

ASIAN VOICES

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INTERVIEWEE: Shivashanmugam
INTERVIEWER: Aravinda De'Silva

(START OF TAPE 3, SIDE A)

ARAVINDA DE'SILVA: This is a tape of an interview for the Asian Voices Project in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The interview was conducted by Aravinda De'Silva, and people who were interviewed were Dr. Shivashanmugam and his wife Lata, who live in the Royal Park Apartments in Carrboro. The date of the interview was April twenty first, 1999. The interview was conducted between six o'clock and eight o'clock in the evening. The whole interview was conducted as one long session with a short break in the middle. The actual interview took place in the living room of Dr. Shivashanmugam's house. Dr. Shivashanmugam is a post-doctorate fellow at the University of North Carolina. I would guess that he is in his middle thirties. His wife, I think, is a little younger than him - maybe in her late twenties. They have both lived in the United States for about three years now. Lata works as a cashier at the Harris Teeter in Carrboro. As I mentioned before, Dr. Shivashanmugam or Shiva works as a post-doctorate fellow. They have one son who is about three years old, and his name is Aravind. I mainly interviewed Dr. Shiva. His wife also participated to some extent. In addition to the Shivashanmugam family, another couple was also present during the interview. They were Dr. Asvind & Manjila. Asvind has also recently arrived, just a few days ago, as a post-doc in the microbiology department at UNC. [pause]

Today is April twenty first and this is the interview with Dr. Shivashanmugam and his family at Royal Park apartments in Carrboro. [pause] Dr.-, what do you prefer to be called?

SM: Shiva.

ADS: Okay.

SM: Shiva is the short name of--.

ADS: Of your name? Okay.

Shiva, can you tell me a little bit about your life in India before you came to the United States? Which--? Where did you grow up, and what was your childhood like?

SM: I lived in a small village-, in Tamil Nadu, in Southern India, where basically, living in a small village where people, mostly the-, doing agriculture at home-, profession. So they-, there was not very big agriculture. () They have like five/six acres. Almost they have-. So they do agriculture and that's--.

ADS: Mostly rice?

SM: Yeah, rice-, and vegetables. [pause] Main source of the income is based on the-, agriculture. They do cultivate paddy, groundnut, cotton and coconut.

Ahm... My father was working as a-, railway in the -, working as a mechanic in the Indian railways near-, working in--, there is place called Erode. So it is a--.

ADS: Erode?

SM: Yeah. He used to go by train every morning. He used to go around six o'clock in the morning and he will be back night around eight o'clock.

ADS: So did he travel on the train?

SM: Yeah. He used to--.

ADS: Which was the route? From Erode to-?

SM: From—actually my place is called Sange Giri. Sange Giri to Erode is just twenty miles. So, my father-, was--, I think his education is from tenth class, tenth standard, tenth grade. So after that he joined Railways. So my mother never attended school. She was only housewife.

ADS: Right.

SM: Umm.... My mother used to take care of us and she used to work in the-, land and doing all household things. In my childhood I also used to help with my father and in my house he used to have cattles-, like buffalo, cow, and some goat and chickens, so we have all- grow in the backyard (). We have a small land in our house also. So we used to keep them all-, with this. We have a school, just-, I think half a kilometer.

ADS: How many brothers and sisters in your family?

SM: Yeah, I have only one sister, and myself. Only two people. Actually, in my community, they never prepared to have more children. The reason, they don't want to bifurcate the land. Because the land may be reduced if I have more children. So that is the reason they have always one or two boys and one girls-, mostly they have. So we have a school, elementary school, upto fifth standard. It is half a kilometer from my house. So, I was-, there is only Tamil medium. So they will teach English only after the-, I think in the third standard they start English-, they introduce English, as a one subject for second language. [pause] So, then after that we have a higher secondary school in Sangagiri, I think almost two miles from my house. So I used to go by bicycle every day. So after my twelfth-, I think after my tenth standard, I started my twelfth grade lessons taking the maths and science as the major subjects.

ADS: So you took an exam and then decided, or--?

SM: No. Actually, that is our optional choice. We can choose any subject. Based on your interest. And sometimes they will insist if you have more marks, they will allow you to go science and maths. If you are very poor in maths and science they will ask you to go for-, like arts subject history and other vocational-, they have some kind of commerce and-, things--.

ADS: It's very similar in Sri Lanka.

SM: Yeah. [pause] After my schooling, I want to study physics as my interest subject. But I applied two three colleges that is near to our place. Actually for college we got to go at least twenty to thirty miles. Salem or Erode, Coimbatore. Some people normally-, if they have-, rich, they go to big places like Madras, Coimbatore. But some medium class people always prefer whichever nearer to home. That maybe less expensive and we can frequently visit. Moreover it is very difficult (to) put the child in a different place and a different environment. Because city life may spoil and they may get-, bad habits or some kind of impression--, always among our community, because they want to-, have the children-, their own supervision.

ADS: Right.

SM: That is the main important. So when I was in college, I did my B.Sc. in Zoology as the major and the chemistry and botany.

ADS: So you said you wanted to do physics, why did you pick zoology and--.

SM: Actually, that they have-, we have some-, in application there are two/ three columns. You can give first preference physics, second, third, like. So I gave first preference to physics, second biology--. So then moreover I got more marks in biology.

So I think they selected me for biology. So I told my parents I'm not much interested in this subject, so I want to have physics as-, my B.Sc. But they said-- they are not much aware of the subjects—they said all B.Sc. is the same. [laughter]

ADS: Doesn't matter.

SM: Yeah. If you study well in this subject you can go anywhere. [laughter]
That's what they said. So, I never--, I thought actually, after B.Sc. I may go for some job because I never thought going for higher studies or coming to America-, something like that.

ADS: Did you--? When you were doing your B.Sc., did you stay at home, or did you live in the college?

SM: In B.Sc. first year I stayed in my home. I used to go by bus. Daily by bus. It will take only thirty to forty minutes to reach my college. So-, actually after one year I think I had some difficulty daily going by bus, so I want to-, get more concentration in my studies. So I go to hostel. So, after B.Sc. I thought that is my-, education is going to be end, so I thought I can go for any job. So, I was-, stayed home for a year.

ADS: When in your home, did your relatives live close by? Next to your house, or what?

SM: Ahmm. Yeah, actually we have—relatives means my father's brother and my grandfather's brother—we have only close community, all inherited from only one family. So we have only ten houses in my village.

ADS: Okay.

SM: So-.

ADS: And everyone is related.

SM: Yeah. Everyone is related to us. So we have a lot of kids, and--.

ADS: And were you a part of-, an active part of that community?

SM: Yeah, we are active part of-, because almost we are in the same family, so we always very close and we can always talk-, we used to go to the other family house and we used to-, sometimes we used to sleep over there. We get all kind of assistance if we need something.

ADS: So when you first went to and stayed in the hostel in college, was it difficult?

