

Interview
with
Chandrika Dalal

July 22, 1999

by Andrew Jilani

The Southern Oral History Program
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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ASIAN VOICES

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INTERVIEWEE: Chandrika Dalal
INTERVIEWER: Andrew Jilani

(BEGINNING OF TAPE 9, SIDE A)

AJ: Ahm... today is Thursday. It's around ten o'clock. I'm sitting in the Hamilton Hall-, ahm.... With Chandrika Dalal, and we are about to begin our interview. And-, today is July twenty second, nineteen ninety nine, and-, ahm... Chandrika is sitting here with me on the fourth floor, and we are about to begin our interview. Good morning, Chandrika.

CHANDRIKA DALAL: Good morning.

AJ: And-, er.... Thank you for giving me your time. I know you are busy with your work, and I really appreciate taking this time in the middle of your work-, and-er.... My first question to you is-, er... when and how did you decide to come to United States?

CD: Hmm..... When I work in the Bardoly.

AJ: "Bardoly"?

CD: It's a-, Surat District-, and-, I am teacher. But-, I make four hundred and forty rupees-, and I have two daughter. So, my father-in-law have a property, but my father don't have a property. So, my friend-, all Patel friends told me, you have brother in America, you have a chance to go there to make more money-, make better life for my daughter. So-, when my brother visit-, after eight years—he is citizen—he asked me to come here, and-, I want to come. My brother want me—me and my daughter—but not

my husband. But-, my father-in-law black-mail me-, (that) if you don't take my son, you can go! So-, I don't have a choice, so-, I bring him here-, with me.

AJ: Uh-huh. Along with your daughters?

CD: My one daughter-, two years old, so she come with me, and I left my two-month old daughter with my in-laws. And-, we can't find a job in North Carolina, so we just go-, in-, er.... California, because we have some Patel people we know. I am teacher in () in Bardoly, so lot of Patel people know me, and respect me as a teacher-, as a person. So--.

AJ: What did you teach in Bardoly?

CD: Ahm..... Gujrati, Hindi, Social Studies, Science--.

AJ: So, going back to when you came here, you went to California-, and what did you do?

CD: Oh-, we work as a motel manager, husband and wife. They give free apartment, and-, it is easy-, to save the money, so-, raise daughter. But-, when-, we stay almost two years in California, but then my brother have a business in-, er.... Pittsboro. He put the manager, but manager don't show the business. So, he offer me to take this business on the lease, so we move-, from California to North Carolina, Pittsboro. In nineteen eighty two, February twenty four-, or twenty three. So, I run the business-, we ran the restaurant, and I take care of my two daughters, so my husband have a job outside, so it's easy way, and safe life in North Carolina, than California. So, we move here. [sigh] After we try for my daughter-, visa, and every time they say, you both don't make enough money to bring another child in this country. So--.

AJ: Who said that?

CD: American Consulate.

AJ: American Consulate, okay.

CD: Every time they go--.

AJ: Oh, you were trying--.

CD: Bombay-, Bombay Consulate-, every time we tried for her, they say you can't afford another child, because we have a small business, only ten unit we have, and two rooms-, we use it. One as a office, and one-, my daughter stay in that room. So-, I decided to take this job in UNC as a housekeeper, because my husband work here, but-, every time he-, buffer on the floor, he has a back pain. So, three times-, he work here, and then back pain, doctor told so-, sometimes stay home-, come back to work, it is same problem. So, three times he try, and then he quit. After-, he don't work in-, he visit India. So-, I applied for this housekeeper job, and I take it. When I interview, they ask me, your husband quit three times and come back three time, and go back, what about you? I say I have to raise daughter, so-, I keep my job. And-, they hire me, in nineteen eighty-six, July twenty eight.

AJ: Okay. Chandrika, tell me you early memories of United States. When you came here, how did you feel? What did you experience here?

CD: Not good!

AJ: Tell me about it.

CD: Gradually. You know, they don't like your skin, they don't like your dress. If you speak in your language, they don't like. They make jokes on you.

AJ: Uh-huh. Who are "they"?

CD: American people.

AJ: American people.

CD: If you talk with two Indian people. If they heard, they make jokes and laugh on you. You know, they don't respect-, our culture, or our language-, you know. They say it is a free country, but I don't think-, they treat as a good person to us. Because--. When-, when we move in Pittsboro-, they always-, police follow my husband.

AH: Uh-huh. Why?

CD: Because of-, he has a California license plate, and they-, just make-, trouble! Every time he drive, police just come-, go after him, and make him upset and mad. Because, you know, we are out-of-country people and Pittsboro is small town. They don't like outside people. But we come here and we take this business on the lease. So, make him so mad! And-, he don't find out jobs, so we-, we have a one Indian friend. One day my husband go in that-, er.... Motel/Hotel Association meeting, and-, er... one Indian people there-- they are from Marora, and they have a business on Hillsboro, Economy Motel—and-, they ask my husband how much he want. He say eight hundred, nine hundred dollar-, I can make in-, that's good for me. So, we take business on the lease.

AJ: Okay.

CD: But we don't make any contract. We just take on the trust. And--.

AJ: Uh-huh. Verbal? Verbally.

CD: Yeah. Just trust! You know, just like a Indian.

AJ: Just like in India? Okay.

CD: Without contract, no lawyer, nothing.

AJ: Word of mouth.

CD: Yes. And-, I run in Pittsboro-, my village motel, and my husband run Economy motel. But-, he-, keep that condition, if you bring your wife, then I give you this business, so three months-, he run-, by himself. And after that, we put manager in Pittsboro motel, and I move with him. And then, I work with him, because-, that business is good-, there, and they have a central air-condition and heater, so in one side they have four rooms and, my husband can't handle phone, rent the room, laundry, cooking-, all this stuff. So, I work with him, I make the bed, and he clean the room, and vacuum-, and I do the laundry and fold up towels and everything, and cook. When he go out, I stay in the office, and run the business, but-, I have a hard time to understand English that time, because this is a different pronounce.

