

Transcription: BV022.29.6

Interview with Maninder Arora

Audio Recording: 2022_0029_0006_003.mp3

INTVWR1: Anushay Malik; INTVWR2: James Binks

Interviewee: MA: Maninder Arora

Interview date: December 7, 2023

1 INTVWR1: That's a good feeling for it. It has to have a steady light. I'm just going to face this
2 toward you and say it is the 7th of December, 2022 and we are interviewing Maninder Arora in
3 her home. I am with James and Anushay, are both present for the interview. So, please, to start
4 off with, if you could introduce yourself.

5 MA: I'm myself Maninder Arora. I have lived in a Burnaby for almost 20 years, over 20 years
6 now. I'm Canadian citizen fortune -

7 INTVWR1: So, what we wanted to start off with, is hearing a little more about, you know, your
8 own story, how you got here.

9 MA: Uh huh.

10 INTVWR1: So, you know, if you could tell us say, who was the oldest person in your family who
11 arrived **00:01:00** in Canada?

12 MA: My sister. My sister got married here.

13 INTVWR1: Ah, okay.

14 MA: Her husband was from Canada. He went back home, India, and he picked my sister. So, they
15 got married and came to Canada. and after a couple of years my father passed away. So, there was
16 a new immigration law that any dependent could come to Canada. So, my sister, because she was
17 the oldest and I was the second youngest and my brother's youngest. So, my mom and my father
18 passed away so this is how we became her dependent, so she was taking care of the family back
19 home, and then she thought okay why not, I **00:02:00** bring them here in Canada to have a better
20 life.

21 INTVWR1: Can you tell us just a little bit about dates so you said your sister got married, and
22 came here, when what was that? Approximate, is fine.

23 MA: Around 1974.

24 INTVWR1: Okay, so somewhere in 1970's?

25 MA: Yeah.

26 INTVWR1: And you mentioned new immigration law. We're very interested in how those
27 changed. So, do you know when this new immigration law came?

28 MA: '19, 1975, around Pierre Trudeau.

29 INTVWR1: Oh, okay. We'll check that.

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30 MA: He made the law like any dependent can come in, be with the family you know, so my mom
31 was my sister's dependent, and we were the youngest, **00:03:00** we were mom's dependent, so this
32 is how we came three of us me my sister and my brother to Canada so which was great for us to
33 have a better life you know so my sister was grateful you know and that this is a nice way to you
34 know without hassle, as well. She could bring her family and be with the family.

35 INTVWR1: Yeah, yeah. Can you tell us a little bit about what life was like within India for you,
36 before you tell us, you know, the experience of coming over?

37 MA: Well, since my father had passed away, we were like down to zero. So, we had the house,
38 that's about it. Well, we had to. My mother had to knit sweaters, or embroidery, or **00:04:00** for
39 people, you know, she would make a little bit of money or she was teaching, tutoring the students
40 and at the end, when she opened a school in her house, you know, the front door. So, within the
41 house, the front room was open to school. So, she had 45 students then. So, she was tutoring and
42 then she opened a school and she was, this is how I did her earning and, you know, took care of
43 us.

44 INTVWR1: Wow, this must have been really hard. What part of India are you from?

45 MA: I'm from. Punjab, Amritsar, northern part of India.

46 INTVWR1: So, can you tell us a little bit about when the immigration papers came through? What
47 was the process by which you could come here? Were there any tests that you had to get done,
48 checks?

49 MA: There was a **00:05:00** police used to come, and I don't know if they checked the-- a criminal
50 record but I was so young I don't know much but I think as I know now I think they were just
51 checking the any criminal records or anything you know before they allow you know give us a
52 visa.

53 INTVWR1: Okay because in an interview we did yesterday someone mentioned that they got
54 health checks done.

55 MA: At that time.

56 INTVWR1: Okay. Okay. So once you got those tests done and now, you're clear. How did you
57 prepare for traveling across, like what kind of things did you gather how did you gather them
58 [speaking in Punjabi] how did you decide what to take?

59 MA: Yeah, well as my sister guided us you know and we didn't have much money either because,
60 since my father passed away, we didn't have much to bring. But whatever little we could, you
61 know. **00:06:00** My sister would ask mom some herbs and, you know, spices. I don't remember
62 what my mom packed, you know. Honestly, I was, we were very young, we were, like, more

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63 playful than, you know paying attention to mom what she's doing, right? So, either education or
64 you know, we are busy mom will say very strict and you know with education She doesn't sit down
65 go sit down. What are you doing?

66 INTVWR1: How many people in your family were there, and how old were you guys?

67 MA: We were, we are seven.

68 INTVWR1: Wow.

69 MA: We are seven siblings and my mom. So, three sisters were married. Two oldest and then the
70 brother. Then sister, fourth number. Three of them were married. My brother wasn't married.
71 **00:07:00** So, my brother was 21 years old. We couldn't bring him along. So, he stayed there and
72 then everybody under 21 could come along with my mom right, with our mom. So, we came with
73 mom, three of us. I was 16 and my sister was 18. My brother was 11.