SM: Ahm....

ADS: I guess it was not too far away from-.

SM: Yeah. It is not too far away. I can go-, home for every week initially. After that every fifteen days. So, my father also used to work in Erode, the same place, the same city, so he used to come and visit me. So, such kind of things. So I never bothered about I'm away from home. So-, after my B.Sc. I think I'm trying to get some job- some kind of job. So I stayed in house. I stayed in my home and--.

ADS: Looking for a job...

SM: Yeah, looking for a job.

ADS: What were your other interests, like outside studies? Like sports, music, cricket, or--?

SM: Yeah, I used to play-, in my school days I used to play games like, er... baseball. So in our school--, I don't know--.

ADS: But there's another name there. It's not like the baseball here. Right?

SM: Ahm.. but-, no the same baseball like here. So we used to play baseball and-, sometimes basketball, but basket ball came very later in-, but normally we used to play

baseball and there is a-, another game called volleyball. Then they will play "kabaddi". So this kind of things more common in our schools. So, after coming to college, I think I didn't get much interest in sports. Because in India people never allow to their children to go for sports because if they are more interested in sports they never get studies well. So, people always discourage to join in the sports or other than education related things. So, then after staying in my house in one year I didn't any good job. So, then I decided to do my M.Sc. For M.Sc. I went to--.

ADS: When you did your college degree, what language were you studying? Was it in English or Tamil?

SM: Ahm...upto my twelfth standard I studied only in Tamil medium. English is the secondary language-- second language. So we have always one subject as English. So, after completing twelfth standard, so-, if you go for science it is-, there is no-, in Tamil medium instructions. Only you have to go for English. So you have to start all the subjects in English, as soon as you enter the college. So-, initially I have some difficulty, but after some time I think most of the terms and the scientific definitions we used to study in our language, Tamil, also is the same, but only written script may be the-, some kind of-, er.. mixed with English and Tamil. So I don't find much difficulty after reaching the college. [pause] So--, that--.

ADS: You said you decided to do your masters.

SM: Yeah. I decided to master in M.Sc. Zoology. For that I went to, again, I think hundred miles from my native place. That is called Trichanopoly. Trichy, that is.

ADS: Uh-huh.

SM: So I did that also-, I think in our place mostly the college are owned by private people. Like, different-, caste based communities, something. They have-, every community have their own colleges. Like I did my B.Sc. that is-, one-, somebody called "Cka Naikar". He established a college in that region. So, then after my—in Trichy actually there is a Muslim organization—have some college called Jamal Mohammad College. So, but- they don't have any discrimination based on the religion. There anybody can study. But they will give more preference to that particular community, but there is not any discrimination. So anybody can apply and if they are-, if you have merit they will select you. So I did my M.Sc. in a Muslim college.

ADS: Was it expensive?

SM: Ahm... No, it is-.

ADS: Not expensive.

SM: Not expensive. Because all the colleges are recongnized by the Tamil Nadu government. Then they will do subsidisy. So they ()-, salary, everything the government will give, so they are not—the private means it is not totally self financed—it is some part of semi government. So-, then I read my M.Sc. Zoology. Then a lot of people told me--, after my M.Sc. they ask me to do like a Bachelor of Education, and I can go to a teachers school, because I can-, it is a respectful job in Tamil Nadu. So if you-, it is only five days work compared to other jobs. So, less efforts. You can just go and teach. Then that also-, you can get a job in your home town. Mostly. Most of the people, the teacher. They live in nearby cities, or near to village-, that village they will teach. So, that way most of the people prefer to go to-, as a school teacher. So, but-, I never get any interest in going to school teacher.

ADS: Uh-huh.

SM: So, I thought I want to study further, at least-, er..., to teach college level. Because for teaching college level you have to get another degree called Master of Philosophy in whatever the subject you have. Like, in Madras University they have some kind program. So this is—they can train candidates for teaching college or if somebody want to do research or Ph.D, they can go. This is some kind of a program, partly research and partly taught program. So they will teach—they can teach and they can exposure to research. Because in Master level degree they have very less exposure to the research because they will some techniques. Like, if you take biology they will teach electrophoresis, histochemistry, histology and other spectropetrometric analysis. Such kind of things. But they will give small project so you have to subject-, submit to the university as part of the partial fulfillment. But that cannot give much in-depth knowledge about the research because they-, in zoology they have all-, they include sorts of biology. Like, in my Masters I did all kind of zoology- functional, morphology of invertebrates and chordates, so paleontology, and all biochemistry, biophysics, biostatistics-,

ADS: Lot of material.

SM: Yeah, then they will go for genetics, immunology, embryology, ecology and evolution. So they will teach all the things. So you cannot have any specific thing. We have one optional subject that is called medical entomology. So there are two optional subjects entomology. One is general entomology, one is medical entomology. So I select medical entomology.

ADS: That's interesting, because I am a medical entomologist. [pause] Huh.. So you did your research project in medical entomology?

SM: Yeah. Actually I did some research controlling the mosquito population. Because in our place mosquito is one of the biggest-, I think-, er... nuisance everywhere [laughter]. So, we use some plant extract. Is it possible to control mosquitoes— mosquito larvae. So we did a small pilot study collecting mosquito eggs in the drainage, and we culture the mosquitoes in the lab.

ADS: Which mosquitoes were you--?

SM: It is--, [pause] the mosquito is culex-, I think. Anophelaes and culex type of mosquitoes.

ADS: You didn't do anything with Aedes? Aedes aegypti. I don't know if there's a lot in your part.

SM: Yeah. We have-, I think. So actually our--, I think in our--, in Trichy there is one place called Srirangam. So they have a--, this kind of a--, endemic area for filariasis. So the filariasis is transmitted by culex quincifaciatis of mosquito species. So, we used to collect that mosquitoes and we did some using plant extract-, to killing the mosquito larvae. But that has very low efficacy. So because I don't know the mosquito has very resistant to survive in all kind of pollutions and other things.

ADS: Right.

SM: So it will grow very happily--.

ADS: Don't they use "neem"--? Is it neem, that--?

SM: Yeah. Neem extract and-, they use some kind of-, this is a-, we use some leaf extract called vinca rosea. This is a plant I think they use some other medicinal purpose.

ADS: Yeah. Vinca rosea. I think a cancer drug.

SM: Yeah. It is some cancer drug. Yeah. Some kind of things they use.

ADS: Right.

SM: So, that is my M.Sc. So after M.Sc. I want to join in Madras University.

Because my-, [pause] from the beginning my ambition is I want to study sometime in Madras. Like big cities, because I never been there.

ADS: Even though your family didn't want you to go.