AJ: Hmmm.... Different pronunciation? Uh-huh. Was this business--.

CD: But mostly--.

AJ: Was this business successful?

CD: It is-, ahm... same-, motel business.

AJ: Was it successful?

CD: Yeah. It's a good business.

AJ: That's a good business.

CD: And-, er... apartment also good-, and area also good.

AJ: Uh-huh. Okay.

CD: And people are so friendly in Hillsboro, you know. They don't treat-, okay, you are Indian, or you are-, your skin is different, or something like that.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: Every time my husband call somebody, they come and help in the maintenance, or any kind of help or advice, or something.

AJ: Okay.

CD: Almost-, we stay there two years.

AJ: But--.

CD: And after-, owner's son-, a student in UNC, but he don't pay attention on studies, so-, they just told us-, (that) we want our business back. So, I moved out-, Pittsboro, and my husband stay there two-three more months.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: And-, that's it!

AJ: Okay. Uh-huh. You told me that when you came, you didn't like-, you felt prejudiced--.

CD: That's it.

AJ: Prejudism. Yeah. How do you feel now?

CD: It is same.

AJ: It's same?

CD: It is same.

AJ: It is same. Okay.

CD: Yeah.

AJ: Okay. People--.

CD: I have a-, I have a restaurant--.

AJ: People-, the Americans still make fun of-, er.... Indian speaking, and--.

CD: That is-, I-, there is--. I'm not speaking.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: They don't talk with me, or speak with me. But-, if you-, if you work somewhere-, some people just don't talk with you, say "hello", or "how are you", or something like that. Or just-, turn the face, you know! I have a neighbor—they are Mexican family—every time I see in the store, or bank, or somewhere, she just don't say "hello" in all these twenty years! You know-, Mexican-, you know. But-, she never talk!

AJ: She never talks.

CD: My- my daughter's parents-, or their friend's-, they talk with me, but-, other people don't talk.

AJ: You mean your daughter's friends' parents-, they talk with you?

CD: Yeah. They talk with me. But-, other people, no! One day I go in the church-, in-, ahm.... Only two people talk with me!

AJ: Hmm.... Which-, which church was that?

CD: It's in downtown. There is a () church, so I don't care what church, and whatever. They-, ask me to come in the church to change my religion, and I don't want to change it.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: Whatever I believe, it is best for me.

AJ: Okay.

CD: So, they just try to change me, you know. (That) come in the church, and--. But, I never go in the church in my life, and I am not going. If I don't go-, in Hillsboro-, my Hare-Krishna temple, or Hindu-Bhavan in Raleigh, I stay home and pray myself in

my house, but-, I'm not going in church, because I believe my religious (religion) is best, and my culture is best. I don't want to be changed. I am still vegetarian--.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: And I respect my culture, my tradition(s), whatever I have-, I respect--.

AJ: Yeah. That's a good-, er... good point. Tell me what is best about your culture, about your traditions? Give some examples, and--.

CD: Morality--.

AJ: Morality?

CD: Yes. You know? You don't (are not) of people, but-, afraid of God. (That) if you do something wrong, you (are) punish(ed) by God. In Indian philosophy we believe, (that) if you do something wrong, next time you birth (are born)-, you born in this earth-, you have to pay for this. Whatever-, you do something wrong-, hurt somebody-, that born with you, related with you, () hurt you back. So-, you have to pay.

AJ: Uh-huh. This morality is one. What other traditions--?

CD: Without-, without marriage-, you know-, you don't have a sex. If you have a child-, need to be father's name. Without marriage, no sex-, and-, after marriage, you have a children, you have to take responsibility as a parent. Not like American(s) (that) oh, just a-, weekend, Christmas card, or birthday card, and-, just in the summer time stay with father or mother, or something like that, and fight for divorce or some-, fight for children-, child custody, or-, all this stuff. And hurts () feelings. Child is so important. If you give birth (to) your child, you take completely hundred percent responsibility-, as a parent—father and mother. Children need both!

AJ: Hmmm.... Children need both. That's true.

CD: You know? And until, parents (are) together-, child have a better life.

Children don't run away from house, like here. Children need protection, children need a guidance-, children need a love, children need a trust.

AJ: So, with these values and with these traditions which you hold very dearly, how did you raise your two daughters?

CD: I try my best, but-, you know. When I learn psychology in India, they say, after generation—your parents or grandparents—is come up from the generation-, you're a family. But sometimes, atmosphere is so strong, it's not (doesn't) work-, like in this country. My both daughter(s)-, my older daughter, here-, when she is (was) two years old-, so this culture, and that American friends-, changed the values. They don't respect Indian culture or Indian values, because they are thinking American way, because they (are) raise(ed) here. They have friend(s) like that, and all friends' parents are divorced and separate(d), that impression on that (their) mind, is different. And changed their thinking. And-, (sigh) until she is with me. She listen(s) about our religious stories. About Rama and Mahabharat, or Geeta, or something.

AJ: Mahabharat?

CD: Yeah.

AJ: What is-, what is Mahabharat?

CD: It's a-, it's war between two family(ies), about right and wrong.

AJ: Okay.

CD: And-, always truth is a winner.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: And-, that('s) the story.

AJ: Okay.

CD: So, every time--.

AJ: Do you want to tell the Story? Can you tell the story?

CD: Ahm..... it is so big (a) story.

AJ: It's a big--. [laughter] Okay.

CD: But it is big-, fight-, war between truth-, and wrong.

AJ: Okay. Uh-huh.

CD: One people believe in the truth, and honesty-, and noble, and everything.