74 INTVWR1: So, there were three of you then?

75 MA: Three of us with mom.

76 INTVWR1: So, do you have any memories of when you came here and [inaudible]?

77 MA: Oh yeah, a lot. Lots of memories it was really scary at first time you know, when we landed
78 in Canada. And everybody looked at us, and you know like language problem you know, you
79 speak very little English. I could read and write perfectly but, **00:08:00** speaking, you know, I
80 never spoken in English. So, I would say a few words here and there. I could make other people
81 understand, but you know, not like fluently speaking this language, right. So every time I get to
82 the bus stop, I would be scared, you know looking around being 16 only and back home culture is
83 like you don't go out of the house you know you're in the box and then coming here, and you have
84 to go to work every day, and then coming back like my shift was, seven to... nine to three, I would
85 go to school, and then Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Friday, I would go off to school direct to my
86 work. Four o'clock I had to be at work. So, four to ten, I would work and then come home by
87 buses **00:09:00** and having a snow like this in November. So after fifteen days landing in Canada,
88 I got the job.

89 INTVWR1: Really? So, you're sixteen years old and you started working?

90 MA: I started working.

91 INTVWR1: So, can you tell us, a little bit about this process of getting the job?

92 MA: Getting the job, my brother-in-law knew this manager of the restaurant. And he called him
93 in that time, you know, there were only few families, Indian families, you know, and everybody
94 knew everybody, because you every Sunday you go to the temple and you meet everyone and

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95 you're so happy to see everyone you know thank God we can speak the same language, you know
96 we can communicate you know openly right. So, that was great like we can see somebody our
97 type, you know **00:10:00** that was great so thank God to the temples, and you know in Canada. I
98 mean that was amazing.

99 INTVWR1: And when you say temple, which temple are you referring to in the center?

100 MA: Akali Singh, that was on 1110 Fraser.

101 INTVWR1: Ok, so that's [inaudible] And um I also wanted to ask about you mentioned the
102 restaurant where you work. Where was the restaurant?

103 MA: Mother nature's restaurant. I still remember. It's on 4th and Burrard.

104 INTVWR1: Okay.

105 MA: This Indian lady married to white and he became sick. So that was like a rare combination
106 you see at that time. Okay, it was like a really, you know, white person. getting married to Indian
107 you know, that was amazing, like you know they and they were really good **00:11:00** they were a
108 very good couple you know, they're still a good couple, you know, and the manager was Punjabi
109 so this is how my brother-in-law reached him. I think he knew him from somewhere, so he got
110 me a job there. He didn't even see me, the manager. He just called me. Okay come in four o'clock.
111 So, I was lucky to have that job, if I say I cried at that time, but I was crying like I had to do dishes
112 in the kitchen, you know, which I never did in in my family house, right. I never did anything
113 because I'm a second youngest. All my older sisters and brothers, my mom and dad, they took care
114 of it. We were like, go study, go study, go study. We were kind of always paying attention **00:12:00**
115 to the education then in the kitchen or cleaning or no.

116 INTVWR1: Yeah, yeah. And where were you living at this time?

117 MA: In Canada when I came here?

118 INTVWR1: Yeah, first –

119 MA: Yeah, with my sister.

120 INTVWR1: Who was it?

121 MA: Nanaimo and 28th.

122 INTVWR1: Okay. And from there, can you tell us a little bit about, so did you start studying at
123 this point in time?

124 MA: Yes, I went to Vancouver Technical School.

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125 INTVWR1: Okay. At the same time that you were working?

126 MA: At the same time. Yes, me and my younger brother, we both went to technical, went to
127 technical school.

128 INTVWR1: And can you explain the process by which you decided to do this?

129 MA: To do the work or the education, to go to school, yeah. Well, school was necessary, you
130 know, and **00:13:00** you know, and obviously I'm just 16, I'm not gonna, you know. So, then I had
131 to work because my mom was looking after my niece at home, so obviously, you know, me and
132 my sister, we, I, this was a part time for me, but my sister was working full time. My sister was
133 older than me, 18, you know. She was working full-time, but I was going to school full-time, and
134 then I was working part -time on the weekend.

135 INTVWR1: You mentioned your mom was looking after your niece. So, while you were staying
136 at your sister's house, she was taking care of your –

137 MA: Cooking, everything. Everything she was taking care of us. You know, my brother-in-law,
138 my sister, you know, making three meals, you know, looking after her granddaughter. **00:14:00**
139 So then, actually, she found a job after a while. We stayed with them five months. So, since me
140 and my sister was working, so we were able to rent the place. So, we rented the place the rent was
141 only \$140 only we used to pay and now I think of it you know, imagine that, right so, I'm in \$140
142 we lived on Knight and Kingsway, what was the street, I don't remember now.

143 INTVWR1: Knight and Kingsway.

144 MA: Right behind King Edward.

145 INTVWR: Oh okay, right behind King Edward.

146 MA: Yeah, there used to be a Safeway there you know, and I still remember those memories like
147 they used to have a big boxes of apples and pears, out in the parking lot, like **00:15:00** by the door.
148 They were like nine-cents a pound like apples, and ten cents pound you know and Gala apples
149 used to be like a 25 cents pound, so at that time you know I, I still remember that. I still remember
150 that parking lot and you know the memories I and there was a Field store.

151 INTVWR1: Field store.

152 MA: Yeah so, there's no more I think and in Canada now they closed down.

153 INTVWR1: And where would you go to get vegetables, masalas, spices?

154 MA: Yeah, there was I think the name was like a Spice Land.

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155 INTVWR1: Spice Land?

156 MA: Yeah, 50th and Main Street there was a **00:16:00** another store, I know the guy's name that
157 looks up low, he used to own the grocery Indian grocery. So, we could get all the lentils, all the
158 beans and anything big in Indian groceries and vegetables we could get.