SM: Yeah. Initially they—my families and all-, they don't want me to go outside and all—and another thing also, they don't know much about the city life and I may get lost somewhere. [laughs] So, from the village people, very less people go big cities. Only rich people can go. Other--, because, if you know lot of people you can go very easily. But we don't know anybody in the big cities like Madras or Coimbatore. So our main population is related to small cities like Erode or Salem, just thirty kilometer, hundred mile radius only. So Madras again, I think, it is four hundred kilometer from my place. I think four hundred and fifty kilometer.

ADS: Long way.

SM: Yeah. It takes overnight journey by train. So, then I decided to go there to study in the Madras University. So then I applied two-three subject. Because they have different--.

ADS: This is for your Ph.D. now?

SM: This is for my M.Phil.

ADS: M. Phil. Right.

SM: Actually, the main aim is—in Madras University whoever wants to do Ph.D., they have to undergo this course also. It is compulsory. So after completing this course only they will take for Ph.D. So this is for dual purpose. So I thought I may do Ph.D. in the same place. So I joined--, actually I applied for three places in Madras University. Like Zoology Department—and they have a separate department for all basic medical sciences. So anybody can join whoever has the qualifications like biological science, like botany, zoology, or any medical allied sciences like physiology, genetics, biochemistry. So they have all kind of specialized subject. So I applied like physiology and genetics, endocrinology. So I got admission in M.Phil in endocrinology. They will teach both basic and clinical endocrinology. So then er...-, this is er..-, I think that is for-, one and a half years, that course.

ADS: What year was this? When you came to Madras?

SM: Actually I did my B.Sc. from 1982 to 1985 my B.SC. Then one year break I was in home. Then eighty six to eighty eight I did my M.Sc. in Trichy, Jamal Mohammad College. From eighty eight to ninety I did my M. Phil. This is almost it will take one and a half years. So-, initially they have a three--, I think three written paper exams. So it consist with both clinical both clinical and basic endocrinology. Then one optional subject is—I took reproductive endocrinology. So I had a project using-, inducing diabetes in male rats. Then I did some studies to see the reproductive functions. Because diabetes people always have some kind of reproductive problems like low fertility and some kind of impotence. So, this is not totally it is all the diabetes are impotence but some people may have some difficulty-, suffer fertility related problems. So I induced a diabetes and did some studies doing-, seeing the sperm maturation in

the—some-, one region called eperidimus, after testes the sperm actually go through-, undergo maturation in the eperidimus. So I did some studies in the-, see the-, is getting any-, er.... affected due to diabetes. So, then after this M.Phil, so I thought to continue the Ph.D. in the same department.

ADS: So you are now very faraway from your family.

SM: Yeah. Slowly I'm moving away from my house.

ADS: Further and further away. So how was that? How was it when you first went to Madras and-?

SM: Yeah, actually I went to Madras. It is very exciting. Seeing a huge population and big buildings. So-, but still I am in the same language speaking people, so I can see a lot of people from my place. I think, in my M.Phil class I have two classmates from my M.Sc. So, I never--.

ADS: From Trichy?

SM: Yeah, from Trichy. So, some people from my--, near to my native place, so I never feel any difficulty because almost I can-, closely related to all my neighboring people or something like that. So, I used to go very--, once in a month I visit my home.

ADS: Go back home. For a weekend, or--?

SM: Yeah, weekend. So, that's what my M.Sc.--, M.Phil.

ADS: What did you do in the city other than your studies? Movies? Did you go to the movies?

SM: Yeah. We used to go to the movies, and we have big beach, I think. It is the largest beach—second largest beach in the world, I think.

ADS: Which one is it?

SM: Marina. Marina beach in Madras. So, we used to go beach. And we have other tourist attractions in Madras like Machabalipuram.

ADS: Yes I have been there.

SM: Yeah. We used to go around in weekends.

ADS: Did you make any good friends?

SM: In Madras?

ADS: In Madras, or--?

SM: Yeah. I have made a lot of friends in Madras. [pause]

ADS: And you stayed in a university hostel?

SM: No, again university has very limited accommodation, so I used to stay in outside.

ADS: Okay. You were boarded in?

SM: I didn't board, but I was actually one of my friends—he's also doing M.Phil. He's also my M.Sc. classmate. So, he--, actually, he stayed in his sister's house. So I also-, actually I don't know much people in Madras, so I also stayed near to his sister's house. So I found some of his sister's colleagues—bachelors—staying in a house, so I join with them. They're actually--, they're--, I'm the only student in that room.

ADS: Others are all working?

SM: Other people are all working. Actually, they're working in airport as a communication assistant. So I stayed with them for a year. [pause] Then I thought that is my education going to be end. I have a little interest to continue my Ph.D. but again the problem-, in India you have to get fellowship from the India government. Or you have to write a qualified--, for a fellowship you have write separate exams. So, such kind of

things you have to need financial assistance. Because it is otherwise--, family like me it is very difficult to support from my family. So far I think, for upto my M.Phil I was supported from my family. Because we don't have any culture of working part time or working outside.

ADS: Right. While you're studying.

SM: Yeah. You cannot get a good job. It is even you cannot get a small job also.

So then I thought I can do my Ph.D., but I'm not--, still not have decided to continue in the same place. And, are trying to look other places.

ADS: Was there pressure from your family for you to start working or did they support you to continue?

SM: No, they always ask me to stop my studies because they don't want to spend more money.

ADS: They are thinking. The B.Sc, the M.Sc., and M.Phil.

SM: Yeah. Because-, I think-, that is-, they feel that is more-, I think-, they can-, I can get-, I may get a good job. So I can stay with them. They can-, I can-, take care because that's what their worry. If I go-, different places I think they are living alone. In the meantime, my sister also got married.

ADS: You had a younger sister?

SM: Yeah. She is my younger sister. But, she-, I think after that tenth grade she don't want to go to school. So she is staying two three years in my house. So normally in our place if the girl is not studying, and she's around eighteen or twenty years old they will try to get them married. So, my sister got married around eighteen years. So-, actually-, [pause] my brother-in-law is almost near to my house. Almost-, only three

miles from my house. So he is graduate in economics. He did masters in economics. And-, so-, they got-, my parents are relieved because my sister got married. So I also completed my—almost— M. Phil.

ADS: When your sister got married, her husband come and live with your parents?

SM: No. Actually-, in our custom actually, my sister has to go live with their house.

ADS: So now your parents were alone.

SM: Yeah. My parents I think from eighty four. When I was doing my B.Sc. my sister got married. From that time, I think, my parents are alone.

ADS: I see. Was it difficult for you when you were in Madras? Was that pressure for you to come back and-, take a job closer to home, so that--?

SM: I don't have any pressure, but they are feeling some kind of—my father is I think working, still working—so he only retired in the ninety three. After my, I think-, when I was doing my M.Phil and all he is working. So they are very busy. They are not very worried because they can take care of themselves, so they never bothered about me. But they worried about my future and they want to be in-, my-, in the same place or they want to-, they have-, their interest is they want me to live with them, because I'm the only son. So, because always-, most of the people in our culture- they will take care of elders in the same family.