Other peoples (are) liar(s), and cheater(s), just want to take somebody's-, property, and somebody's-, you know--. It is not belongs to you, but you just want to just take it!

AJ: Uh-huh. Okay.

CD: It is between two families. But there is a-, values-, in the end of this-, war.

Truth is (the) winner.

AJ: Truth is winner. Uh-huh.

CD: So--. They keep (lead) you to believe, (that) lie is not always (a) winner.

Truth is a winner. And if you-, keep faith in the god, God help(s) you. That is the reason. In Ramayan, ideal king, an ideal husband, ideal father.

AJ: That's the-, the philosophy for this teaching?

CD: Morality.

AJ: Morality.

CD: You are king, you still respect your religious, your society rules, and your family's rules, and everything. You just don't say (that) it is not your business. If you stay in the family, you have a family rules, if you stay in a country, you have a country

rules. If you go in religious, they have some rules for you, and you have to follow that rules. Because that is the life. You are (a) human being. You have a sense to understand right and wrong. So when you listen (to) your religious stories, the stories teach you, what is right and what is wrong. So--.

AJ: Uh-huh. Okay. Ahm.... You mentioned earlier that you go to Bhavan in Raleigh--.

CD: Hindu Bhavan.

AJ: Hindu Bhavan, and the Hare Krishna temple in Hillsboro-, ahm.... Do you regularly attend those--?

CD: No. When I'm in Hillsboro, I go in Hare Krishna. My husband take(s) me there, and then somebody-, Indian people-, bring me back, and drop (me to my) house. Because we-, he is a manager, he can't stay there two hours.

AJ: Okay.

CD: But, I just go by myself. When I go in Hindu Bhavan, there is a one American friends, they believe in our religious (religion). And-, there is a-, in India, they have a-, we have a "Ganeshpuri". That name is Ganeshpuri in India, but here, they say "Sidha Meditation Center"--.

AJ: Sidha Meditation Center. Okay.

CD: Main center (is) in New York.

AJ: Okay.

CD: And-, they have an Ashram-, in Fallsburg. It is a hundred and fifty miles from New York. You can go in the bus, you can go in the taxi, you can go in a rented care, or your car.

AJ: Okay.

CD: They have an Ashram there, every summer time, Guru Mai-, is a priest leader-, she come(s) here--.

AJ: Guru Mai?

CD: Yeah.

AJ: Okay.

CD: And stay four months, so they have a totally five hundred and fifty center(s) in USA. Until I go-, last time I heard number. I don't know how much more.

AJ: Uh-huh. You--.

CD: But five hundred and fifty I heard-, center(s)-, and every Sunday, they have a meditation, and chanting. They have a video. That video-, Guru Mai visit(s) everywhere and give the lecture about any thing. About "bhagti", or about truth, or honesty, or anything. It is on the video. And every Sunday, the center put (play) that video, and (conduct) meditation and chanting. And that--.

AJ: Uh-huh. Have you attended-, er.... Her meetings?

CD: I-, (in) Chapel Hill, they have a center-, (if) somebody give(s) me (a) ride, and I watch-, sometimes, that video. I (have) never (did) see (it) in India, but I see here.

AJ: Uh-huh. Okay.

CD: Few videos. And I'm so impressed with that-, er... video-, because that-, that-, language is so easy to understand, and-, change(s) your mind about religion, (that) you are so lucky to listen (to) this video.

AJ: And the video is in English?

CD: Yeah. And they have stories, so in the story, they have a message. So, it is easy to understand-, which story-, just like here in cartoon. The cartoon-, they make it-, but there is an end-, they always say truth is good-, best. Truth is the best!

AJ: Uh-huh. Okay.

CD: Bad people just lose, and good people just win. That is in-, cartoon. It is-, same things come in our religious stories. So--.

AJ: That's good. Do you meditate?

CD: I don't sit in one place, but when I have a time, I speak my God's name in my mouth, all the time.

AJ: Okay. How do you--?

CD: If I don't talk--.

AJ: Can you give me an example? What do you say?

CD: "Shri Krishna sarna mumma". That is our-, mantra.

AJ: It's a mantra. Okay.

CD: Yeah. When I am five years old--.

AJ: Can you--, can you repeat the whole mantra-, or is this--?

CD: Yeah. That's a-, only one thing--.

AJ: Okay.

CD: When-, in my family-, generation to generation, we have a priest. His name is Rajratna Lal. He is a priest.

AJ: Say-, say that again.

CD: Rajratna

AJ: Rajratna. Rajratna.

CD: He is my spiritual father. He give me this mantra: "Shri Krishna sarna mumma".

AJ: Shri Krisna--?

CD: Sarna mumma.

AJ: Sarna mumma.

CD: (It) Means, you belong to God.

AJ: You belong to God. Meaning, I belong to God.

CD: Yeah. So, if you completely devote your(self to) Krishna, then Krishna help(s) you out. That is the meaning of this mantra.

AJ: Okay. Ahm. Chnadrika, I wanted to ask you now about-, you live in Pittsboro, and-, how do you-, how do you relate to the community there? Your neighbors, or--?

CD: Not too much.

AJ: School communities, or--.

CD: No. I work here as a housekeeper. When I go home, I'm too tired. And to cook for myself, I have a small business. If I have a customer, I have to clean room, and (do) laundry, or all the stuff.

AJ: Okay.

CD: And I watch TV, because when I come here, my English is (was) not good. People don't understand me, I don't understand them. So, I watch the CBS-, Daytime Show-, and I learn English from this TV show.

AJ: Uh-huh. Is it-, is it a TV-, lesson on the TV.

CD: No. It's a story. It's a movie, it's a daytime show. Soap opera!

AJ: It's a soap opera? Aaah....

CD: Some people watch ABC, but I like CBS because I like--.

AJ: What's-, er... what is your favorite soap opera?

CD: Oh. It's-, er... Young and the Restless.

