

ASIAN VOICES

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INTERVIEWEE: Radhey Shyam

INTERVIEWER: Andrew Jilani

LANGUAGE OF INTERVIEW: Hindi

(BEGINNING OF TAPE 14, SIDE A)

ANDREW JILANI: Today is July twenty-sixth. It's about ten o'clock-, a little after ten, and I am sitting in the apartment of Radhey Shyam, and we are about to begin our interview. Ahm.... First of all, Radhey Shyam, thank you very much for taking this time, and-, er.... So I would-, er.... [switches to Hindi] I'll start now, and we will talk in Hindi. First, I'll ask you how you decided to come to America?

RADHEY SHYAM: Someone sponsored me from India-, as a chef. So, I came and worked for him, he got me a green card. Now I'm a citizen of America.

AJ: Okay. When was this? When you came--.

RS: Eighty-nine.

AJ: When you came, did you come alone, or--?

RS: Alone.

AJ: Okay. So, where's your family now?

RS: Family is in India.

AJ: In India. Okay. In India-, where did you live in India?

RS: Dekhi, Patparganj.

AJ: Delhi?

RS: From Delhi-, Patparganj.

AJ: Patparganj? Okay. Patparganj is a city, or a village, or--?

RS: It's a city in Delhi.

AJ: Okay. Patparganj. In Delhi?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Okay, right. So-, what did you do in Delhi-, in Patparganj-, before coming to America?

RS: I worked as a chef at the Asoka Hotel. It's a five-star hotel.

AJ: What's the name of the hotel?

RS: Asoka Hotel.

AJ: Asoka Hotel? Okay.

RS: I did a three-year diploma from the Institute of Hotel Management.

AJ: From Delhi?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Okay. So-, what is your specialty? What of foods do you cook?

RS: North Indian.

AJ: North Indian? Okay.

RS: Mughal dishes.

AJ: Mughal dishes? Okay. What is a Mughal dish? Could you tell me in detail?

RS: These were the dishes of the raja's and the maharajas's. Over there [in India], it's quite costly to make them, but over here it doesn't make a difference. These were the food of the nawabs.

AJ: So, what did the nawabs use in these?

RS: Dried fruits, dried nuts. [pause]

AJ: Okay. So, the Mughal dishes are cooked with those?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Do you have a favorite among the dishes you make? One that you like very much?

RS: Yes. I like almonds. I like chicken qorma [curry]. Among the lentils, is "daal maharani" [queen's lentils].

AJ: Maharani?

RS: Daal Noor Jahani.

AJ: Uh-huh. How do you make daal maharani?

RS: Cream and butter are ingredients in daal maharani.

AJ: Okay.

RS: It's made with cream and butter. And for flavor, you add dried "methi" [].

AJ: Dried methi? Okay. You make that here, in this restaurant?

RS: No, no. The food here is no good.

AJ: Food is no good? [laughs]

RS: Over here, I just work to pass my time.

AJ: Okay. So-, the dishes you prepare, must be expensive to make-, with all those ingredients.

RS: And-, then the kitchen also need to be organized. We don't have a well organized kitchen here. The chef's position is--. People here don't even know what a chef is.

AJ: Hmmm.... What is a chef?

RS: Chef is the head of the kitchen. Like a-, Just like the dining room has a manager. Similarly a chef is the kitchen manager. And-, he creates new dishes, and removes the bad qualities of food.

AJ: Uh-huh.

RS: And the cooks in the kitchen—there are three categories of cooks, “commie” [?] second, commie first, commie third--.

AJ: Commies? Okay. Uh-huh.

RS: Then chef de party, then chef-, then executive chef.

AJ: Executive chef? Okay. So-, what made you become a chef? Becoming a chef--?

RS: I did a diploma course from hotel management. When you first go for training, you have to make a schedule for yourself, specifying what training you want. Whether you want to become a restaurant manager or chef. And chef--. There are many kinds of food also. Like-, I chose to go for north-Indian food. Some go for continental, some for European. And-, in restaurant-, in hotel management, there are separate restaurants for each kind of food. You learn all this in training for executive chef.

AJ: How long was your training? In India?

RS: In India, I took two years-, management training.

AJ: Okay. You like-, do you like this work?

RS: I don't like it here, but I like it very much in India.

AJ: Like it in India?

RS: But for money-, for dollars-, I like it here.

AJ: For dollars you like it here?