ADS: So who was-? Your father was, you said, upto ninety three he was working. Who was helping with all the work in the-, animals and the fields?

SM: I think they themselves take care of all those things.

ADS: You said you all have a large community so there must have been some help.

SM: Yeah Whenever need any help because after that I think now the agriculture is almost some kind of improved, so we can use-, hire a tractor or something like that. So they can-, you can give some money, they will do all kind of work-, farm works. So the work, actually, it was reduced. So, they can take care.

ADS: So did you do your Ph.D. at Madras university also?

SM: No. After my M.Phil-, actually I am looking a good place to do my Ph.D. because somehow I don't like to do Ph.D. in the same department. The reason there the infrastructure is—compared to other places—it is very low. I think after my M.Phil. I thought doing Ph.D. in the same department, I think it is totally-, I think it did not improve much in terms of quality and knowledge. So, I thought I can try other-, places. So, because-, I think in other places means I ought to look—because in India we have different kind of institutions. Some kind of institutions get I think-, more funds, more facilities.

ADS: Right.

SM: So universities they always very poor in terms of infrastructure. So, that I found after staying some years in Madras. So Madras also it is small place. It may be a big place. If you live in a village, Madras may be a big place. But once if you reach Madras, you may compare to other cities in India, other big institutions India, or in terms of-, compared to other parts of world like US, UK. In terms of science, they're doing very preliminary work only. They're not doing much. So, I thought I can go for my Ph.D. to Delhi. Because Delhi is I think India's capital. [laughter] So I want to--.

ADS: You're continuing your journey. You're going to bigger and further away.

SM: Yeah. So, actually I went to Delhi. That also, actually-, lot of people from the same institution in Madras used to go to Delhi for higher education, Ph.D.

ADS: Which institution in Delhi?

SM: In Delhi we-, All India Institute of Medical Sciences. So that is a-, one of the-, India's premier-, big institute and they have all kind of medical-, doing medical research. And they have I think, like Ph.D., MBBS, MD, B.Sc., and M.Sc. They have all kind of programs related to medical sciences. I already-, I did my M.Phil. in basic and clinical endocrinology, so it is very easy to get in over there. Because if you have like zoology background, it may be difficult, because they don't have any zoology, so they have always all medical subjects.

ADS: It's a good thing you did that.

SM: Whoever have medical—basic medical degrees—they can easily enter. So we have all kind of-, already have experience in biochemistry and endocrinology and genetics. So, some kind of molecular biology, some theoretical knowledge about molecular biology. So, I easily get admission in All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

ADS: What year did you go there?

SM: Pardon?

ADS: What year did you go to Delhi?

SM: I went to-, in 1990.

ADS: 1990?

SM: Yeah. So, actually I joined in this. I continued my research in same kind of department that is called reproductive biology. So I did reproductive endocrinology as a optional subject in my M.Phil. So, then I joined in the reproductive biology department

as a Ph.D. student. Then they offered me fellowship for monthly () that is three thousand rupees, I think. Rupees at that time. So, they give you accommodation also in the hostel. That is, I think, more than enough, I think. They give you enough money to live, and—even if you go for a job, I think it is very difficult to get that kind of money. So, normally, that is another thing most of the people get in Ph.D. in India. So if they're not getting job, fellowship sometimes-, if they have a very good knowledge, they can compete in big institutes, they can get fellowship. That is for—they will give five years. Minimum three years, maximum five years, they will give the fellowship. So, then I was doing my Ph.D.-, I get a-, [pause] more interest in science. [interruption caused by child]

ADS: That's okay.

SM: So, I get more interest in science and-, at that point also I never thought I may go for-, I may come to US, or some other country. So, after completing my Ph.D.--.

ADS: Which year was that?

SM: It is--. Actually I submitted-, 1995. So as soon as--, before writing my thesis, I used to go home once in a year.

ADS: Once in a year?

SM: Yeah. So-, because Delhi is very far, so you never get holidays.

ADS: So you took the train?

SM: Yeah. Normally, I used to take train only. So, because-, in summer they will give one month vacation.

ADS: Right.

SM: So I used to go home for one month. Then-, I think-, during my 1995 almost I am finishing stage of my Ph.D, I think, my parents want me to get married. So, as soon

as I-, I think I went to in summer 1995 then my parents looking so many girls for me but nothing materialize because we are some kind of arranged marriage system.

ADS: Right.

SM: So, people always rely on horoscope. So they-, first they will match the horoscope. Then-, if the horoscope matching is going fine, they will look for other things. [pause]

ADS: So your horoscope didn't match with anyone, or--?

SM: Yeah. It matches with so many people, but the main problem is I am far away from my home place so everybody is asking you're living in Delhi, so people afraid of sending their daughters to Delhi, because Delhi is almost foreign place because they speak different language, so almost their culture and most of the things are different compared to Tamil Nadu because India has a large number of languages and cultures.

ADS: So did you--? Before you went to Delhi, did you speak Hindi?

SM: Actually, when I was in school, my father asked me to learn Hindi because he-, he's working in railways. The central government--, most of the central government departments, they always encourage other people to learn Hindi. So, somehow my father asked me to learn some Hindi. So I-, I learnt Hindi with my-, some private teacher. So I go to every day one hour in the evening-,

ADS: [speaking to wife] Thank you.

SM: One hour in the evening. So I learn, I think I passed two-three Hindi exams. Like that is called Prathamik, Madayama, like that. Some kind of a series of exams. But I did only two exams. That time I can read and write, but I cannot speak much because I don't have to communicate with other people.

ADS: So how did you communicate with other people, in English?

SM: In Delhi?

ADS: Yes. With colleagues at work.

SM: Yeah. Because most of the higher educated-, education institution in India they follow only English.

ADS: So English-, English was the bridge English language.

SM: Yeah. English is the second language in almost all the Indian states. So there is not much problem in communication with people in the institute. But if you go outside, people cannot speak. Even the peasants, the-, hospital employees, they cannot speak English. They may be less educated compared to other professionals. So, it is better to have some kind of knowledge to communicate with people. So, when I was learning the Hindi when I was doing around tenth standard. So after that I think almost I forgot all the-, er... the Hindi stuff. But still I used to recollect and I can read signs in the bus and some signs in the shop names and other things-, kind of things. But--.

(END OF TAPE 3, SIDE A)

START OF TAPE 3, SIDE B

SM: (continued) Daily I actually--. I was staying one of my friend. In a house, actually. So that-, house is actually part of a-, another family. They are living-, er... -, they are-, belongs to, I think Uttar Pradesh. We lived-, I think, one year in that house. So somehow I think I got more interest to learnt that Hindi also. So, I learnt I think to communicate with them, so I can speak-, Hindi with a- little bit-, my Tamil accent. [laughs] But-, our-, because-, the language Hindi is not related to Tamil. Because in India there are two languages, like Sanskrit and Tamil.

