

This is Your Heritage...

Stories from the Indian Community in South Gloucestershire

Interview: Anju Patel Full Interview Audio Transcription (11-11-2021)

Transcribed by Bristol Transcription & Translation Services and edited a member of the South Gloucestershire Museums Group, 9th February 2022. Anju Patel Interview audio (54 mins)

Interviewer: Halima Malek

Recorder: Hardik Gaurav

Location: At home in Bradley Stoke.

Participant prefix key:

I: Interviewer
R: Respondent

Transcript begins 00:08

I: Today's date is 1st of November 2021. My name is Halima Malik and I'm interviewing the very lovely Anju Patel. I'm here from the South Gloucester Indian stories project. Could you please introduce yourself?

R: Hello, my name is Anju Patel and I was born in India, [Surat] which is in the west, about a hundred miles from Mumbai.

I: Could you spell your name for us please?

R: My full name is Anjna which is A-N-J-N-A and Anju, A-N-J-U.

I: Thank you, so you said you were born in [Surat] in India. Could you share with us the first memory that you can remember as a child in India?

R: As a child a bit more than a toddler, probably around three I used to follow my grandmother around because we grew up in the extended family and I always went with my gran everywhere so if my gran went visiting people in the street or family I kind of just tagged along with her.

I: Was that your maternal gran or your paternal gran?

R: My father's mum – paternal.

- I:** If you close your eyes and go back to when you were three do you have any memories of smells or textures or the heat, something as a child to go back to?
- R:** Yeah [Surat] is a city and it was a city at the time as well. It was quite modern for that time. The road we lived on it was like a little cul-de-sac and just outside the porch was a dusty road – well, initially it was dusty and then it was full tarmac so we always played on the dusty part. We weren't allowed to go on the tarmac because that was where bicycles and rickshaws and cars would go. That's what I remember, you know, not to go beyond that line.
- I:** Okay and do you remember any of the games you played as a child with your friends?
- R:** As a child I remember playing [sl: Batch Goki: 0:02:24.1] and playing with bottle tops and leaves and things like that. Skipping with other children in the street.
- I:** What about schooling? What was the schooling there in India like?
- R:** Schooling – like you have the nursery, there was a school called [Mamon: 0:02:48.9] which is a children's school I guess and that was the nursery, so I went to nursery for two years because my sister was already there and I wanted to tag along with her so mum and dad paid for me to go but I did another year as well. It was quite far. We had an Ayah and she would take us to school and bring us back. I also remember her combing our hair and plaiting them and basically dressing us and taking us to school.
- I:** For our listeners what is an Ayah?
- R:** A child minder but she wasn't a live in one, she used to just come in the morning and go after she brought us back from school. I don't know, she stayed around until 16:00-17:00 probably.
- I:** Was this quite normal for your community to have Ayahs for the children at that time?
- R:** I don't know. I know we had one but that's probably because – I don't want to sound snobby but we were kind of well off or mum and dad were so we had the Ayah and she also did the tuition at home like played with us and did drawings and number work and things.
- I:** Brilliant what was the language that you spoke in your house, in your home, your mother tongue?

- R:** It's [Gujarati: 0:04:07.0] In our home we spoke [Gujarati] but within the neighbourhood there were other people living. There were some [Marathi: 0:04:16.0] people, there were people who spoke Hindi and there were also some [inaudible: 0:04:21.9] living locally as well just above two flats away. It was a little bit I guess cosmopolitan like we did have people from all over India living there because there were two colleges in Surat so a lot of students used to come and across the road from us was like a student flat and a lot of young people used to live there.
- I:** Thank you. do you remember as a child what your favourite food was?
- R:** Oh, my staple was [Dal bhat; 0:04:59.0] which is rice and dal and still is.
- I:** What's dal?
- R:** It's Toor dal. Pigeon peas and it's an oily dal which you boil and then do the [Tarka: 0:05:13.1]
- I:** Did you enjoy it?
- R:** I did. I so did.
- I:** Okay so we're going to move away a little bit from your childhood, so my understanding is that your parents migrated here from India.
- R:** They did.
- I:** How old were your parents and what was the reason they left their home town to move here?
- R:** Well, my father had a friend who was already living in England in the West Midlands and obviously dad had kept in touch and it transpires that he sponsored him to come to England for a better life basically so mum and dad came with my brother and my younger sister back in 1966, yeah and we and my older sister we stayed behind with my grandparents – my dad's parents and [the Gaki and Jaja: 0:06:17.4] the extended family.
- I:** How old was your mother and father when they moved out?
- R:** Oh, I don't know how old they were but they were probably late 30s – early 40s.
- I:** Okay and how old were you when your parents moved out here?
- R:** I think I was about five.
- I:** Do you have any sort of memory of how you felt when your parents moved here and let you with your grandparents in their care?