RS: For the position, I like it better in India.

AJ: How much do you make in India at this job?

RS: Now, it's about thirty thousand [rupees].

AJ: Per month?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Okay. And that is not enough?

RS: Thirty thousand by the standards here is not much.

AJ: By the standards here it's not much. Okay. And by Indian standards?

RS: By Indian standards, it's okay in India.

AJ: In India-- [laughs] Okay. Where did you get your education?

RS: In Delhi.

AJ: What did you study-, how many grades?

RS: B.Sc. part one.

AJ: Okay. Science?

RS: Yes.

AJ: What subjects?

RS: Physics, chemistry--.

AJ: So, Radhey Shyam, tell me how did you like America when you first came here?

RS: I liked America-, but I miss India very much-, then, and even now.

AJ: You missed it in the beginning also?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Okay. Were there any things that you found looked very good to you, or that you were greatly impressed by when you came here first? Can you recall any such things? [pause] Or things that you thought were very bad?

RS: No. Everything here is good. Every place has its own culture. It's just that it's different. It's good to live here-, health-wise also--.

AJ: Okay.

RS: And-, money-wise, of course, it is good.

AJ: Okay. Money-wise it's good? Uh-huh. And now-, you've been here-, about nine years?

RS: Yes.

AJ: And-, have you been to India in these nine years?

RS: Yes.

AJ: How many times?

RS: About eight or nine time.

AJ: Okay. You have a family?

RS: Yes, I have one child, and a wife.

AJ: Okay. They don't have plans to come here?

RS: Yes. They're coming here in about one or two months. I'll be going to bring them here.

AJ: Okay. And--. What do you think of the society and culture in America? What do you like, and what is it that you don't like, the way of life of the people here-, their culture? You have any ideas about this?

RS: Culture--. For them, it's good-, and if you look at it, their culture is good. And their-, lifestyle is very good. Work-wise also it's very good, that you work only forty hours [per week]. They use their own people rather than foreigners. They have the time to play around, singing-, dancing--.

AJ: Of going around--.

RS: For going around.

AJ: How many hours do you work-, in a week?

RS: In a week-, at least seventy hours.

AJ: You work seventy hours? Okay. And-, how much do you get paid for that?

RS: I get six hundred and fifty dollars weekly.

AJ: Six hundred and fifty dollars weekly. Okay. So-, you mentioned that you missed India then, and still do. What are the things that you miss and which--?

RS: The reason I miss so much is that I have no relatives here, and no-, neighbor-, there is nobody from even close to where I lived. I am all alone here.

AJ: Okay. You are all alone. Yes.

RS: I have no relatives.

AJ: In America?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Friends? Any friends?

RS: No friends, either. Wherever I work, people become friends there.

AJ: People become friends there. Okay. Yeah. So-, there's a Hindu temple here in Raleigh/Durham-, do you ever go there?

RS: There's no time for that.

AJ: You don't get time.

RS: I have one day off. And-, the gurdawaras and mandirs open on Sundays, but since I have my day off on Monday, I can't go there.

AJ: Can't go there. Okay.

RS: In Maryland I used to have my day off on Sunday, so I used to go to the gurdawara as well as mandir.

AJ: Okay. In Maryland also you worked in a restaurant?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Okay. How many years did you work there?

RS: Eight years in Maryland.

AJ: How did you like Maryland?

RS: Maryland is good.

AJ: Which place were you in?

RS: Rockwell city.

AJ: Rockwell city? Okay. What were the things you like in Rockwell?

RS: On Rockwell, there's no crime for one thing-, and it's a neat and clean city.

AJ: Neat and clean city. Okay. How many hours did you work there?

RS: Over there, fifty hours.

AJ: There weren't as many work hours?

RS: Yes, not as many. They had two shifts there.

AJ: Okay.

RS: The owner there is very good.

AJ: And-, did you get paid as much there?

RS: I used to make fifty dollars less than here.

AJ: Fifty dollars less there. Okay. And-, what are your plans for the future? You plan to live here, or--?

RS: Over here, once my family gets here, I plan to stay for five years only.

AJ: In America?

RS: Yes. After that, we will live in India.

AJ: Okay. Five year--. Why do you want t live five years? Why not ten years, or--?

RS: We hope that—my wife and I—can make good money-, and on that we can have a good life in India.

AJ: Uh-huh.