ADS: It's also similar. Mine are two languages, Sinhala-, It's more closer related to Hindi, than Tamil.

SM: So, it is very difficult to pronounce the Hindi words perfectly, because my mother tongue- Tamil- is not related to Hindi. So whatever we speak-, it almost look like Tamil. [laughter] So--.

ADS: Do you feel strongly about Tamil language? Do you read Tamil literature, Tamil--?

SM: Actually Tamil is--, has a-, very strong literature and it has in-depth-, they have-, very--. More Tamilians are I think always more affectionate with their language. So they're more resistant to Hindi. I think the only state in India-, we're totally against Hindi.

ADS: I remember, because a long time ago there was some talk of having a national language.

SM: Yeah. Still I think we have-, all the states have three language programs but our state has two language program.

ADS: Even in Sri Lanka one of the reasons for this ethnic problem in Sri Lanka has to do with language.

SM: Yeah. Starts, I think.

ADS: Perhaps in the fifties and sixties, the central government want a favored national language. And that made a lot of people very unhappy.

SM: Yeah. That is the main problem in India too. So--, [pause] I think-, I learnt I think somehow to communicate with people like hospital employees, and the department technicians. And if we go outside in the market, in shops-, sometimes some people cannot understand English, so we have to speak in Hindi. Or we are to take help with some other people. So, it is very difficult to take always some people with us. So--,

ADS: So we were talking about your parents trying to get you married, but horoscopes would match but none of the--.

SM: None of the people are not ready to send their daughter to Delhi. So-, I think one year before I think-, one year before I think. In ninety four I saw one girl-, she's--, her horoscope is matching with me. Then we saw the girl. Because we have a custom. As soon as the everything-, horoscope and everything is okay, they will ask to come and visit the house and see the girl.

ADS: It's very similar in Sri Lanka also. I have horoscope also, but my wife has no horoscope. [noise/interruption by child]. So, we couldn't match it. [pause] So, you normally go to the girl's house or does she come to--?

SM: No. Normally the boy has to go to the girl's house. So I went to- I think-, see that girl. It's okay, I said, I'm ready to get marry that girl and my parents also said okay. But the problem is they said you're still studying, you don't have a decent job. So they said if you get a job, we will try to arrange marriage. Then I said I don't know, now it may be difficult. I may get--, I will definitely get a job, but I cannot give any guarantee when I will get. So, then-, that time I think didn't happen- my marriage. Then I went to Delhi. Then after a year I came to my house. In the meantime, my parents looking everywhere—desperately. Because I am almost, I think, by that time thirty one-, years old. So normally in--, in our place, they will get married as soon as the boy reaches around twenty five. So--.

ADS: So you were late. () [child continues noise and interruption]

SM: Yeah. Almost already late. They are afraid--.

ADS: Were you concerned about it?

SM: Er.... No. I didn't concern about much. Because I don't have-, I think, decent job, or anything I ought to-, some kind of support, you know. As soon as I come out of my—All India Institute of Medical Science, I ought to get a good job to support my family. So, I didn't--, I'm not desperate getting in marriage. So, I think in the meantime, I think, almost I am finished my research project and I was writing my thesis. So, in the meantime-, at that 1995 somewhere-, I went to my home. So, my parents already looking lot of-, bunch of horoscopes-, and--. [phone rings—child continues disturbance] [recorder is switched off and on]

ADS: [to Lata] Tell us about how he met you-, now.

SM: Er... Actually in my-, after my-, I think-, this is-, er.... Completion I think-, er.... -, I first-, er.... I think-, er.... my parents-, er...., lot of-, er.... horoscopes. Including Lata's-. [laughs] So, but-, most of the horoscopes I think didn't match. I think Lata's horoscope matched with us-, with my horoscope. And, she's, er... just-, one mile away from my home. So, that way I think both her parents and my parents are-, actually they're not-, directly they don't know each other, but they know lot of people-, through other people they are-, I think they come very close. They know-,

ADS: They know the family.

SM: They know through somebody I think. So, then-, some of our relatives also-, to relatives from my family-, from my family. So almost we are--, because we used to get married almost in the same community.

ADS: Right.

SM: So, the caste-, also everything they look. [phone interruption] So, finally I think-, so we went to see Lata, and decide [wife speaks on phone in the background] I think--. Er..... okay for marriage. They also didn't raise much questions about my--,

ADS: Your job.

SM: Job or my-, other things. Because they know very well er...., our family, I think through some of the relatives. And even if I am not getting the job I think-, they are ready to give their daughter because-, they are like me and my-, education and other thing. They are sure I think I may get a good job. So, then-, so I think in July actually, we are finalize everything-, for marriage.

ADS: July of ninety five?

SM: Yeah. July ninety five. Umm.... I think we are--.

LATA: Not marriage. Engagement!

SM: Yeah. Engagement.

ADS: What's that?

LATA: Engagement!

SM: Only the engagement. We are fixing our marriage in the December. Because I have to submit my thesis. Still I didn't submit my thesis.

ADS: Right.

SM: So then I went back to Delhi and-, submitted my thesis. In the meantime I'm trying to-, er.... Looking for job. In India--.

ADS: Going looking in Tamil Nadu or--, close to your home town?

SM: Er..... No, I didn't try because the scopes are very less. If you look-, because in my place I cannot get a--. [child makes noises again] Because after Ph.D. I think it is I ought to go to Universities. [child continues interruption]. If I want to do-, continue my research, I ought to go to universities or big institutes.

ADS: Right.

SM: So-, I was looking job some institutes. But before that-, I got more interested to do some sort of training in US. Because in I think, my institute, all the people after their Ph.D. mostly they go to US, Europe, or sometime UK. Even some people these days going Japan. So they want to get some experience like-, those countries develop in more-, science. So, they want to get some exposure in developed nations-, countries. So I also applied lot of places. Er..... which directly related--.

ADS: When did you apply? After you got married, or before marriage?

LATA: Before marriage.

SM: Before marriage also I have applied, because-, in Delhi we have effective internet connections-, e-mail. But at the time we don't have internet, but we have e-mail facility. So, I can communicate with other people I think without much difficulty.

ADS: Did you talk to your parents about your desire to go to America, or do you--?

SM: Yeah. I told my—I told them before. [child continues to make noise] When I was doing my Ph.D., I informed to all my family and relatives I want to go for USA for some years to get some experience. So that may help-, to get good job in India. Like that I can do more-, more effective-, I think can go to-, good education and I can join good education institutes in India. So, they are almost agreed-, because I don't want to-, they don't want to stop my I think ambition and other things. So they are proud of me to send to other places, because they also get more proud you know, they can say their son is doing science in US or something like that. So I never discouraged this kind of things. [pause] Then in I think December we got married, so after one month in Tamil Nadu we went--,

LATA: back to Delhi.