159 INTVWR1: Okay. So, at this point you're working and you're going to school at the restaurant
160 and you found the place for \$140, and then where did you guys move next?

161 MA: Then we moved to Maine and 62nd, because that lady said I need the basement, so we had to
162 move. So how we moved, we transferred our stuff like in the buses, and you know taxi was too
163 expensive for us, so this is how we got a help from friends you know **00:17:00** and we moved to
164 who used to carry this stuff like in the bags and we didn't have much you know, because the
165 basement suite was furnished by the landlord you know, so we had the minimum necessities you
166 know, this is how we lived there's one bed and one sofa so my mom and sister sleep on them, they
167 used to sleep on the couch. So, we managed it you know.

168 INTVWR1: Was this also a basement?

169 MA: It was a basement suite, yeah.

170 INTVWR1: And here you're still working at the same restaurant at this point?

171 MA: No, no, no, no.

172 INTVWR1: Okay, so can you tell us what happened?

173 MA: Then we, when we moved to, no, I think we moved to Knight and something, this David
174 Thompson school was close by, **00:18:00** Knight and 57th. I still remember next to the gas station
175 the bus stops. So, we lived there and I went to, me and my brother we went to David Thompson
176 school yeah. So, the this is where we went both of us, and I don't know. I dropped out of grade
177 12 and then I was working because we had to pay the debt, we borrowed from India for the tickets
178 to come here, you know. So, then me and my sister was working, and we collected money to pay
179 back the debt and then my mom bought the house for Marine and **00:19:00** Ross. Marine and Ross
180 yeah between Knight and Ross, yeah so we bought, we bought that house for sixty four thousand
181 five hundred dollars.

182 INTVWR1: Do you remember what year this was?

183 MA: Could be 1981 around that.

184 INTVWR1: Okay.

185 MA: So, we bought that house and we lived there for a while.

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186 INTVWR1: And what work was your mom doing?

187 MA: The place I was going to the restaurant, that guy was like, you know, he said, I'll give you
188 full time if you want to work here in a restaurant. So, she said, okay, I don't mind. I'll work, you
189 know. So, this is how my mom got a job, through me, **00:20:00** because I was working there. So,
190 I guess I was slow, slow to the manager. He felt like I'm not professional like. So, I was doing it.
191 Actually, after that day, he promoted me. I was doing short orders, you know, cooking. And my
192 mom was doing the dishes and like helping clean the tables. And so, this is how we got the job,
193 you know, me and my mom used to work together. and then go home together. That was safe for
194 me. You know, even there was no issues. Like, just sometimes you feel somebody look at you,
195 weird way, you know, like, who are you aliens coming to Canada. You know, like, we felt that.
196 We felt that, you know, like, oh, there's this. One story I never forget. I was on the bus with my
197 sister **00:21:00** and two girls sitting right across to us, you know, I was sitting right behind a bus
198 driver's seat, the long one, me and my sister, you know, and then these two girls that are looking
199 at us, and my sister's really nervous about it, and she said don't look at them, don't look at them. I
200 said why what happened you know, she said no don't just, just look on the other side. Then they
201 start saying "Hey you Hindu! Go back to Punjab, go back to India, go back to your country", you
202 know they they kept on, and on, and on all this the whole trip, and the good part was the driver
203 stopped the bus in the middle of the road and he approached them. He said, "Are you going to
204 smarten up or not, if you don't, if you don't keep quiet, **00:22:00** I'm gonna have you, you know,
205 get off the bus, remove you guys, you know." And then they were quiet, so two blocks went by,
206 this driver got off duty and the Chinese bus driver comes on now, so now these girls thought you
207 know like okay Chinese who cares you know he's not gonna say anything to us. So, they continue,
208 they followed us all the way to Main and 62nd where we got off you know they got off from the
209 back door and we got off because we were sitting behind right behind the driver's seat. So, we felt
210 safe for there, you know like. So, when we got off and they came like this to me "Hey, what's
211 wrong with you? What's the matter with you?" I said, "What's the matter with me or what's the
212 matter with you?" I want to know, you know, she's you, and she came so close, **00:23:00** and then
213 what I did, I had to do and this is how we got into like fight there you know me being 16 only, you
214 know not understanding the law and you know that was I think I shouldn't say stupid of me, but at
215 that time I thought of like I'm protecting myself, you know, like I'm a human being and it's
216 naturally, you know, it's not that I was thinking of I'm a human being, you know, like, "Hey, I'm
217 not saying anything to you. We didn't bother you, you know, and why you're bothering us?" We
218 couldn't get it, like I couldn't get it, but my sister knew because she she's been living in Canada for
219 four years or something like that, but I didn't know anything I got into fight **00:24:00** you know,
220 but then there's now like a 200 white people around me, surrounded me, and the bus driver parked
221 right there and he's looking at us, you know fighting, nobody is helping but everybody's looking,
222 you know, watching the show. So anyways, my sister, my sister is so nervous, she gets scared, you
223 know. She says, "Mona, come here, come here, don't move." She pulled me and she took me home.
224 And these girls were, she said, "You don't know these people, you know, they are gonna bring
225 other friends" because they are young too, right? So, "they're gonna bring other friends, bunch of
226 other friends and they will, if they see your house, they will come middle of the night" and she

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227 said "You're gonna be in trouble" she said we ran into the you know our suite, our basement suite
228 and for sure they were looking for us, you **00:25:00** know so that was a scary part.