RS: Because the life here is-, just work. You go to work, come back and sleep. Then go to work again in the morning. But with work, you have money also. But then, money is not every thing.

AJ: Money id not everything. Okay. Uh-huh. What would you like to do-, other than work?

RS: Other than work, I like to move around-, meet people in the community, go to the temple also-, and enjoy life also.

AJ: Uh-huh. Yeah.

RS: I have worked a long time. Another five years of hard work.

AJ: Okay. And then--. Going to America--. [pause] Since you have been here in America, have you ever been invited by an American family—a black family, or white

family, or a Mexican family, or an Indian family—for a meal or something to their house?

RS: Yes, once-, one person from the Jehovah's Witnesses invited me to their house. I had a meal at their place. They were good people. I met them in church.

AJ: This was in Maryland?

RS: This was in New York.

AJ: You've lived in New York also?

RS: A few days.

AJ: A few--. So-, you also go to church, or--?

RS: I used to go to church. With those you call Jehovah's Witnesses. But later on, I did not like their--.

AJ: Okay? What--? How long did you go-, with them?

RS: For about two months.

AJ: Okay. And what did you not like about them?

RS: They make a lot of new stories. [pause]

AJ: You remember any of their stories? Would you like to tell some?

RS: Like-, we have our Rama and Geeta-, and what's has been written in them once is forever. In their bible, the keep adding new things.

AJ: Okay.

RS: So, what are you supposed to believe in?

AJ: So, you left them.

RS: Yes.

AJ: So, as you said, you miss India-, what do you do at such times? When you miss your family, your friends, what do you do?

RS: Then, I thin--. On a day off I go watch a movie-, English movie-, or go to the theatre and watch a drama. Or, go to a shopping center-, or sometimes, I even watch a Hindi movie at home, which consoles the heart--.

AJ: Consoles the heart. Okay. Uh-huh. Which one do you like? Do you have a favorite movie? You have any Hindi--? Tell me which is your favorite movie?

RS: "Hum aap kay hain kon"--.

AJ: "Hum aap kay hain kon"--. And--?

RS: "Main ne pyar kia"-, "Raja Hindustani"--.

AJ: Raja Hindustani--. And-, other than that?

RS: "Dil walay dulhania lay jain gay"--.

AJ: Aha! This one has very good songs. Okay. And--?

RS: And-, old movies.

AJ: Yes, tell me from the old movies.

RS: Old movies are good.

AJ: Which ones? Which ones do you like?

RS: "Dosti".

AJ: Dosti.

RS: "Khandaan".

AJ: Who was-, in "Dosti"?

RS: In Dosti-, Dilip Kumar.

AJ: And the heroin?

RS: Yes?

AJ: And who was the heroine?

RS: Heroin in Dosti--? I don't remember?

AJ: Songs--. Which ones do you like? Which Hindi film songs do you like?

RS: I like "ghazals" [semi-classical songs].

AJ: You like ghazals? Which ones?

RS: Those sung by Mehdi Hasan and Ghulam Ali.

AJ: Okay? My God. I also like one of Mehdi Hasan. Which ones--? Which ghazals of Mehdi Hasan do you like?

[pause]

AJ: "Gulon main rung bharay"--.

RS: I have them written down in my diary.

AJ: You have your diary here?

RS: No, not here.

AJ: Where is it?

RS: In India. Because in India, I used to sing also.

AJ: Okay? Uh-huh.

RS: And I have sung in the presence of Mehdi Hasan, as well as Ghulam Ali.

AJ: Okay? Here--. In Delhi?

RS: No. In America-, Maryland.

AJ: Ah...? Wow.

RS: But since I got married—I've been married about six years now—since then I never sang.

AJ: Never sang? Any reason for that?

[pause]

AJ: You don't feel like it, or--?

RS: I don't feel like it. I think of my family all the time.

AJ: Ah... you think of them all the time. Uh-huh. So-, when you did sing-, did you sing ghazals?

RS: Ghazals.

AJ: Can we hear one or two lines? If you remember any--. We will also think you--. Your memories will remain with us. For us, as well as others--.

RS: I'll sing a ghazal-, it's written by someone else.

[sings a ghazal]

RS: I'm singing after a long time--.

AJ: It's all right. You're doing well--.

[resumes singing]

AJ: Excellent! That was great.

RS: My voice is not good any more.

AJ: Do you know who has written the lyrics-, and who has sung it? I have heard it, but don't remember. [pause] No? Okay, if you do remember, do let me know, so that we can write the names--. And-, other than singing, what are your hobbies?