SM: Back to Delhi. I think after my marriage I think I got some response--.

LATA: Two three days.

SM: from University of North Carolina-, Chapel Hill.

ADS: Two three days after the marriage?

SM: Yeah, after marriage. So, I got a mail saying-, they asked me some reference letters. So, then I-, after reaching Delhi I sent them the reference letters.

ADS: When did you come to North Carolina?

SM: Yeah, ninety six August I came.

ADS: So, Lata, when you went to Delhi, was that the first time you had gone to Delhi?

LATA: Yeah. First times. Yeah.

ADS: But before that you must have gone to Madras, and--?

LATA: After come back-, er... my place-, Salem. So, after seven month pregnant.

ADS: I see.

SM: He's asking, when you reached Delhi, before do you visit Madras and other places-, in Tamil Nadu or--? Do you visit Madras?

LATA: Yeah.

ADS: You have? So it was not a big change for you, the big cities?

LATA: Yeah. Delhi is big city. But er.....-, population, and pollution, everything-
-, [laughter]

SM: No, they are asking about culture and do you feel different or--?

LATA: Culture-, and feel-, different language. So I use only-, English and Tamil.
My mother language is only Tamil.

ADS: Right.

LATA: Everybody speak Hindi, it's not-, not talk in English.

ADS: Right.

LATA: So everybody speak Hindi but I don't understand. But-, er... I like Delhi,
but-, some problems always problems.

SM: She stayed three months only-.

LATA: Six months--, no, five months--.

ADS: So then you came back to Tamil Nadu and stayed in your house?

LATA: Stay in-, one month. Stay in both my house.

SM: Because we are very close-, only one mile [husband & wife repeatedly talking at the same time].

LATA: After he come to--.

SM: Actually she is pregnant at that time. So, I don't know--.

LATA: Seven months and something.

SM: I don't want to come and--, because this country I think everything is difficult--. [wife interrupts]

LATA: The insurance problem.

SM: Not only insurance, but we have people, parents and relatives. They're not-, they're afraid of pregnancy, you know. If something happens, so it is difficult to take care of. I cannot take care all the things.

ADS: Right.

SM: So it is a new place and new environment and I don't know anybody here.

ADS: That makes sense.

SM: So, we don't want to take any risk.

ADS: So when you left, Lata was seven months pregnant?

SM: Yeah. So--.

LATA: Somebody ask-, he go-, you go-, two years your son is US citizen [couple speak together again]

SM: Yeah, a lot of people--.

LATA: () You are citizen. Somebody ask, but I don't like US citizen. I like Indian citizen, [laughs] but I know--. Everybody is ask--. [interrupted by husband]

SM: Yeah, she got also. She got visa--.

LATA: Yeah. Everything finished. But I don't like--. [interrupted by husband]

SM: So many people-, so many people--.

ADS: It would have been difficult for you to come here. And also two months after coming here, to suddenly have a small baby--.

LATA: [interrupts] Yeah. Yeah. First delivery. Different things.

ADS: I think there you have a lot of support. You have your family.

LATA: Yeah.

ADS: It must have been difficult for you to see your husband leave when you were seven months pregnant knowing that in two months you're going to--.

LATA: Yeah--. [husband interrupts]

SM: But the problem--, they have a lot of--, [pause] er.... Like, er..... my parents and her parents. So, her grandmother--, so they're living all nearby places, so-, she don't have problem because-, for few-, I think few days it may be difficult for her, so after that I think other people are taking and-, they will-, our-, I think our system also, I think-, hospitals-, compared to US cities--.

LATA: Difficult--.

SM: Cheap. And I think they can-, you can stay as long you like in the hospitals.

LATA: I stay in eleven days hospital--.

SM: Yeah--.

LATA: After delivery. Before, four or five days stay in hospital. More or less fifteen or sixteen days stay in hospital.

ADS: They won't do that here!

LATA: Yeah. He's caesarian.

ADS: For that they would extend your stay here.

LATA: But this country is difficult. Only forty eight hours stay in hospital. And after, go to home. Every--, managing.

ADS: Right.

LATA: My parents and-, your parents is pray.

ADS: So, What about you, Shiva?

SM: Yeah. After reaching-, er.... First actually--, first week I have very difficult time because totally a new and different environment and different culture and different people. But in terms of culture I don't have much difficulty as soon as I come here. So, then I-, we are looking for an apartment, but we didn't get any apartment at that time because this August twenty six, the -, all the college and the university graduation- I think graduates are already occupied almost all the apartments. So we find a house-. South lake shore, Chapel Hill. So, I stayed in the house. I think after reaching the house, initially-, I think two three days-, I think three four days I was-, I was staying with my professor. So, he gave I think-, very good facilities. I think he used to cook rice, and he giving good food, like almost India--.

ADS: Who is your professor?

SM: Dr. Richard Richardson. Actually I was-, stayed with Dr. Richard Richardson--.

ADS: David Richardson?

SM: Ahm... No, he's Richard Richardson, not David Richardson. He's my-, he's one of my professor. But I'm working with-, Professor Dr. Michael Warner. He's my supervisor.

ADS: Supervisor.

SM: So I was staying with this house, er.... He used to give very good food and nice hospitality, so I don't have much problem. So then we-, look apartment and I got the apartment in South Lake Shore Drive, Chapel Hill. So-, then after reaching the-, my apartment, I think after second day or third day the major hurricane happened.

ADS: Oh, Hurricane Fran?

SM: Hurricane Fran--.

LATA: It's no food and ().

SM: So, it's heavy rain and--.

LATA: No power.

SM: No electricity-, no power--. Nothing for four days. My God! Very--.

LATA: Bread and--.

SM: Only bread and coke only--.

ADS: And you were alone, you didn't have ()

SM: Yeah. I had much difficulty in those days. Then after that I slowly--, I think I participate with--, other people-, interacting with other people in that neighborhood, because-, that is a totally neighborhood area. So people normally-, evening and morning, you can see lot of people going, walking around because mostly-, all retired people I think, they always walk with a dog.

ADS: And they talk to you?

SM: Yeah. They will talk to me and-, see people coming in the same bus. They are all working in the university.

ADS: How did you keep in touch with your family and Lata?

SM: So I used make-, by phone only.

ADS: So there is a phone in your house?

SM: Yeah, as soon as I think I reach my that my house, I got phone connection.

ADS: No, in India.

SM: In India? We have a phone.

ADS: So you were able to follow-. You must have been worried, knowing that Lata had a caesarian section.

SM: Yeah. They will inform me everything. I think every week I can-, used to talk.

ADS: And when did you come here, Lata?

LATA: I will come December twenty six.

SM: Yeah, I think October fifteen. No!

ADS: Of last year?

LATA: Ninety five December. Sorry, ninety six December.

ADS: Hunh – you came soon after.

SM: Yeah after I think-,

LATA: fifteen month back.

