you first came to the US.

Gupta: I missed the keyword.

**01:32:03**

Q: Sorry, I keep forgetting to hold the mic. I was wondering if you're feelings towards the US, if they've changed or if they've maintained the same, over time.

Gupta: Feelings you said, or?

**01:32:17**

Q: Yes, your feelings towards the US and America.

Gupta: Oh, towards the US. My feelings are very positive—except for the last few years, without naming names, I think the society's become a little bit divisive and I don't like that, firstly. But I will not change my values. I'm hoping that our temple, myself, or others will be a beacon of hope and something different and nice than what we're going through now. Let's stop there.

**01:33:03**

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<sup>7</sup> Suman Guha Mozumder, “Indian-American professor to present symbol of faith to Pope,” *Rediff India Abroad*, April 16, 2008, <https://www.rediff.com/news/2008/apr/16pope.htm>.

Q: Yes, definitely. I do have a few current events questions. The first question is we're obviously living through history with COVID. I'm wondering if you could tell me a little bit about how COVID has affected you or your family or the temple?

Gupta: Well, I think it has affected the temple. It's closed. We still do—we have duties and there's still worship. We can't stop that. But people are missing that. We are doing it digitally now, like most people are. We have digital classes and sermons and lectures. Yes, I'm a little worried, because I think, I don't know how long will last. But we're worried about the fact that maybe people miss for a while, but if the absence becomes too long, then I'm wondering, will they ever come back?

**01:34:11**

Gupta: I think eventually they will, but in the meantime, as the kids grow up, they get too hooked into the digital. Nothing wrong with the digital, but you also need in-person face-to-face interaction. That's very, very important. The digital divide—it could become a digital divide and—or actually, all studies are that too much of this digital world actually makes people depressed. Because you still need that human touch and the human interaction. So that's something that I do worry about, but it's beyond my control. We'll have to wait.

**01:34:57**

Q: Yes. On a different current events question. We were also seeing a lot of protests in Boise and as well as outside Boise related to Black Lives Matter. And I was wondering if that was something that you felt was something that you were thinking about yourself or reflecting on or having conversations about in your family.

**01:35:24**

Gupta: Well, I've thought about it and I do sympathize because I could see myself in the same situation. But to be honest about it, because of the pandemic, I've not been into the streets to protest or even to go out. I barely go out for shopping, mostly it's deliveries or Instacart or so forth. But, no, I'm full of empathy and very much concerned. A lot of the things that are happening, hopefully this is a temporary phase in the life of the country. I think this is a great country but I think we are going about the wrong way a little bit right now.

**01:36:25**

Q: Yeah. One question before I get into the conclusion questions. Have you visited India since leaving?

Gupta: I do every year, every year. I go every year, sometimes twice a year. When I'm in India, I'm at home. My Indian ways when I come here, yes. My parents have been here, my brother has

been here, family's here. We go back and forth as a constant exchange. There have been no final goodbyes.

**01:37:04**

Q: Yeah. And do you feel like there's been major world events that have been going on in India that you also feel connected to?

Gupta: Oh, yeah. Just last night, I stayed up to three o'clock in the morning. There was a big inauguration or installation of the sort of groundbreaking ceremony for a very huge new Lord Rama temple that the people had struggled to get it done. With world events, yeah, I'm following all the COVIDs and all the different controversies. And that's partly because even as a child, I was very much interested—I told you about the world political scene—I was always interested in that. What are things happening in Germany or India or China and Russia, that's my side hobby. Going outside, getting a peek of it.

**01:38:18**

Q: And then, I'm just getting to the last few conclusion questions. The first question is, how is the world today different from what it was like when you were a child?

Gupta: Yeah, it is different, very complicated. It's becoming more and more a world of darkness. One thing that I was thinking about it is it has become so—even the children are stressed out. They [do not have] stress-free lives; you have to protect them. We have to protect them. My mother was saying that when I was five years old, when I first went to school, and she would have a servant that would take me to school and bring me back. And one time he forgot and she was wondering why I'd not come home, and the thing was I did not see the servant and I just walked out of school, five years old, and I was walking in this town, and then somebody saw me and said, "Who are you, what are you doing?" I was kind of crying and he brought me back home. I'm not sure how much that will happen now, but I mean, many kids would get molested or kidnapped or hurt or all those things that you hear about.

**01:40:00**

Gupta: And so, it [the world] has become a more risky place for everyone, and more so. The kids are not kids anymore. We still resist. I mean, all my grandsons and [granddaughter] don't have cell phones. But all of us do worry that maybe we should give them and as a matter of principle, [unclear] for them to have their cell phones and get into that, and that we should be able to protect our children and self. My boys and my daughter in-laws, they take extra care.

**01:40:52**

Gupta: Family values are going down. I worry about that. That assumes a whole bunch of things. Things are going downhill materially, spiritually, socially. I don't see that—okay, well you could

say, like “India is more spiritual, so okay, you guys are spiritual.” But even in America, the material, there's more hunger, there's more poverty, there's less of everything, except for the super rich people. The education is going downhill, and the people are getting into more baser values. Women are being exploited. I wondered why, and that's why I said I feel therefore there's more need and importance of temples and churches to provide the alternative. Because many times, people don't even know that there's an alternative. So that's kind of what I feel.

**01:42:20**

Q: Yeah. The next question is, what accomplishments are you most proud of?

Gupta: The temple.

**01:42:30**

Q: Yeah. That makes sense, and—

Gupta: Raising my two kids.

**01:42:39**

Q: Yes, that makes sense as well. What is one thing you want people to remember about you?

Gupta: They have to tell me, I don't know. They tell me. People do appreciate our family, giving this sort of gift of the temple, to the community. I think that'd be good enough.

**01:43:09**

Q: Yeah. And then, this question is probably related, but what was the most important and meaningful event or experience in your life? And also what's the happiest moment in your life so far?

Gupta: I think happiest moment was opening the temple in 1999 and cultural center came afterwards, but same degree. But it already happened 1999, so this was like a repeat. Happiest moments was also seeing my sons getting married and having grandsons and granddaughter. All those things.

**01:44:08**

Gupta: One of the happiest moments was my younger brother, he just doesn't want to move out of his hometown. He lives there and doesn't travel too much. It took me forever to get him to come to the States. He came and I was so happy that he came. He came and lived for three weeks. when the cultural center opened. Same thing with my parents. Yeah, so those are some happy moments.



**01:44:50**

Q: Yes, definitely. And then, what are your dreams and visions for the future?

Gupta: Hopefully I can die without any diseases. Now I'm in my old age, so just to have peaceful death, I guess. I mean, you hear all those horrible stories, and hopefully I won't. Krishna will protect me. But I have accomplished all I wanted to do, I guess.

**01:45:29**

Q: Yeah. That brings me to my last question. It's that, obviously we can't cover your life, which is quite long, in the sum of two hours, but is there anything that you'd like to add to the interview that you feel like we haven't touched on enough? Something important that you feel like we've missed? Or just something you'd like to add final words on?

Gupta: I guess I could. I mean, the only thing that comes to mind is that this country is great because of this diversity, and America has such a rich mosaic of different cultures, different peoples. I would suggest to, right now with conditioning, people would go back to those values and say, "Okay, one of the reasons why this is why America is so great, is because of this diversity, not because of this wealth." And people should keep that in mind.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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