RS: Other than singing, I like to swim.

AJ: You swim? You have a swimming pool close by.

RS: Yes.

AJ: Do you ever go there?

RS: No. Never been there.

AJ: Okay.

RS: In Rockwell I used to, on my days off.

AJ: On Sundays they have free swimming.

RS: Yes. Free--.

AJ: If you can spare the time.

RS: But Sunday is not an off day for me.

AJ: Sunday is not an off day.

RS: And-, I also like-, whenever there are artists performing here-, I watch their performances, and meet them also.

AJ: Okay. Yeah. A couple years ago-, no, it's been four, or rather five years now-, I heard Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, at the university where I got my Ph.D. degree from. I enjoyed it very much. And when we're sitting here in America, and some artists come from and Pakistan come to perform here, listening to them is a more fun. [pause] Do you play any [musical] instruments, like "tabla" [drums], or--.

RS: No.

AJ: Harmonium, or--?

RS: I can play the harmonium.

AJ: You have one here?

RS: No. I don't feel like playing any more. I used to play when I was in India.

AJ: Uh-huh. What kind of a city is Delhi? I've never been to India, that's why I ask you.

RS: Delhi-, it's okay.

AJ: And where you live-, what kind of a place is that?

RS: At first it was a village near Delhi-, like villages are. And now-, now that it's a part of Delhi, there's been a lot of development. All the lands are sold. Previously, in those places, there used to be a lot of dust. Now they've built high-rise buildings.

AJ: Uh-huh?

RS: Since the start of "NOADA"--.

AJ: Start of?

RS: NOADA.

AJ: What is NOADA?

RS: NOADA--. I don't know right now--. Industrial--.

AJ: Is it an industrial plan, or an industrial scheme?

RS: It's an industrial scheme.

AJ: Industrial scheme? Okay. And what has been done under it-, built roads, or buildings--?

RS: Road have been built, office complexes have come up-, and a lot of industry has been set up-, with foreigners-, and foreign--.

AJ: Financial assistance-, or something? Okay. [pause] And--. If an American asks you what the Indian culture is like, what would you tell him? What is India's culture, and what is the Indian society?

RS: India's culture-, it has some things that are not good. They are "rudi vaadi"--.

AJ: What's rudi vaadi?

RS: Those that have been followed from the old times, and that don't match [with the times] nowadays.

AJ: Okay. [pause] Will you give an example?

RS: For example, for women-, there's no freedom, like it is here. They have to observe the custom of "ghoongat" [traditional covering of the face in public], which is not right; and it is also not right that they are married at very young ages--.

AJ: "Jahaiz" [dowry]?

RS: The custom of "jahaiz", also. All the "parthah's" are not right.

AJ: What is a parthah? Customs?

RS: Yeah. Customs, yeah.

AJ: And are they changing now-, India--?

RS: The change is coming slowly, but-, people with the old thinking--. There are still many areas, that are quite backward-, like in Rajisthan, in Bihar, and in UP-, where there's not much education. Because of this these things are still followed there. But slowly--.

AJ: Things are changing?

RS: Things-, all systems are changing.

AJ: Okay.

RS: As more people are getting more education, things are changing.

AJ: Uh-huh. And-, what are the good things of India-, that you would like to tell people here?

RS: The good things are-, one is that when you marry once-, whoever the girl is, she endeavors to live with it all her life. Not that arguments comes because of small matters, and things reach the stage of divorce. These things are not so common in India. And the Indian women-, lead a religious life-, mostly.

AJ: What's "dharmik"?

RS: Religious.

AJ: Religious? Okay. Religious life. How did you get married?

RS: Me-, I got married in court.

AJ: In India?

RS: Yes. I did not marry as per the customs-, the Hindu customs. Because-, you don't spend as much money--.

AJ: In court?

RS: Because-, if you have a traditional wedding, you spend a lot money-, you have to invite a lot of people for a party, and-, the playing of bands, fireworks, etc. All these things are useless expenses.

AJ: Uh-huh. And you--.

RS: And--.

AJ: Please go ahead.

RS: We gave a reception party on the day after our wedding-, and we hired an orchestra--.

AJ: Hired an orchestra? Okay. Did you sing on your wedding?

RS: No. I was just sitting with my wife. There was a lot of public demand for me to sing, but I did not.