SM: Three months ()

LATA: He is seventy days, maybe.

ADS: How that coming with him on the plane? It must have been very tiring.

[Lata laughs] [pause]. Did he sleep?

LATA: No problem. He is sleeping. Every time sleeping in flight.

ADS: My brother just went to Canada. His wife didn't want to-, come later.

LATA: Oh.

ADS: I think it's very easy if he came first. Like Shiva came and then found a house and then his wife came three months later.

LATA: After wife coming.

ADS: But she didn't want to do that, because she didn't want to travel with her children. She has two small---. [interrupted by Lata]

LATA: Yeah, one year old baby. It's very problem flight. After three or four years-. After no problem.

ADS: So they all came together---. [interrupted by Lata again]

LATA: before no problem. He sleeping, eat milk, after sleep. The flight is very difficult. He's like---. [pause] But he like every time flight. But this time go to-, last year go to August-, go to India. Is very, very problem. Not sitting! Go to-, outside. Mummy go to home. Mummy, no. No watch the TV. [pause]

SM: So she joined with me I think, in December. Actually my house owner, he also migrated from Iran. So, he worked in university. So, he-, he's more helping to us to do all kind of things, shopping, going for grocery and everything.

ADS: So-, I guess-, I'd like to talk a little bit about your community here in the United States. You have been here now for three years.

SM: Yeah. After reaching university I think I tried to meet some other Indian people, but in my department I found two-three post-docs, so then I got-, some kind of interaction with them. Then I-, after that I think, we have some Lata's relatives living in Buffalo. I think--.

ADS: Buffalo, New York?

SM: Buffalo, New York. They came some, I think, more than thirty years ago from the same place, same home town. So, they introduced some friends living in Cary. So, they're associated with Carolina Tamil Sangam. So, they're doing lot of cultural program and they have some kind of association between the-, Tamil speaking people, Tamil community. So--.

ADS: Are there also Sri Lankans in that Tamil group?

SM: Yeah. We met I think few Sri Lankan Tamils. So, that Sangam is for all Tamil speaking-, anybody can-, whoever interest in Tamil, they can join. So, they're not any specific Indian or Sri Lankan. So we met a lot of Tamil speaking people. So, normally they used to have some festivals like Diwali, Pongal, and Tamil New Year.

ADS: Did you do anything on the fourteenth?

SM: Yeah. I think last Sunday they had some program-, for—they normally they have cultural programs for kids for dancing, singing cinema songs. So, some kind of--.

ADS: Is it in Cary or in Chapel Hill?

SM: Always in Raleigh, actually. Because the department of transport in Raleigh is giving auditorium free of cost, so they used to have their programs in that auditorium. Umm.... Then they have—every two months I think they're screening one Tamil movie.

ADS: Okay.

SM: In Raleigh. There is a colony theatre or something like that.

ADS: I have been there.

SM: Yeah. That theatre I think they are showing Tamil movie. So we have some kind of-, to see all the people belongs to our same language and culture. So we used to go there and, that way we met a lot of people living in Chapel Hill area.

ADS: In terms of your neighborhood around your house, do you do anything with your neighbors here? Do you have-, is there any form of community in the apartment complex, or--?

SM: In apartment actually, lot of Indian people, but-, here mostly they are all students. They're living alone or with other students. We don't have much interaction with students, but we have interaction with some families. Like one family from Bangladesh. So, actually-, initially they lived in the same complex. Same building. Now just they moved to a adjacent building. So, we have some kind of relation. We used to go to their house and they used to come to our house. They have two kids, so they are playing with Arvind, sometimes.

ADS: Same age?

SM: No, they are a little bit big gap, but-, the boy is I think around eleven or twelve years, the girl is seven years. So, still Arvind wants to play with them. He like more-. Then another there is a Mexican family actually, near our apartment. So they have three children, so we have some kind of interaction with them. Sometimes we go for dinner with them or something like that. So they are-. Very nice compared to (). They also Mexican people more chili, more hot food. So we-, they like-, we like that food, so that way they used to give very nice food to us.

ADS: have you ever been invited by the American family to come and visit them for a meal?

SM: Yeah, actually my professor- two of my professors invited us us to join with them in the thanksgiving dinner, during Christmas time. So every year they always invite us and we used to go and meet with a lot of American people.

ADS: Uh-huh. Do you have any other American-, that you consider close friend?

SM: Ummm...

ADS: No, what I mean by close friend is, people that on a Saturday you would go and visit them or you would go out with them for -, for a film--.

SM: Ummm.... No, so far we didn't come--, that kind of thing.

ADS: You don't have?

SM: Because initially we live in that house, we have a lot neighbors in that area. Lata used to go to their house and talk with them. Sometimes they call us for dinner, but after coming this apartment, we don't have much interaction-, with American families. When we were there, we had more—much more interaction with lot of American families.

ADS: What do you think is the difference between the two places?

SM: The place-, the apartment I think, mostly the students or some kind of people. They're not very family oriented people are living in the apartment complex. I think most of the complex I think, maybe true I don't know, but I have seen here mostly all students. We cannot see them most of the time.

ADS: They're out.

SM: Yeah. So-, then we are living in that house-, residential area, we got more interaction with American families.

ADS: Do you-? Are you all religious?

SM: Yeah. We are basically Hindus.

ADS: Hindu? Do you have an opportunity to practice your religion? Is there a temple?

SM: Yeah. There is a temple in Morrisville, near airport I think.

ADS: Okay.

SM: So, that is Hindu Bhavan. That is called Hindu Bhavan. They have all kind of-, gods. Because in Hinduism we have thousands of gods. But we are not more particular about temple, because Hindus believe you can see the gods wherever-, even all things. So, I'm not more religious or something like that. I believe there is only one god. So, that way I never feel-, we have temple or not. Because in India also we have different kind of temples and different kind of faith among the Hindus. So, for religious point of view, I think we can-, we normally worship in the house itself. So we have statues of small-, statues of all gods, so we can worship in the house. So we don't have any-, in terms of religion we don't have any problem in this country.

ADS: This is a more broad question.

SM: Okay.

ADS: How do you think your community--? Say, if you had stayed in India without coming here, say, worked in Tamil Nadu-, how do you think coming here has changed the experience.

SM: Yeah, in India people-, normally they are more closed communities. I think-, I don't know, in big cities it may be a little bit difficult, I think. It may be almost similar like US, because even in India if you live in big cities like Delhi, you have neighbors maybe from different places. You have to speak with them in language-, same language in English. And-, they also have interaction with-, almost like this. But they may still I think-, little bit they have-, close relation, but when coming to here I think, we are little bit isolated, I think. Because here I think the culture-, their culture-, you know, the American culture or western culture very- I think, close bond between even among with them, their family members, I think. After their son gets I think eighteen years age, he is independent. He can go anywhere, and he can do-, so on. But I think in-, that way I think we don't feel much about that community because whenever you see some people in street or university they are more friendly. They are always very happy, I think, to-, when you see they always wish, so that way I think, it's okay. It's not much problem in terms of-. But in India even if they say they very closely and they are very closed community, but if only the people if already they know they say hello. Otherwise if you say hello they may look in a different way. So they never expect if anybody-, someone unknown to you saying hello or something, they never accept.