AJ: Young and the Restless--. Okay.

CD: As the World Turns, Guiding Light.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: They're so--. You learn about this culture, this society, what they believe, what they (are) doing. And everything--.

AJ: What was the-, what were the other ones after the Young and the Restless? You mentioned two--.

CD: As the World Turns.

AJ: As the World turns....

CD: And-, Guiding Light.

AJ: Guiding Light? Okay.

CD: That-, in that soap-, soap opera, teach(es) you about this culture, this country. How people-, er.... Use people, cheat, and lie-, and there is no morality.

AJ: You think the-, the life, the stories which are on soap opera, they connect with the real life?

CD: I think so. Because, I read in the talk show--. I watch that-, Hard Copy, Inside Edison, America's Most Wanted-, and that-, [pause] Extra!

AJ: Extra?

CD: The talk show-, come on the CBS-, on CBS seven o'clock-. That-, er... Inside Edison comes seven to seven-thirty, and seven-thirty to eight-, Extra.

AJ: Extra?

CD: Yeah. And NBC-, they have a show, (called) Hard Copy. In Hard Copy, they bring some true stories--.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: True murder cases, or criminals, or all kind of things-, they bring it-, and then, you think (that) whatever happen(s) in the soap opera-, all these shows-, it's a real life of America. Because I heard in the news-, I heard in the movies-, sometimes they bring on the TV true stories. And I (am) always interested when they say that movie (is) based on a true story. I just watch this movie, and just realize there is a-, you see this culture-, so understanding-, you know? Because you can't go and talk with people and find out like this. So, you just watch this-, er... TV--.

AJ: TV--.

CD: Or the true story movie(s), then you know this culture is different than our culture.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: But then you learn about this culture, too.

AJ: Uh-huh. But you-, you don't think that these stories on the soap operas are made up?

CD: No. They bring some real stories!

AJ: You think they're real stories?

CD: I think so. They make that stories-, but some reflection-, they put the light on this-, in this-, society, and this American culture. I think it's real. It's not-, all-, all-, all is not-, wrong.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: Something is truth in these stories, and it's happened in real life. It's come on that-, er... talk shows, and it's come on the news, or America's wanted. Where they bring that stories (from)? You know?

AJ: Uh-huh. So in-, in your work, and in your business, do you face, or have you faced any people, or any-, any situation in which there was a story very similar to the one on the soap opera you watched?

CD: No. But-, when my husband (was) here with me-, when I-, we start this business-, some people-, scared us on the phone.

AJ: They scared you--?

CD: To kill you--.

AJ: What would they say?

CD: We (will) kill you! That's it. Same words! They say--. Keep calling you, keep calling you! If you pick up the phone, and sometimes hung up, and sometimes they say "we kill you".

AJ: Hmm?

CD: So-, that's why I think-, it's prejudice. We don't do anybody-, anything wrong. We just come here, take business, make money, to make our daughter better life. We don't do anything-, wrong.

AJ: That--.

CD: This is a free country. You come here, you make money, you work hard, you work two job(s), or whatever you do, you just make your money. It is a free country-, all over the world people hear. They are jealous about you, (that) they are working (at)

minimum wage, and you have a property. You have a small business, and then you are-, happy.

AJ: Does this still happen? Do people--?

CD: It still happen(s)!. I have a restaurant. I give (it to) the Chinese people. They take (it) for one year. After he run business and (was) travelling, so he leave his wife here, and that she can handle the business. She gets 'C' grade, still town let them to run the business-, then, her husband find out another () help for his wife-- (sigh) And-, after one year, lease is over. He begging me to take this business one more year. After I give the lease and-, after one month he come and he-, say(s) he's not interested in this business, and I say, you forced me to take this business, so you have to keep (for) one year, or you have to have to find out somebody. And then, he keep this business-, he's travelling and his wife (is) running this business with-, help-, another employee. Then he's-, er... forcing me-, to give me five years lease, so his employee-, get(s) the liquor license. And I don't trust him, because he's drinking.

AJ: He's drinking?

CD: And that time, my daughter is working in that restaurant as a waitress. So, I know-, so-, he's begging me, and I say "no". because my lawyer say(s) (that) if you give the lease, then you have to (be) stuck with him (for) five years. And I don't want to take that chance, because my daughter (is) working there, (and) she's scared.

AJ: That he's an alcoholic?

CD: Because he's drinking-, and it's not good for (a) teenager--.

AJ: To be around alcoholic people. That's right. Ahm... Chandrika, do you like Pittsboro enough, that you can consider hat your home now?

CD: No! Because that-, health department people, marshal people--.

AJ: Who are--?

CD: Local people, my neighbor-, they all give me so hard time, and it's a (bad) effect on my health. So--.

AJ: Who are-, who are marshal people? Who are marshal people?

CD: It's ()--.

AJ: law enforcement?

CD: Government people.

AJ: Government people. Okay.

CD: Town of Pittsboro.

AJ: Town of Pittsboro?

CD: Yes. Marshal people means-, they-, connected with health people. So, they just-, give me hard time, because I don't know the American law. I'm an Indian woman, I'm scared-, you know?

AJ: They give you a hard time? Yeah.

CD: So-, (they) give me (a) hard time-, for any reason.

AJ: Yeah. Where-, where would you-, where would you consider your home to be? In your heart, where do you think your home is?

CD: My home is still India.

AJ: Still in India?

CD: Yeah. How much dollar(s) I make-, it still-, I think I belong in India.

AJ: Yeah?

CD: Because until my both daughter(s) graduate, get married-, then my responsibility is over. And my health give(s) me (a) hard time. I have high blood pressure. I have a back pain, I have a chest pain. I have () on my-, left leg.

AJ: Arthritis? Uh-huh.