229 INTVWR1: I'm so sorry that happened.

230 MA: Yeah, they were kids you know like they hardly were 12 years old, but they were totally
231 drunk, totally drunk you know. But being you know, and you're that young, you don't, you don't
232 understand and I didn't either. I got into fight you know like so at that time I thought well you
233 know in your own country you're like a, you know, a queen in your home, and you know like
234 everything is like a normal.

235 INTVWR1: Yeah, and I know that you would then go on to have this role of being, you know,
236 taking on conflict and resolving it as in **00:26:00** the union when you worked with that as well,
237 right?

238 MA: Yes.

239 INTVWR1: So, can we hear about your other jobs until you got to that point?

240 MA: Sure. My sister used to work, when I was working in a restaurant, my sister used to work an
241 Elderly Lodge. And she was making only \$2.70.

242 INTVWR1: Where is Elderly Lodge?

243 MA: It's a South Adera care home on Granville and 19th, somewhere around there, 19th.

244 INTVWR1: Okay.

245 MA: So, when I got out of the school then I, she asked me one day, she said, do you want to work
246 there? Maybe I can ask them. I didn't have any education. I didn't have any diploma, nothing, you
247 know. And she said, if you want to work, she said, I don't have it, so I'm working there. So, if you
248 want to work, you know, I'll ask Mrs. Cuckoo. **00:27:00** I said, okay, why not. So, she said, okay,
249 I'll ask her. And then she called me and she said, I'll give you \$3. So great, you know, I'm making
250 more than you, you know. Being young at that time, you know. You don't understand like \$3, right.
251 You know, I think average was like around \$5, union pay, or something, around \$5 here. So, then
252 I'm hearing from other care aides and nurses, you know, like there's a union place, you can work
253 that hospital is under union, this place is under union, you know, they pay you more, they pay you
254 benefits, you know, and then I made up my mind at that time, I'm going to get a union job, you
255 know. If you want to work hard, **00:28:00** you know, as I do, you know. So why not make more
256 money like everybody else, you know. So, I decided in my mind at that time, you know, like, I'm
257 gonna work towards finding a job at union place. So then, obviously if I apply, you know, they
258 will say, well, you don't have the certification. So, they made it mandatory by the time I was
259 working in different hospitals. I worked at Amherst Private Hospital, Carlsbad Private Hospital,

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260 without diploma, nothing. I had nothing, you know. And then I worked Fraserview Care Lodge,
261 Richmond. By that time, we sold it, didn't sell the house, my mom rented the house and she bought
262 another house, while we were working making money. **00:29:00** So she was smart you know she
263 bought another house in Richmond, you know which was only 114,000 so that's again, '82 maybe
264 you know...

265 INTVWR1: 1982.

266 MA: Yeah around '82.

267 INTVWR1: So, you were only in the other place for about a year?

268 MA: Yeah, about two years, I think maybe. I think now I remember, around '79, '80, '81, and then
269 we bought, in '81 we bought the house there because I lived there a few years, you know, in
270 Richmond. Now this house was in Richmond. My mom bought, 114,000. And then we, I was
271 working at Fraserview Care Lodge at that point. And I was going picking berries after 3 o'clock.
272 My shift would be 7 to 3, or 3 to 11 **00:30:00**. And before or after each shift I would go pick berries
273 because my brother will pick me up from, now we had the car. So, my mom bought a brand-new
274 car, you know, Volkswagen. I still remember that. So, and now my brother, my brother was driving
275 and my sister was driving, so he would pick me up from the hospital, take me there at the fields.
276 Then we finish there till 7:30, we work until it gets dark, you know, we will pick berries. And then
277 come home, same thing every day. Until I found another job, I found a job with a Paramed
278 Company, that's a private company. They hire care aides, health workers, you know, to supply
279 when they're short of in hospitals **00:31:00** like emergencies, you know, so they will supply the
280 care aides, you know. So, this is how I got the job at Paramed. Somebody told me and I applied,
281 so I didn't have to go to the fields to pick berries, you know. So I was, now I'm working two shifts
282 every day, you know working with a Paramed or Carlsbad Private Hospital or [Amos] Private
283 Hospital, so I would get a jobs like from right left and center, you know from everywhere,
284 everybody will call me for, can you come today because I never said no. They would say yeah you
285 know call me and I'll say yes, you know and I will just run like that you know okay, I'll come you
286 know. So, this is how I know all these hospitals I worked, then I was working private **00:32:00**
287 seeing private patients in VGH, Shaughnessy, St., Mount St. Joseph, so I was seeing private
288 patients there, you know, like family would hire to sit with them, you know, wow. So, this is all
289 what I did, and then when I worked at Fraserview Lodge, my mom wouldn't let me, you know, she
290 would say, you don't need to study now, just you know, work right because you got the job now
291 yeah. So why you need to study, you know that time you don't think like what is my future. I'm
292 not gonna work like I never thought of that you know, like am I going to work with this like all
293 my life you know, it's, it's not easy job, it's a very tough job. One of the toughest job you working
294 in the **00:33:00** hospitals. And then I said to my sister, I said, can you tell mom that the certificates
295 are mandatory now. That we, because I apply at Union Place and I wouldn't get the job because
296 they will turn me down, you know. But I got a job at Richmond General Hospital. They hired me,
297 but one minute after my sister, she said, oh, we don't hire sisters. So, they got my sister and I didn't
298 get the job. She said, I'm so sorry, you know, you're quite capable. You know, you have a very

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299 good resume, but I'm sorry I can't hire you because she's been hired, you know. That's okay, no
300 problem you know. So I was still working at Fraserview and I worked there for about five years
301 and then in between, **00:34:00** I told my sister to tell my mom to, that I need to take a course so
302 this is when I went to Kwantlen College and got my nurses aide course you know diploma, and I
303 got the certificate from there.