AJ: You did not sing. You didn't feel like it, or were you shy?

RS: [pause] I just did not feel like it.

AJ: Uh-huh. Where did you meet your wife, and how? How was the match made?

RS: My sister took me to a wedding. When I was visiting from America, she took me to a wedding of a friend of hers. I saw her there. So, I told my sister that I would like to talk to this girl-, about marriage. So, my sister talked to her. And-, her family were not in favor of her marrying someone who was living in America.

AJ: Hunh! Why?

RS: They thought American people are not good. That's why. Someone spread the rumor tat I had another wife in America--.

AJ: In America?

RS: Yes. So, they were afraid of that. Then, my sister assured her that my brother is not already married. She agreed to us getting married in court if her family would not approve of the match. So, that is how we ended up getting married in court. Later on, after we were married, we went to her family's place, and everything was okay.

AJ: So-, your wife hasn't been here since you've been married?

RS: No. I filed for sponsorship a year ago, and it took a lot of time in that. I did not have my citizenship then—I got it just a month ago--.

AJ: Okay, one month ago?

RS: I sponsored her on the basis of my green card.

AJ: Yeah. That takes a longer time.

RS: It takes a longer time now-, because the families of citizens are preferred over those with green cards. Now a lot of people are getting their citizenship. Earlier, not

many people liked to do that. And my wife's priority date is eighteenth April of ninety five, and those being processed this month are eighth April, so there's a difference of ten days only. So-, she'll get her visa it by next month.

AJ: Okay. So, it's a matter of a few more days.

RS: And-, that is why I'll be here in this restaurant for just a few more days. After that, my former employers want to open a restaurant for me.

AJ: In Maryland?

RS: Maryland, or wherever.

AJ: Okay. In Chapel Hill?

RS: They have asked me to look for a place I like in Chapel Hill also.

AJ: Uh-huh.

RS: But there are many restaurants here now.

AJ: Yes. Two, three--. There are three in Chapel Hill now.

RS: Yes, there's Darbar, India Palace, and one is Tandoor.

AJ: Tandoor. Yeah. Yes.

RS: But if the food is good, a fourth one will also do good business.

AJ: Fourth one will also do good business. Yeah.

RS: So, when my wife gets here, then we'll do some planning. Our life will begin then. [pause] Without your wife and children, life is very boring here. In India you can pass the time with friends. Over here, friends also don't have the time, so one feels bored.

AJ: People are busy here?

RS: Yes. And friendships with white people do not develop easily-, with Asian people They develop gradually.

AJ: What is the reason for that?

RS: The reason-, one is the English language problem that Asian people have. Because of that, they fail to mix up with hem. The other factor is time. Nobody has time, neither them [Americans] and nor these [Asians].

[pause]

And some people-, interact with Asian just for appearances sake. But deep inside them, they don't like Asian.

AJ: American people? How do you know this? How-, did you have any such experience?

RS: I have heard. And-, we see that they like our food, when they come to the restaurant, but don't like the people very much.

AJ: What do you think is the reason for this?

RS: They think of as people from poor countries, making money here, running businesses—because our people have gone ahead in running businesses here. [pause] And no matter what, we will always be considered as second class citizens. [pause]

AJ: After all this progress? We will still be considered second class citizens? You said that some people have made progress in business, and some have progressed in education also. Why do you think that we will be considered second class citizens?

RS: We will be called Indian-, Indians or Asians. They won't consider us American citizens.

AJ: But you-, your passport-, you are also an American now.

RS: I am American, but they will still ask me where I am from-, from India.

AJ: But the people here also-, those that live here-, are mostly from other countries.

Some have come from Europe, some are from Mexico, some from Germany, some from France, some from England.

RS: Yes. Yes.

AJ: Some from San Salvador, Guatemala, there are a lot of Africans.

RS: But they'll still be referred to as African Americans.

AJ: African American. Yes. And we will be called Asian Americans?

RS: Indian Americans, Pakistani Americans--. But all told, America is a good country.

AJ: All told-, it's a good country?

RS: Every country has its good and bad things. But the government here is good. There's not much party politics here. There are no state-wise differences. There's no language problem. They have only one language in all of America. There's no caste system also. These are the things that are destroying India-, taking her backward. [pause] There's not much of a visible divide between the rich and the poor. It doesn't matter how you dress up. Water, power-, their service is very good.