CD: And-, that all lost-, how much they say, free speech-, and-, America is a free country. But I don't think it is free. They give-, you are foreign people. Everywhere you go, they treat you bad. In my working place, my team leader, my supervisor, treat me different than black people, because I'm not black. I'm good in my work-, I (have) work(ed) here for thirteen years. (The) department people don't have any complaint, but-, still-, they treat good-, black people-, than any other people, Mexican or white or Indian. It's still there. There's a lot of discrimination-, race and nation, or anything, or color-, or something-, but still it's there. Because my daughter have a same problem, in (). Her supervisor treat(s) her bad. Sometimes she come(s) and cries, she hate(s) this job. She work(s) for money, but still-, their treatment different than other employee(s) because she is not black or white-, she is Indian.

AJ: And her supervisor was--?

CD: White!

AJ: He was white, okay.

AJ: So, you feel that, at work, you're also discriminated--?

CD: That's right.

AJ: And it--.

CD: In the town they do it.

AJ: And in--.

CD: In (the) working place, government job, they do it to you. One supervisor go(es) and another come(s), they have a same impression, they treat you same way, again and again and again. So it's not change(ed). How much you (are), how much you (are) smart, still it's (the) same.

AJ: So, what do you think-, er.... Now you have been here, in this country, for how many years?

CD: Twenty years.

AJ: Twenty years. So, I have also been in this country for that long now, for about eighteen, nineteen years. So what do you think--?

CD: When I am in California two years-, I don't have a bad experience about-, any custom, or any American people. Because we are motel managers, so we don't have a contact with-, personal contact with nobody. Only Indian people, but not American people-, any contact. So we are happy there, because we have American friends, we call, they call, they come, and we see (them), and all this stuff. But when we move in Pittsboro-, (it's) just like a prison. People don't talk with you. People turn the face (away) with you. And then-, law give you (a) hard time-, town of Pittsboro. Police give(s) my husband (a) hard time. One time he drink, and they catch him, so they (are) just watching him all the time, until he is here. I have a customer, they come-, nuclear power-, they are working with the nuclear power-, and they come-, which beer? They drink, drive, and go and drink beer again and again. They never catch, because they don't have a record in Pittsboro. But my husband-, one time they catch him, so all the time-, they catch my husband. Follow my husband. If anywhere he go(es), he's so mad when he's driving and goes away, because police just follow.

AJ: Chasing him.

CD: Because he has a record. But other customer(s), they are drink(ing) and drive(ing). How is the law? You know? You never stop anybody and just check if these people (are) drunk or not. They drink and drive, drink and drive. Where is the law?

AJ: Police doesn't stop them?

CD: No! Because they don't have a record in Pittsboro. And they don't care, because they are black or white, they are American(s). That's prejudice.

AJ: That's prejudice, yeah. So, Chandrika, I-, I want to go back to my question. I was-, er... thinking that how, as Asian-, as South-Asians, we can work to finish this discrimination?

CD: I don't think so. How much you try, you are still foreign people.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: It's no change. Just like, one day-, I watch(ed) in the Sixty Minutes-, untouchable-, Miss "Achhoot".

AJ: Achhoot?

CD: Achhoot. Yes. In India--. And I have a friend-, Barbara Prior-, she's American. And she watched that show and she's asking me, (that) how can people treat somebody like that-, untouchable. I say I don't make the rules, society make(s) that rules, and I can't change the society. Okay? One person make the change, but not all the time. It's-, happened for years, and years, and years. My father is really just person. He don't allow that untouchable people-, they clean our toilet. They pick up our trash from the street. But still, it's there. They wear clean dresses, clean clothes. They are clean, but still, in my town in Surat they have a separate area for the. They can't stay next to us.

So-, and I can't change it. It is not only mine. It is my family, what they believe. My parents, my grandparents, you know. All my brothers, sister-in-law, they are religious people, they don't believe. I have--.

AJ: Your-, your father was a-, was priest, in a temple?

CD: No. Religious.

AJ: Religious. What does that mean?

CD: Religious means believe in God.

AJ: Believe in God.

CD: So-, whatever rules they have-, they just obey.

AJ: He obeys. Okay.

CD: Untouchable people-, they do dirty things, and they are always () by society. I can't change it. Nobody can change it. Some things are always there. Law can't help them. Law(s) change--. They now-, now they have a free education, they have a-, some percentage job- opportunity, too. But still, society don't accept them. You know?

AJ: Uh-huh. Yeah. The untouchables.

CD: So-, you can't change the world. It's so hard to change. Somebody-, I heard all the time in this country. I don't like him, I don't like her. All the time I heard it, and I don't understand what is this meaning? We all are human being(s), if you don't like somebody, just stay away. Don't talk. But don't say openly, I don't like him, or I don't like her. What is this? That is a wrong speech, you know. You are human being, why you don't like somebody-, somebody you like too much, and somebody you don't like, and hurt-, bad way. That's not right. Human being have to be like each other. If you

don't like, just stay away, don't talk, don't keep any friendship, or relation, or something.

But don't hurt people. That's so bad.

AJ: Yeah.

CD: You love pets-, dog, cat, whatever you keep. But you don't like human being?

You say you don't like him, and you don't like her, what is this?

AJ: Is that a--. You are referring to this country?

CD: Yeah.

AJ: That people like pets, and--.

CD: I heard all the time. My daughter, or some people, in working place, or in the town, some people say I don't like her, I don't like him-, what is this? I don't understand this mentality, you know.

AJ: Chandrika, I have a question, do you-, do you have hope, in United States, in Pittsboro, for you and for your daughters?

CD: I don't think. My both daughter(s) want to get out. My one daughter go in college for three years, she's so happy in Raleigh. Because in Raleigh, you know, she has all American friends, Indian friends, she is so happy there. She's not happy in Pittsboro. Some people like you, some people don't like you, you know.