304 INTVWR1: And from here on out, can you tell us a little bit about how you ended up living in
305 Burnaby?

306 MA: Yeah. So, when I got married in '87, '86. Then we lived in a basement for a while. One of
307 my colleagues visited.

308 INTVWR1: Wait, wait. You said you got married. We need that story.

309 MA: You need that story. That's a long story too.

310 INTVWR1: The details. How did it end up happening?

311 MA: Yeah, that's, my sister, older sister used to live in Burnaby **00:35:00** on Woodsworth. And
312 my sister-in-law, used to live across to my sister, same street, Woodsworth.

313 INTVWR1: Ah, okay.

314 MA: So, we used to go visit our sister and she saw us, me and my sister. So, she thought this is a
315 great opportunity that she can convince my sister for us to marry her brothers. So, that's her hidden
316 agenda, okay. So, she didn't say that, but this is probably she was thinking, okay. So, she knew
317 that one year we were going to India. She knew that we are going to India and one day she came
318 over, we were both there, me and my sister. And then she made a plan, like you know I want to
319 send something for my mother, can you take it **00:36:00**. So, my sister said you know hey I don't
320 have a room in my suitcase, but I can ask my sisters if they have any room, but your mom have to
321 go to Amritsar to go pick it up you know. She said, she doesn't mind she will go pick it up, so
322 they gave us whatever in the bag, so we put it in this suitcase. And when his mother came to pick
323 it up, he came along with the mother.

324 INTVWR1: Very smart.

325 INTVWR2: Very smart.

326 MA: Very smart, right. I would never think of that, right. But they were very smart. So, and she
327 started, when she was leaving, you know, we fed them lunch or whatever, you know. She's talking
328 about, oh, you're both daughters. And she said, no, the older one has got engaged because she just
329 did, you know. And she said, oh, then little one, we **00:37:00** didn't understand. I'm, I'm we are
330 just serving them lunch and, you know, whatever. We didn't understand what she's talking about,

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Interview with Maninder Arora

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Interview date: December 7, 2023

331 you know. So, she's, when she was leaving, she started to give money to my sister. And my mom
332 said, no. She said, okay, then [Shagun], you know, to my sister, mom said, no, she's engaged. I
333 just told you that, you know. And then they looked at me and I ran away, you know, like a little
334 kid, you know. So even I was 21 or 20. I didn't even care. And then they are teasing me now. They
335 are gone. And my sister, my sister is teasing me. How do you like him, you know, I said, "What
336 the hell?" I said, "I don't want to marry him. I don't want anyone from village".

337 INTVWR1: Okay.

338 MA: You know, because I was born in city. you know, **00:38:00** Amritsar is a metropolitan city.
339 Okay, so born from there, never seen a village, okay, only in the movies. And then from there,
340 coming to Canada at the age of 16.

341 INTVWR1: Yeah.

342 MA: So, what the hell you're talking about, you know, like, what are you saying, you know, "How
343 do you like him?" you know. I said no, I don't like him, I don't want to marry him, and I just had
344 a fun wedding and all that my brother's wedding and I came back you know and now his mother
345 is coming from Harshapur to Amritsar every other day, she will be at my door convincing my
346 mother to have your daughter marry my son. Oh, we can't go to Canada because our culture
347 **00:39:00** is like we don't live with the daughters. So, if my brother goes there, then she, they can
348 come too. So, I say, is it on me, like, you know, now I'm saying it. At that time, I didn't know the
349 what, you know. So, then she's, she's going to all my relatives. Every door she went to convince
350 my mother. My mom said, hey, I can't do that. I have to ask Mona first if she wants to marry him
351 or not, you know. She said, if you don't like the younger one, the older one, I said, well, he's like
352 my father's age, you know. I said, "What the hell are you talking about", I said to my sister. I said
353 "You are asking me this question. It really amazes me, right. You know, don't ask me." I said, I
354 don't want a father. I want a husband, right. Oh, then the younger one, he's really nice, you know.
355 The family is really nice. They're convincing me, phoning **00:40:00** me here every day. She's
356 sitting here. What should I say to her. So I say no, just say, no, I don't want to, you know, and then
357 my mom comes back with the saree. The mother gave a saree to my mother-in-law and gold
358 earrings or ring, diamond ring. So, she brings all that. And she said, you know, I'm gonna give it
359 to your daughter, but I have to ask my daughter first, if she wants to marry him or not. So, in
360 between I got engaged to dentist in India and came back and this guy you know, it was
361 assassination of Indira Gandhi right, it was so bad. He didn't even come to see of me at the airport.
362 **00:41:00** I said, you're gone now. So, I left my ring to my mom. I said, I don't want him. I mean,
363 if you can't stand by my side, I came to Canada and he's not even there. You know, I said, what
364 kind of person he is, you know. So, I left every, whatever they gave me, I left it there with my
365 mother and I said cancel it so I came to Canada you know, now they are convincing the sister is
366 crying, so we said, no I said straight no, I said I'm sorry I don't want to. I'm not ready yet you know
367 and she goes she was crying. She started crying in front of me and my sister, you know, like, okay,
368 this is another crocodile's tears, you know, like, I mean, that's what it was, right. You know, oh,
369 my family **00:42:00** can't come because my brother is not here, and she was living with her in -