AJ: Service is very good?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Okay. [pause] Telephone?

RS: Telephone, yes.

AJ: You can get one easily.

RS: Food is not a problem. No shortages-, like sometimes there's no sugar, sometimes no [cooking] oil--. No milk--. Everything is available here to fulfil your physical needs, but to make your heart happy-, nobody can do anything.

AJ: Okay.

RS: You think of your country-, when you think of the happiness of your heart. There's everything to fulfil your physical needs-, from sex to fruit.

AJ: And for the happiness of the heart?

RS: There is nothing for the happiness of the heart.

AJ: What does India have for the happiness of the heart?

RS: Over there-, the thing is-, you have relatives. In times of need-, they stand by you, you meet frequently. Over here, nobody has time. Everyone is busy, so you feel those things.

AJ: Do you think that your wife, when she comes here, and your son—you have a son, don't you--?

RS: Yes.

AJ: Do you think your wife will like America?

RS: I don't know. She likes it right now. She wants to come right now.

AJ: Okay.

RS: I'm trying to discourage her also. I tell her that we will have to work very hard here-, there's very little other than hard work here. But she says she will work hard. But when one gets here, one thinks that all you get here is work. [pause] Over here-, the Asian people-, what not good is how they misuse Asian people.

AJ: How are Asians misused?

RS: Plenty--. Like, if there's a Chinese business, and all the workers there are Chinese, they will have them work very hard, very long hours.

AJ: Uh-huh.

RS: And they will not pay well. So, what do these people have to look forward to? Then they miss their country.

AJ: And this is happening in your restaurant also?

RS: In every restaurant. Every Indian restaurant.

AJ: They over-work you?

RS: Yes. And there's no check from the government. Nobody would ask the workers how many they work and whether they have health insurance or not.

AJ: You have health insurance?

RS: No.

AJ: You get a salary only?

RS: Yes.

AJ: And if you fall ill?

RS: If I fall ill, I'll have to go to a hospital, and pay the bills.

AJ: You will have to pay? The restaurant won't pay?

RS: Restaurant will not pay.

AJ: And the rent for your house?

RS: Rent--. There are five people living here. We divide the rent amongst us.

AJ: The restaurant doesn't pay for it?

RS: No.

AJ: And how much is the rent?

RS: For this, five hundred dollars.

AJ: Five hundred dollars? Means a hundred dollars each. And telephone, power-, that's separate.

RS: That's separate. [pause]

AJ: And-, what do you think one should for the happiness of the heart in America?

RS: Happiness of the heart--. To pass some of the time-, these [prepaid] telephone cards are available now. So, for some time, one is happy after talking to the family.

AJ: You use these telephone cards?

RS: Yes. [pause] And-, for the heart's happiness--. [pause] For the happiness of one's heart, one should go into a community and spend time with them. When one is alone, loneliness sets it.

AJ: Do you sometimes think that you should look for another job--?

(END OF TAPE 14, SIDE A)

AJ: Okay. I was asking you if you ever think of looking for a job at which you don't have to work such long hours, so that you have time to spend some time in the community, to meet people--?

RS: Yes, I do think on these lines sometimes. If there's another job that pays well, and I get back home in time-, eat on time--.

AJ: get some rest.

RS: Get some rest. Then things would be good.

AJ: And when you get this day off-, you get one day per week?

RS: Yes.

AJ: You get a full day off?

RS: I get a full day, but all these other guys get half a day.

AJ: because you're the chef. Okay. So, what do you do on your day off?

RS: On my day off, I first of all, go to the laundry.

AJ: Okay.

RS: After that, I watch a movie. Some English movie.

AJ: On TV, or--?

RS: In the theatre.

AJ: You go to Chapel Hill.

RS: In Chapel Hill, or sometimes-, there's one here also, where I go for laundry.

AJ: Okay. Right.

RS: Then, I come home and sometimes watch a movie, if I have a Hindi movie. In the evening, I have one or two drinks, and then I sleep.

AJ: And, so-, the heart gets its happiness?

RS: Yes--. Sometimes I call [my family] also.

AJ: Your son-, how old is he?

RS: My son-, is two and a half years.

AJ: Two and a half years. Does he talk on the phone with you?

RS: Yes. It feels very good.

AJ: Feels very good. What's your son's name?

RS: Prince Kumar Premi.

AJ: Prince Kumar Premi? Who gave him that name?

RS: His mother's sister.