AJ: Yeah. How about for yourself? You think you will keep--?

CD: I can't go away, I have a business. I have a property. I put eighty five thousand dollar(s), for this property. Almost-, eighty thousand I spent in this property. Still I have a hard time with people. I have to rent my place, and every time people come for rent, and they just want to buy it, because they know, (that) (when) bypass open(s), the property value (will) go up. And the town of Pittsboro don't give me the permit for

rent my place. So I lose the money-, I have a property, but I don't make money, because that prejudice (is) still there. When I have a Chinese restaurant, they have a 'C' grade-, okay? But they still run that business because town of Pittsboro need(s) a Chinese food (restaurant). Pittsboro don't have a good any restaurant. Hardy is not good for all people, so--.

AJ: A 'C' is a good grade, or a bad grade?

CD: 'C' is a bad grade, but they still need a Chinese food, so they let them to run that business. That's a prejudice, and now I have to rent (to) somebody else, they make the damage. They don't give me the permit. They just told me-, big list-, to spend four thousand, five thousand dollar(s), then you--.

AJ: Will get a permit.

CD: Get the permit, and rent the place, and I don't have (a) housekeeper. Single mother for ten year(s). I have two teenager daughter(s). I don't-, I put four thousand dollar(s), still I need a four, five thousand dollar(s). So, people just don't want to spend the money. They say, we don't want rent, you just sell it, and we own the property then we put the money. So I am-, in the middle. I have property, but I don't make money, because town don't give me the permit. Without permit, I can't put the rent sign. So, it is a closed sign. People don't know this place (is) for rent. People-, come here-, for rent, and ask for sell. So-, for last three years, I lose money.

AJ: Yes.

CD: My daughter have to for scholarship, or for loan, for education. You know? How can you say this country is free. They don't let you to make money.

AJ: Yeah. That's right. Ahm.. You momentarily-, moments before you mentioned that you raised-, er.... Your two daughters as a single parent-, as a single mother. How was that-, experience?

CD: (It) is hard. India is not hard, because you have a social life, religious life, you have friends, neighbors-, and helping you. But here-, it's not easy, because they-, wash your children's mind(s)-, wash-, brainwash-, like that. You don't have to listen (to) your mother, you don't have to tell you ()-, mother where you (are) going, where you (are) coming (from), you are sixteen years old. You are -, (on your) own. How can they-, (be on) their own? They come for one dollar and two dollar. They come for my signature as a parent's, and they don't have to respect my rules. What is that? That American people wash your children's mind. Change them. You know? That's why, (no matter) how much you try, you can't keep your culture, or tradition, because they change. You know, in India when you get married, you need a parents' blessing, parents' permission, because life is not easy. When you have a problem-- if you don't take parents' permission—then parents are not responsible for helping you.

AJ: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Then you are on your own!

CD: And American people, they () go. They are sixteen years--.

(END OF TAPE 9, SIDE A)

(BEGINNING OF TAPE 9, SIDE B)

CD: You are sixteen years old, or eighteen years old, but you still need a parent's guidance, you still need a parent's respect, and you still need a parent's permission. Where you go-, parents have some rules, just like country and state have some rules. It is for everybody's good reason. Like you (are) driving, there is a driving speed. It is good for everybody, to protect everyone. Rules is good for good reason.

AJ: Yeah.

CD: And that's why you have to follow your-, your parents' rules--. Our private life is our business. It's not a government business, until you hurt your children-, then government has to interfere in your personal life. But until then, it is parents' business, with that children. Family business is a private business, it's not a government business. It's not a legal business, until you hurt your children. You slap, or you throw out, or you hurt physically or emotionally-, but-, until-, how can family, you know, handle that own problem? I don't that (that) legally government have to interfere in personal life, you know.

AJ: And you mean, US government, yeah? Okay.

CD: Yes. And I don't like-, (that) you just, you know-, you just-, er... motherhood-, sixteen and thirteen and fourteen-, there is a lot of birth control-, things here. You just don't sleep and get pregnant, and just-, have a child, and give for abortion-, er.... go for abortion, and-, () your child. That's not good for morality, or for religion. It is not in the bible to-, to kill their child. It is a seed-, you know? That's not good. If you can't afford-, to raise your children, why you give the birth? You don't have to keep nine month(s), and just throw your children for ten thousand or

twenty thousand dollar(s), and give your own child-, somebody--. How can you live with your life, or with you soul? And after ten, fifteen years, oh-, you change your mind, and looking for your child. Oh, my God! I'm thirteen years old, I make mistake, and I give you--. What's about children's rights. You can't make decision(s) for your children. It is children's right. If you give birth, take responsibility. Or if you don't have a time for that, don't give birth (to a) child, and put child's life in danger.

AJ: That's right.

CD: Adoption children-, sometimes they are worst. I-, I see on the TV all the time. That child-, is-, mother give () that child is so violent, so violent, you know? Because that adopted parents don't treat him good, and he blames (the) mother. Why you give me birth, why you don't have abortion. So-, if you don't have-, you just--. Sometimes they bring in the story-, (that) husband and wife decided to (have a) child, and then-, take a-, ten thousand dollar(s), or medicine and hospital expense and give (to) somebody. Just like a selling thing. You sell your own children. What is wrong with these people?

AJ: Yeah. Chandrik--? Chandrika, do you miss India?

CD: I miss my country.

AJ: You miss your country? What do you miss?

CD: Everything. My friends, my relatives. [pause] Everything.

AJ: What do you do, when you miss-, miss them?

CD: Nothing.

AJ: Do you write? Call?

CD: I (used to) write before, but not any more. Because I am too tired with my job, and too tired with my teenager daughter(s).

AJ: Yeah? So they keep you--?

CD: I have enough things to worry about.

AJ: They keep you busy. Okay.