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370 laws. So, in-laws will not allow the family to come and live with them until whatever, it takes to
371 move them you know. So, that was another issue and then they kept bothering me bothering me
372 at the end you know, and I was at the point of like a different depression and I one day, my sister
373 phoned me and I said go ahead say yes to him, you know and this is went on from there. I got
374 really mad and pretty soon I know like my mom and everybody's at my door to do the ceremony
375 and this is how it happened and I hated it from day one. I didn't like it at all, but because I had
376 said yes, **00:43:00** I can't take it back now. That's what I felt. It's not good for him to say no now.
377 But when he came to Canada, he landed. He got his immigration after two years. He was writing
378 me beautiful letters. For two years he wrote me and I hardly answered them you know, so every
379 time he writes me these letters, I still have them, and it's all what should I say, conditional you
380 know, that was like, and my sister-in-law is doing, and I could feel it like she's fake. And I'm
381 telling everybody I said, you know, don't you see that you guys. **00:44:00** It's a good time to say
382 no and then I'm feeling guilty at the same times, you know like now he's and you know, waiting
383 for you me and what should I do. So anyways, when he came here, we had a little ceremony at
384 the temple and I signed the, just signing the register. I signed it and then in the morning, I'm saying,
385 no, I don't want to marry him. So, I called the priest. I said, I don't want to. Please don't send my
386 papers to Victoria. I don't want to marry him. And then I went to the temple as well. And he goes,
387 "No, it's okay". He's Punjabi too. Older guy, couldn't say anything, like you know, respect. So, he
388 said, you're sitting in a temple. Leave **00:45:00** it up to God. He said that, and then I'm very
389 spiritual and believer, you know. So, I said, okay, you know, leave it up to God, you know,
390 whatever my life is. So, this is how I got married to him. Yeah.

391 INTVWR1: Wow, and it was at this Akali Singh temple?

392 MA: Yeah.

393 INTVWR1: And then after that you were living in Burnaby?

394 MA: After that we were living in Richmond at that time.

395 INTVWR1: Okay.

396 MA: So then when after marriage I moved, then I moved right next to my work, because I didn't
397 know how to drive a car. So, it was easy for me to commute. Like next door I'll go to work and
398 then I got a job at union place. So, I applied three times, before this boss hired me, and then
399 **00:46:00** she told me that we had a meeting of all the hospital's administrators, and she said, Mrs.
400 Barron told me, how wonderful and hard-working woman you are. And then she hired me after
401 that. She didn't even interview me. She just, can you come today, four o'clock. She didn't even
402 interview me, nothing. She told me after the fact she hired me. And the year went by, I was working
403 there every day. Every time she calls me, I'm there. And I worked very hard. You know, so the
404 nurses were very impressed by me, you know. So, they kept you know telling her like Mona is
405 really a good worker hard worker you know, so from there on my, **00:47:00** they would respect
406 me really, highly respect me you know and my boss, my previous boss too, I was still working

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407 part-time there. Now I had part-time there. But after a few months they had a part-time job, but
408 full permanent part-time job. So, I took that because I can get the benefits. I'm married, I have a
409 first child. No, not at that time. No, no. So, I got married after. And then, so my hours were like
410 on the top. My, what you call that, seniority. Number one. So, after a year, she told me, she said,
411 "You want to work, Mona?". I said, "Yeah". She said, "you" 00:48:00 I still had a part-time job,
412 you know, permanent part-time. And then she said, "One of my friends, her name is Linda. She's
413 at Lion's Manors she'll give you three to eleven job. So, she sent me there. She said, "You still
414 want to keep this job?". I said, "Yes". So, I kept it part-time, permanent part-time. And then I
415 went, three to eleven.

416 INTVWR1: Oh okay.

417 MA: We didn't have kids that time, you know. So, I was married though, but then she told, send
418 me there. And she said, "Come tomorrow, three to eleven". So, this is how hard work I was doing,
419 you know like. Everybody loved me because of my hard work, not because I was pretty, you know.
420 Because of hard work, they, you know, they would recommend people, you know. Here's, you
421 want a hard worker, 00:49:00 good person, you know, on time, you know, every day, you know.
422 And neat and tidy, that's what they had. That was the quote, you know, neat and tidy. You know
423 so she hired me and then I worked for a little bit and after that I had my first daughter, so I didn't
424 want to ignore my kids you know, and then what had before I quit there, my boss where I was
425 working permanent job part time. She called me in the office. This is not, I supposed to tell
426 anybody, but I'm gonna share this. How kind she was and how hard-working I was. You know,
427 she said, Mona, are you going to India. I said, yes. She said, "When are you leaving?". I said,
428 "16th of January". She said, "Write 00:50:00 me a letter saying if any opening comes, that you
429 want that full-time job". So, she got me write that letter signed and I'm interested in this job if
430 there's any opening. So, she's the one, phoned me in India. In India, Mona, you got the job. So that
431 was nice, you know like. This is how hard work I have done, you know, in order to get that. So,
432 after that, I worked there 16 years –

433 INTVWR1: Oh, wow.

434 MA: And they –

435 INTVWR1: Where was it?

436 MA: Ah Rosewood Manor in Richmond.

437 INTVWR1: And throughout this time, where were you living?

438 MA: Richmond.

439 INTVWR1: Okay.

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440 MA: Right next to **00:51:00** Fraserview, because I was working there part-time first. So, after
441 that, I moved it to another basement suite.