ADS: ()

SM: So that way I think I feel here it is more comfortable.

ADS: More comfortable, yeah. I mean, for both of you all, where do you all consider home now?

SM: Ahm.... Now we can, I think, consider the-, North Carolina. Chapel Hill is our home, and Carrboro is our home. So we have a lot of people, I think, all communities

like even Indian-, people from Indian subcontinent, Mexico, even American people also, they are interacting with American people. So we didn't feel much. But still, I think, in terms of our parents and relatives-, in India-, we feel I think-, still I think-, sometimes I think still we want to go back to India, something like that. But still we have not yet decided.

ADS: Do you think you can live in this community, and continue to be-, practice your culture, your religion to maintain your identity as a Tamil.

SM: Yeah, I think it is possible to maintaining our culture and integrating, learning some new things from their culture. This is not much problem. I think it is good, I think. Because-, in terms for our children I think, it is better, because America is going, I think almost multi-cultural. Everywhere you can see lot of people from coming from different part of the world and living together. So that way we don't find anything different.

ADS: You think that your children, when they start to know, get a little older, and start going to school, and they grow up, that they will-, will they be able to maintain their—er..... first of all, I guess you have to ask what is their culture, and second, how do you worry that they might lose your heritage, your language, and()?

SM: Yeah. That I think, it is not-, they are not going to lose. Actually if the-, I think that is depends (on) the parents. If the parents really want to teach their culture and their language to their children or daughter or son, they can. But I don't know, so far I think, in my experience, most of the people—some people if they come twenty years ago, they are totally americanized. They are not speaking their one mother tongue, and they are not following. What partly they are following-, their Indian culture, and partly they are not doing. But, I have seen some people are paying more interest, and they're

learning language, speaking their mother tongue even if they're born and brought up here. They're speaking. I don't know, this diversity is very easy to maintain and you continue your culture and identity because via internet, I think, information technology-, use all the information, whatever you need, you can get it. So there is no problem. It is not difficult to continue. If they want to, they can-, use I think, they can always that separate identity.

ADS: Okay. I just have a few more questions before we finish. Having-, you know, you must have traveled to other parts of the United States also, what do you think about the Chapel Hill/Carrboro area as a area to live in, as a community to make your home, compared to other areas in America?

SM: We went to different places like Buffalo, New York, Atlanta, Boston-, but I don't know-, most of the places are all big cities compared to Chapel Hill. But, actually, we were came from, initially, from India we are from a small village. So, we don't feel anything-, Chapel Hill is a small place or something like that. We feel it is more— compared to other cities, it is more comfortable, and we feel I think similar type of environment like village-like things with all facilities. So it is a better place-, compared to other places in the United States. Chapel Hill is definitely a better place-.

LATA: Very nice place.

SM: Very nice place.

ADS: Have you ever felt-, any racism, or feel that you have been treated differently because you don't fit in the mainstream?

SM: No, so far I don't come across any such kind of things.

ADS: The last question I want to ask you is I think relates to any-, struggles you have, being an immigrant. One issue, of course, is the issue of your parents, right? I think you could have them come and live with you here, or you could go back and live with them, or maybe another solution. Ahm... what--?

SM: This point I think I didn't-, we didn't decide to go back or we can stay continuously here, but I think my parents cannot come and stay with us because it is very difficult for them to stay this environment, because I was-, lived in different places and different environment, so almost their life is entirely different than me. So-.

ADS: Even before you came here you traveled—to Madras, you went to Delhi ()--.

SM: Yeah. Yeah. If you live-, if any person to from Tamil Nadu to Delhi, it is entirely almost like a foreign place. You have to speak different language and different culture. So I lived in different places and different cultures. I have seen different people, different culture. But my parents and all lived in the same place from the-, born and brought up in the same place and living in the same place--.

ADS: Must be difficult for them

SM: . So, for them it is difficult. They can visit one time and see all the places in the US. I think that is the only (). If-, or else-, if I get any good opportunity, I think I can go back and I can stay with them.

ADS: Uh-huh. I just have a few more questions for you, Lata. A few questions. I'm particularly interested in talking to you about-, we're all at the university, but you work at Harris Teeters. How long have you worked there?

LATA: For two and a half years.

ADS: Two and a half years?

LATA: Not-, first working in grocery store--.

ADS: Right. Uh-huh.

LATA: Departmental store. Cashier, accountant. But after change-, move the apartment, this very near Harris Teeter. [to child] yeah!!

After Harris Teeter, it's very near-.

ADS. How have you enjoyed? You probably come into contact with a lot of--.

LATA: People--.

ADS: Different Americans--.

LATA: Yeah, different Americans people--,().

SM: No! How did you feel? [speaks to Lata in Tamil]

LATA: Uhhmm.... I like Americans. But the Indians come to my line—[SM speaks to wife in Tamil- and the couple have an extended conversation] [recorder is turned off and on].

LATA: each and everything-. () how are you, good morning-, everything. Yeah. Americans is very good.

ADS: Have you made any friends-, from working at Harris Teeter? Have you met any people who have become your friends?

LATA: Yeah. Lot of friends. Chinese, and different stage. Lot of Indian people. Indian cashiers is five of [continued disturbance by child as he talks] Indians. But I like that.

ADS: So when you're working there, where does Arvind-, does he stay with the friends here? Where does he stay?

SM: Actually. First two years I think she work only part-time—

LATA: Part-time! Evening.

ADS: After you were home.

LATA: Six o'clock. Six to nine I working here.

SM: So only for these two/three months--.

LATA: I go to--.

SM: She's going--.

LATA: For day shift--.

SM: In the morning. So Arvind go to another Mexican family-, house. I think they will take care of him. Sometimes she used to go from one to--.

LATA: Nine--.

SM: Evening nine. Only weekly four days she used to go there-, house, and their children is speaking very good English, I think he is picking more English--.

LATA: It's three children. In this Spanish house, two girl and one boy--.

SM: Actually they need--.

LATA: Learn all people in English. So he learn English.

ADS: At home you all speak to him in Tamil?

LATA: Tamil. He speak two language.

ADS: So he will grow up speaking two languages. That's good. [pause] Have you gone back to India? After you all have come?

SM: Yeah. Last October we--. She and Arvind spend I think more than--.

LATA: Three months.

SM: Two and a half months, almost three months.

LATA: Stay in home.

ADS: So-, er.. thank you very much. First of all, excuse me because interview is very long.

SM: Okay, thank you very much.

(END OF INTERVIEW)