AJ: If-, if a friend of yours, or a relative of yours in India asked your advice, asking you, Chandrika, I want to come to India (US) with my family or alone, what kind of advice would you give them?

CD: If you come in this country, you have to make sure (that) you don't lost (lose) your culture, your-, your children in this country. In this American culture, because this culture-, is-, is a-, make your children-, you know, out of control. They try-, without marriage sex, girlfriend, boyfriend, all this stuff. I don't like it. You know, you have to make some moral things, and morality is a worst-, best thing-, in India. Without marriage you don't have a sex, you () with your family, with your children. Keep you keep your family bonds so strong, nobody can broke (break).

AJ: But--.

CD: Here, it's broke (broken) all the time. And it's-, make(s)-, parents-, children's lives so miserable--. Children are so miserable here! Stepfather, and stepmother, and that-, abused by stepfather, father, or-, that hurt-, (). So young-, that children-, you know-, sexually-, hurt children. This is a worst thing. How can you think-, with your own daughter-, sex! That's-, I don't understand. You daughter! Your own blood! How can you think-, about sex with her? And then you say "sorry". Sorry is not enough! You are human being, you have a mind, you can think what is right, what is wrong. You

are older than your children, how can you hurt your own children. You know, that is a worst thing.

AJ: Yeah.

CD: As a father-, father, or stepfather, still you need a-, you have that position. And mother is so blind. And she can't see what happened to their children, and if she find(s) out, she just avoid(s) that things. How can (you) live your life, live your soul?

AJ: Like that--.

CD: It's so bad. And-, daughter say, you don't believe your daughter or son. Your father doing this, or say father doing-, avoid, and just going. To keep your children with babysitter and just go out and party, and all this (). Oh, special time for both of us. What about children? Children-, you have main responsibility. Sex is necessary, but it is not everything.

AJ: It's not every thing.

CD: Your children is important. Raise your children, you completely trust-, and love, and protection. Sometime, check your own husband if you don't trust. Make sure your children (are) safe in your own house. If there is no safe(ty) in your own house, how can they (be) safe in the street.

AJ: Uh-huh. Yeah, that's a very important concern. Ahm.... In Pittsboro, do-, has an American family ever invited you?

CD: What?

AJ: Has an American family, or families, ever invited you for some celebrations, like--?

CD: No.

AJ: Thanksgiving, Christmas?

CD: No. They invite my both daughters.

AJ: Okay.

CD: They-, if they go somewhere, they take my daughter(s), because they know I am not driving, and I let them go, because after my job I am tired, I am not driving, I don't go anywhere. But if-, they take-, somebody take my daughter, I let them go-, to enjoy.

AJ: But you get invitations, though? From American families?

CD: No.

AJ: No?

CD: Because I am not close with anybody. Just-, if I see somebody or somebody call for my daughter, I talk on the phone, but that means they don't invited me. They invited my daughters, not me.

AJ: So, are your closest friends from the Indian community.

CD: No. Pittsboro-, there is no Indian people.

AJ: There are no Indian people there.

CD: If I go in Raleigh, I see somebody, but that's not a friendship. Just seeing the place and say hello, how are you, that's it. But not-, not any friendship.

AJ: Okay.

CD: Because this life is so different here. People stay far away, and you know, people are so busy in their job or business, and children-, there is no extra time like India, (that) after dinner you sit outside and talk with (family) members, you know. After fourteen years when I visit(ed) India, I sit outside, and sit with my neighbors, and talk a

fourteen years talk-, [laughter] what happened in the street, what happened in this all neighbors' family(ies), bad things, good things, every thing.

AJ: That was your first time you went back, after fourteen--?

CD: After fourteen years, I go first time, because I can't afford to go, till my husband (was) here (for) ten years. He has (had) a drinking problem, so--. He go three time(s), but I don't (didn't) go. I (was) stuck with that business, and my daughter(s). That's my responsibility.

AJ: Yeah.

CD: I can't run away from that, and at least, I need two thousand dollar(s). I can't afford that.

AJ: Exactly. Have you--?

CD: It is later, I save(d) that money-, () daughter--.

AJ: Yeah. Have you-, have you gone back, after that-, visited--?

CD: No. After five or six years, I don't go back, because now I have teenager daughter(s) in the house, I have a business, my () on clothes. If I go somewhere, I have a bad neighbor. They always damage my property. I can't go anywhere.

AJ: Yeah.

CD: I have a backside laundry room window-, glass. Three times they (have) broken my window glass. But I don't have a proof, and they are so young, I don't want to put them in lot (of) trouble. If I put (them in) trouble, they make (trouble) again and again. I can't watch my backside laundry room, when I work (till) three o'clock in the morning. Until one o'clock I am not home. They damage the property, so just don't fight. Because, in here, the people easily sue you. Because-, they make the damage, I

know-, only neighbor-, is there. My (), my laundry room--. Nobody else come(s) and damage the property-, from outside people. But you still need a proof, and I don't have that proof.

AJ: Yes.

CD: But only-, that children playing backside (with) the ball-, basket ball, baseball, all-, everything they play backside.

AJ: Yeah. Ahm... let me ask you, if you were to make this decision again-, of coming to United States, would you do this again?

CD: What I do--. I-, my nephew come here. He work(ed) in the Baroda-, one company, and that company bring him here. When I (was in) Virginia, (to) visit my nephew's wife-, and my-, I talk with my nephew two, three time(s) on the phone, and he told me, (that) we have a one circle-, one group, and that group('s) name is Swadiyai people--.

AJ: Swadiyai?

CD: Swadiyai! Means, study yourself. That is a religious group. So, you go in that group, and you study our culture and our religious (religion), then your children don't change in this culture, but I'm staying in Pittsboro, (a) small town. All American(s), black and white and Mexican people-, there is no Indian group here. My daughter--.

AJ: Are you the only Indian family here?