442 INTVWR1: Okay, okay.

443 MA: Before I bought the house.

444 INTVWR1: Yeah. Yeah. And when did you then eventually come to live in Burnaby? So, your
445 sister was here the whole time?

446 MA: My sister was here the whole time. And I could hear very good things about Burnaby and
447 the schools, you know. And she said, you know, the teachers are very nice. You know, my nieces
448 and nephews, they used to go to Burnaby Central, you know. So, I would hear things from my
449 sister, you know. Burnaby is more peaceful, Burnaby is good, but you know, people have life, they
450 don't bother you, you know, like neighbors are kind, you know, so this is all I heard from my sister.
451 **00:52:00** It's more peaceful, it's not like crime is not there. This is what I thought when I had my
452 first daughter, and then second daughter, and I sold of the house in Richmond, and went to Delta
453 and then from Delta, having a dream of a newer house and bigger house, which I got it in Surrey,
454 but then within 11 months, I realized that I made the biggest mistake.

455 INTVWR1: Why?

456 MA: Why, because the environment was very bad for young kids at that time. It's now too, it's,
457 you know, as you hear, you know, at that time I felt like, No, no, no, this is not for my kids. I felt
458 that, you know, but I didn't know like it was that bad. **00:53:00** bad you know, and then I said
459 "Oh no" I talked to my husband, I said sell the house. I don't want the big house, you know, I don't
460 care let's move Burnaby, you know. Because I had heard my sister-in-law living in Burnaby, my
461 sister living all her extended family living in a Burnaby, so we heard good things about Burnaby,
462 and then I said to my husband, "No, I'm gonna move. I'm gonna find a house in Burnaby". So this
463 is how within 11 months I sold the house in Surrey, beautiful home, big home, you know, and then
464 I came to little ranch area. I bought in Burnaby on Broadway and Kensington.

465 INTVWR1: Broadway and Kensington okay.

466 INTVWR2: When was that? **00:54:00**

467 MA: It was like around 1999. My daughter was born in 1988, a younger one, she was in grade
468 nine. So, five and nine. 9, 14, yeah, so '88 and 9, 14 years, so '92, around, right. So, this is when
469 we came and bought the house and I put them in the Burnaby Central School, you know, hearing
470 the good things and you know about Burnaby Central School, they're very strict. They don't take
471 a bullshit, they don't let bully people, so things like that you know I heard a lot you know. So,
472 that's what I thought I said oh great, this is what I want. **00:55:00** My kids are disciplined as well,
473 and focused towards the study you know.

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474 INTVWR1: Was there any experience in school while they were living in Surrey that made you
475 feel like?

476 MA: Ah, in the school, I was hearing that kids are having drugs, they are bringing drugs in the
477 school.

478 INTVWR1: Ah, okay.

479 MA: I heard that they, I didn't witness anything, but I heard, and then people were, these young
480 kids were fighting a lot in a school ground, in, bullying in the school. My older one was bullied
481 all along, she could not make any friends, you know like, I don't know why she was bullied all her
482 school years you know, and then this is how she was riled up and, you know. So, then I felt, I said,
483 no, **00:56:00** this is not a good place for, maybe change of environment. We'll take the focus away
484 from here. And maybe focus towards the education.

485 INTVWR1: Yeah.

486 MA: That was my reason.

487 INTVWR1: And can you tell us a little bit about your life once you've moved to Burnaby? So,
488 this is the early 2000s, I'm guessing late 90s. How do you feel life was everyday life was different
489 here from all the places you'd lived before Richmond and briefly, Surrey.

490 MA: Like I was feeling like one thing my kids didn't know anybody. So, they were more like
491 friends in a school maybe in a class, and my sister-in-law son and her sister-in-law son, they were
492 both going the same school you know all the kids were together in Burnaby Central. So, they were
493 like cousins you know first cousins, so in a school **00:57:00** that knowing what's happening, and
494 so you can keep a track of everything you know, like somebody will tell you something you know,
495 like why how it happened you know. If it's their fault or not you know, so things like that parents
496 you know keeps a hundred things in the mind, before you bring your child you know in this
497 environment. Of course, you have to watch a game you know, it's not like I came here and I can
498 close my eyes now. I couldn't do that yeah you know, so, I had to keep an eye on them, you know,
499 take them to school, bring them back, you know, every day, you know, so I would keep a close
500 eye on them.

501 INTVWR1: When you mentioned keeping a close eye on them, was there ever anything that made
502 you feel either discrimination or unsafe within?

503 MA: Discrimination, if you think of today, **00:58:00** it's obvious. You feel it. People don't realize
504 because they are privileged. They don't understand where we come from and the colour of our
505 skin, you know. And as they look at me, even in the hospitals, like in a Surrey hospital, I went
506 once. I experienced and the nurse asked me she said, "Do you know do you know English?" and
507 then she looked at my daughters you know, and they said "Ask her question, ask her something".