AJ: His mother's sister.

RS: Premi-, I always write that for him.

AJ: Okay. [pause] And-, I have also asked this question of your other colleagues also. If a friend or relative of yours from India wishes to come to America, what would you advise him? Whether he should come, or not, and if he should come, how should he prepare for it?

RS: If one wants to come here, he should learn a trade.

AJ: What kind of a trade?

RS: Any technical trade.

AJ: One should learn a technical trade?

RS: I'll say that you're welcome to come, but you have to work very hard. You don't have to work so hard in India. If you are working in a farm, you come to work at ten in the morning, you get two hours off in the afternoon, you get off work at six in the evening, and you can go home and spend time among your family.

AJ: Yes.

RS: But here, when they think of these long working hours, they will probably not like it much.

AJ: Yes, that's correct. So, in the end, would once again say that if you have a ghazal or a song, or some couplets that you would like to recite--.

RS: Now I have left these things.

AJ: Left them.

RS: I had a desire to become a singer, but my father did not like these things.

AJ: Why?

RS: He wanted me to become an engineer or a doctor. At one time I wanted to do a photography course in the Poona film industry. So, he—he was in the politics there—so, he pulled some strings and got me an admission there. But because of my English—all the lessons, physics, etc., were in English-, but when I had studied in B.Sc., it was half in English, half in Hindi--.

AJ: Okay.

RS: So I couldn't complete it, and I told my father it's not in me to finish it. After that, I asked to let me do a course in hotel management. So, I got admission in the hotel management institute. I thought I'll stay in hotels, I'll see all kinds of food, and meet all kinds of people. But one-, I had a senior friend-, he said that if you want to make good money, go work in the kitchen. And if you just want to have a glamorous life, go for the front office jobs. And-, I wanted to make money and go abroad, so I was advised to go for the kitchen training. Now, I got here without paying anyone.

AJ: Okay?

RS: Someone ate at the restaurant, and queried the waiter about who the chef is.

The waiter told me, and he invited me to his room to discuss something.

AJ: It was an Indian person?

RS: Yes, he was Indian.

AJ: Okay.

RS: So, he talked to me and asked me how much money I wanted. I didn't know how much he could pay, and I said as much. At that time I was making one thousand eight hundred rupees [per month].

AJ: In India?

RS: In India. So, he offered me one thousand eight hundred dollars per month.

AJ: Okay.

RS: I agreed to with him.

AJ: Uh-huh. And the [air] ticket?

RS: So, he sent me a ticket and said I could leave with him in fifteen days. I said wanted to meet my family and relatives, etc., so I asked for an additional fifteen days. And I came after those fifteen days. And-, I had thought that I'd work here for a couple of years. I had a visa for one year. But he said he'd get me an extension each time it was expiring. I originally thought two years would be good. Then I saw the green card opportunity, and got myself sponsored for a green card. That took eighteen months.

AJ: You have to wait eighteen months?

RS: Yes. Now these people that have come here-- those that work here with me— have spent as much as eight hundred thousand rupees.

AJ: Hmmm.....

RS: Now, to earn eight hundred thousand rupees, you have to work real hard.

AJ: Who takes this payment of eight hundred thousand rupees?

RS: It's these agents, who help you get visas and somehow get you here.

AJ: Okay.

RS: Like, the person that brought these people here-, he got the a visa for France at first-, saying that he is a performer, and got him an entertainment visa.

AJ: Entertainment visa?

RS: Right. And from Paris, he took them back.

AJ: To India?

RS: India. After a week or so. Then they applied for the American visa, because if you have one other visa, the American embassy usually gives you a visa. And then, they got a visa to come here, and did not go back from here. Because that was the aim.

AJ: Okay, Mr Radhey Shyam. Thank you very much for giving us this time on your holiday.

RS: Doesn't matter. I had the time, and spent it with you. If I didn't have it--.

AJ: If you didn't have it--. In the end, if you would like to say anything else--.

RS: If I say something, then where does it get to?

AJ: This matter--. Ahm....

RS: In the library?

AJ: In the library, at the university.

RS: I would like to say, in the end, is that the government here does keep an eye on the labor, but there should be a system whereby the laborers are asked about their

conditions, and they should be able to tell [about their problems] without any external pressures. That's all.

AJ: Okay, that's what you wanted to say. Okay. One again, thank you very much for your time. [recorder is turned off]

(END OF INTERVIEW)