CD: Yeah. And-, I have a job and business, and my health is bad, I can't go all the time and (make) contact with my friends in Raleigh. You know, they celebrate all festivals-, Indian festivals-, but I can't go all the time, because my daughter is not

driving. (The) other daughter is driving, but she's so busy in her school, and her study, and job-, so we can't go there. So, I completely lost that connection with (the) Indian culture.

AJ: Hmmm.....

CD: That is the reason-, then one reason my husband is alcoholic, so I don't have enough time. When he is here, I don't have enough time to look after my daughter(s), because I'm busy with my job, and busy with my husband's cooking, and job-, and business-, to helping him. Because every time he say(s) they are your daughters-, means my daughters. So he don't want to take responsibilities, so I have to work with him for daughter(s), and then-, I lost my daughter because I don't have enough time for both. I have time-, little, but not enough time-, in business and job.

AJ: What do you mean you lost your daughter?

CD: Means-, I don't have-, er... too much time for both.

AJ: Okay.

CD: To spend with them. You know? To sit with them, or talk with them, ask about school, what about your friends, or what about this and this? Because I am too busy. When I go home, I have to cook for my husband. All food. Rice and curry, and vegetable, and chapati, then I don't have time. When my Daughter-, both daughter(s) come from business-, school, then my husband is busy with business. So, I have to do laundry, I have to make—he can't make the beds, I have to make the bed(s), I have to out the laundry, he can't cook, I have to cook for him. Two, three time(s) make tea for him, so I am so busy, to service him, and I have don't have time for my daughter(s). My both daughter(s) 9are) so upset, and angry, but I can't help it, because he come in this country,

but he don't want to change. He (is) just like an Indian husband-, every thing wife has to do. He don't share anything. He just take the money, and I have to work with him. That's it. Use me to work, and make money, so he can drink, he can spend. Every time he go(es) in the store, he like(s) something, just buy it. He don't care (that) I need (it) or not, I can afford or not—I have two daughter(s), I have a wife, I have a business, he don't care. Just go there, spend the money! Go in the store, drink the beer. Is enough--, finished--, bring it--.

AJ: Bring more. That's it.

AJ: Where is he now?

CD: I kick him out. Before-, ten years, in-, er.... nineteen ninety, June-, January eleven. Because he is scared-, beating my two daughter(s) to kill-, and I can't take that risk.

AJ: He threatened-, he threatened you? [pause] Uh-huh.

CD: he threatened to kill me, my two daughter(s), my brother and sister-in-law in California, (and) all my family in India, too. I can't take that risk. I don't need a husband to kill my family or my daughter(s). I can't take that--. I don't care (if) he kill me, but I don't--. I don't take risk for my two daughter(s), or my brother and sister-in-law, or my family in India. Because he has a violent nature.

AJ: () about your husband--.

CD: Violent nature. He is drinking. Every time--.

AJ: So you kicked him-, you kicked him out?

CD: Yes.

AJ: Okay.

CD: Because three time(s) he lose license-, in DWI.

AJ: DWI?

CD: He don't drive, so he call taxi driver-, private taxi driver, give ten dollar(s) every day come in Franklin Street, sit there and drink. And come night time, one o'clock, two o'clock, three o'clock. So, after (my) job, when I go home, I have to help my two daughter(s) for homework, I have to cook, I have to run business, make money for him, and when he come, he ask how many customer come, and how much money we get. That he asks! Okay.

AJ: Hmmm.... Nothing else? And-, is he now in India?

CD: He died-, before-, two years.

AJ: He died--.

CD: I'm glad!

AJ: You're glad?

CD: Yes, because he is trouble for (the) whole family. And scared me from India to kill me. Until he is alive, I'm scared for myself, and for my daughter(s). It's not safe.

AJ: And how do your daughters feel?

CD: they don't respect. They don't remember daddy, they just remember mummy. Because as a daddy, he don't take any responsibility. Not love, not respect, not trust, not make any time-, you know. He has a time for drink(ing). If my daughter say, daddy don't drink, and play with us, talk with us, ()-, Oh, my God! He don't have the time. He just want my daughter(s) (to) get out.

AJ: He will get angry.

CD: Yes.

AJ: So-, last question-, going back to my question I earlier asked, you know-, if you had to make this decision-, again, coming to United states, would you do it again?

CD: What I've--. I give that advice (to) people. If you come in this country, and if you feel (that) you lost your children in this culture, go back (to) India.

AJ: Uh-huh.

CD: Don't stay in this country, if you want to lost your children in this culture--. I don't care how much money you-, dollar(s) makes, or facility and luxury in this country, but lose your culture, your religious, your traditions, go back in your country, and keep it.

AJ: Do you think you will go back to India?

CD: I can't go. My both daughter(s) stay here. I have to stay with them. Because now, they can't go and get education in India, because one daughter finished three years, (in) one and a half years she graduates here. She can't change the education now. The other one going in India, she don't admission in college there, because she don't know Gujrati, Hindi, Sanskrit, anything. It is hard for them to go.

AJ: To India and study there.

CD: I want to send them, but my brother say(s) it is so hard for them to adjust with culture, with food, for weather, for education too, because they don't know any language. Not Gujrati, not Hindi, not Sanskrit. If you go in college, you have to-, just one paper-, exam-, you have to give for Hindi or Gujrati, or Gujratu or Marathi, or Hindi and Marathi, or something. And they can't learn that

AJ: They can't learn that. That's true. Yeah. Okay, in the end, I want to thank you, Chandrika, for your time-, and-, do you want to recite a mantra, for the last time-, for the-, to end the interview?

CD: "Shri Krishna Sarnam Mumma". I belongs to Shri Krishna. So, I pray (to)
my God, I belong to you--. [begins to weep]

AJ: Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much, Chandrika.

(END OF INTERVIEW)