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508 So, things like that you know, they were so obvious you know. They are already made up their
509 mind, I'm an old lady, you know. Maybe I don't know English you know. So, even in the stores
510 we go today, **00:59:00** people look down, you know at you, they, they think of...The other day I
511 experienced in Burnaby now again, Metrotown. This girl, I'm trying the shoes, you know, runners
512 or walking shoes, I'm looking for. So, I was trying the shoes and I asked my friend, I said, can you
513 go and ask her, ask somebody that if I can return it. Because they were in a clearance. So, I said,
514 but they fit me fine, you know, the price is great. That's only one size, there was in that style, the
515 colour was great, and I was looking for that. So, he went and asked the one of the cashier, and she
516 said anything ended with 88 we don't return, the rest we do. Okay, so okay great I can take it home
517 show **01:00:00** to my daughters if they like it, you know, and I won't return this is perfect for me,
518 86 dollars great, almost a half price they were 145.99 you know so that's a great you know. So, I
519 went to pay and this Indian girl and she goes you have to buy the bag for two dollars. I said "Two
520 dollars?", before she said bag, I said "Well, you know sorry, they don't have a box because they
521 said, you know, "Sorry, we threw them out. I can't find a box for these shoes". So, I said, "Well,
522 will they put it in the bag?", oh, yeah, yeah, they will put it in the bag for you. So, she said, oh,
523 let me check on. So, this girl comes, you know, and she looked at me and my friend, he's black,
524 okay, so I'm brown. So, she said to me, first thing she said to me, anyways, we don't return this.
525 **01:01:00** Anyways, we don't return this without boxes. I said, "I just told you that you guys don't
526 have a box". So, she said, "I'm sorry". I said, "Oh, so you looked at my colour, and the policy
527 changed. You just told my friend anything with 88 ending, you can't return, the rest you can return.
528 This is ending with 97". She said, "I'm sorry, we don't even do that". I said, you know, I felt inside
529 me and I said, carry on, you know, then I said to the Punjabi girl, I said, "You know, I'll buy them".
530 So, here we are both talking, I paid for it, holding the shoes in my hand, walking out of the store,
531 shoe laces are hanging. Okay so, the manager is standing there, we didn't know he was a manager,
532 we thought he was just somebody. We didn't even know he was standing there. **01:02:00** So, he
533 heard our conversation and that manager, you know, he stopped us. He said, "What happened?"
534 Then I explained it to him. And you know what she told me. She said, "Why don't you go to
535 another store and ask for a bag?" I said, "I'm buying a hundred dollars product from you, and you
536 can't even give me twenty-five cents bag?" Really, I didn't come. I came to return my shoes, but
537 I didn't know I was going to buy it, you know. So, I bought it, you know and then she told me on
538 top of it she told me to go get the bag from other stores. Why don't you go she said, she was like
539 teasing me, literally teasing me, looking at me you know, I said "I'm a much older than you, you
540 don't do that". I simply walked away, but I don't want to create a problem you know but then the
541 manager he said, "No **01:03:00** you kidding me. She said, that?" I said "You want to go and verify
542 that, let's go". He said "Oh no no, I will coach her. I'll take care of, I'll take care of that". He said
543 "No" he said "Come with me". So, he said "Return these shoes", the manager he returned it, he
544 okay, you know, and then he said "Give her 50 % off". So, the manager was black, you know, so,
545 you see the difference people are still, you know, we are way more modern, thoughtful, mindful,
546 but back of their mind, they still have that, you know in them, like they look at you like you are
547 not worth it, or you are not at par you know. **01:04:00** That's what I feel every day, even till today
548 and that's a sad part, but you know we can't change overnight, hopefully, they will deal with
549 everyone, you know, like deal like another human being.

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550 INTVWR1: Thank you so much for that. I mean, there's one last question. It's just to ask about
551 your suggestions, which is, what would you like to see in an exhibit that focused on South Asian
552 histories, particularly for as a sort of perhaps message for younger people who may see the exhibit.

553 MA: In Burnaby?

554 INTVWR1: In the Burnaby Village Museum.

555 MA: Well, as a Canadian citizen, we should all participate to make Burnaby beautiful, you know,
556 not litter and **01:05:00** make the environment better, and peaceful, and happy, so, we can all live
557 in a peaceful environment, not cause other people struggle or grief for nothing. So be kind to each
558 other.

559 INTVWR1: Thank you so much for that. James, do you have any questions? You wanted to ask
560 that I didn't give you a chance to answer.

561 INTVWR2: The only thing I was wondering actually, is about how you came to Canada, like the
562 transportation the first time. You mentioned you were flying, but I'm just wondering if you had to
563 stop over anywhere along the way, or just how you reached –

564 MA: Transportation?

565 INTVWR2: Yeah, like you were from your **[inaudible]** Center, so then did you take a train to
566 Delhi and fly from there?

567 MA: Yeah, we took a train to Delhi, and we stayed with my first cousin's **01:06:00** house, and
568 then they dropped us at the airport, and this is how we came to Canada.

569 I2: Do you remember, was there a stopover somewhere?

570 MA: Yes, there was in Japan, Tokyo. We stayed there. We went to the hotel, we didn't know what
571 to do. We were going in the elevator up and down, you know, like, first time we saw elevators
572 there.

573 INTVWR1: That's interesting, so what airline did you go on?

574 MA: I think Japan Airline.

575 INTVWR1: Ah, okay. And that flew from Delhi, it makes sense. Okay. Thank you.

576 MA: Japan Airline, yeah.

577 INTVWR2: Thank you. Okay.

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578 MA: Thank you.

579 INTVWR1: Thank you so much. I'm just going to hit, yeah.