- R:** Well because we all grew up with our grandparents and our younger [Gaki and Gaka] it didn't seem that painful because both brothers – you know, we all lived in this big house. Yeah they were going away and they went and we went on to school and life was normal. The only thing we had obviously back in those days there was no telephones and things like that so you just got a letter every week, 10 days you know and we'd write a letter back to mum and dad and that was our form of communication for three years.
- I:** For three years. I guess because you lived in that extended family situation and in your home like you said, it didn't really affect you so much?
- R:** Yeah, obviously it was your mum and dad but there's not that great big void as they say because my grandmother looked after us so much all of the time anyway. Mum would always be cooking and cleaning – cooking more to the point or going to the pictures so we were really you know – we used to get on with our cousins and uncles and aunties so they were like our second parents.
- I:** You obviously seem to have a beautiful relationship with your grandparents and like you said they brought you up and you had a very big extended family with your uncles and aunties so if we move away from a bit of your childhood. When and how old were you when you found out that you and your sister were now going to be moving to England as well to be with your parents?
- R:** If I remember rightly they always used to say – they used to send money for our schooling and everything and they said as soon as we've bought a house they could call us over. There may have been some rules and regulations where parents couldn't bring the children over until they had a home or something. That bit I don't know. As I say, I was too young but yeah so sometime later they sent us letters saying you're going to be coming over and my uncles arranged our passports and tickets and everything and dropped us off at Mumbai airport.
- I:** If we just rewind a little bit, do you have any memory of the conversation you might have had with your uncle when they said to you you're now leaving India?
- R:** Yeah. We do. They told us like when we went to have our passport photos taken it was like why? I remember signing forms because you had to sign the passport with your name and signature and they said, 'Oh because you're going on the plane to your mum and dad.'
- I:** What did you think? Did you know what a plane was?
- R:** We knew what a plane was because when mum and dad left we had gone to the airport to drop them off to Mumbai, that was probably the first time I saw a plane, you know really close up.
- I:** Okay so you had your photos taken, you signed it, you'd seen a plane before, so can you sort of maybe tell us the journey from home to the airport?

- R:** The journey from home to the airport was broken in two bits so I had a [Foy: 0:10:34.6] my dad's younger sister – two sisters who used to live in Mumbai so we'd gone a few days ahead and stayed with our aunties and then on the day we flew we went from their home in Mumbai to the airport because it was nearer rather than doing about 200 mile journey all in one day. It was broken up.
- I:** Who came with you to drop you off to the airport?
- R:** The uncle I lived with and two cousins and my [Foy].
- I:** Can you remember how you felt that you were now going alone with your sister on a plane and leaving your uncles, your aunties, your grandparents, friends, as a child, do you have any sort of...?
- R:** A lot of crying going on if I remember. There was just lots of crying and they did us garlands and coconut for good luck and that kind of thing so they did a little ceremony and after all that was taken away we had a photo taken after all the tears were dried up and we were just stood there waiting for the plane I guess and then my uncle – it was arranged because me and my sister were travelling on our own it was arranged with the airline company that one of the air hostesses was going to be sort of our guardian looking after us until we landed, so she basically took us in with her. We didn't go like all the normal passengers would go, we went with the crew because she was taking us and when we landed again, we had to stay back until the end and she brought us out, collected our baggage and handed us over to our parent.
- I:** How old were you and how old was your sister when you left India?
- R:** My sister was just over 11, probably coming into 12. I was under eight.
- I:** Okay, do you remember what it felt like to be on a plane for the first time?
- R:** Yeah, we just stared out of the window. It was just amazing. Like going to a fair and you think, 'Ah I'm going on a big dipper,' but even better.
- I:** Were you scared, were you anxious?
- R:** I think we were very... I don't know. We were naïve and innocent but uncle and them had said, 'Oh this lady is going to look after you,' and everything and we did have the seat up close to the air hostess who was taking us so there was always somebody familiar. We didn't know her but she was taking us.
- I:** So, you felt looked after...?
- R:** Yeah we felt safe.
- I:** What did you eat? Do you remember what you ate?

- R:** Um, we flew Air India so we did have normal Indian food, I can't really remember, no. I remember pickle, I remember orange juice. We had milk and biscuits because my uncle had given biscuits to her to give to us during the flight.
- I:** Okay so you are now travelling from India to England. How did you feel when you got to England for the first time? what kind of words come into your head and think the doors opened on the plane and then the air hostess is taking you out. Can you relive some of those memories for us?
- R:** Well like I said, we were held back until the passengers had come out and then we came off with the lady and we had little jackets and shawls on with our dresses, we had little boots – shoes and socks and everything. As soon as we were coming down the staircase we were hit by – we were met or greeted by hailstones and it was like something we'd never seen before. It was cold, April – just hailstones. I'm thinking, 'Oh my god,' and that was it really and then we were on a little buggy-like thing and straight into the airport. We didn't have to walk or go through the normal channels and they did our checking bags and everything for us so we didn't have to do any of it.
- I:** So, you come out as an eight year old child to England in April, faced a whole load of hailstones and who was there to greet you after you came through the doors?
- R:** Well, when we came through the doors with our bags and everything it was my dad and there was somebody else. I don't remember who the other person was and my dad's friend who we refer to as uncle so the three of them had come for us two because obviously we'd got luggage and everything and it was just a small car. I can tell you the car that came. It was a Ford Anglia.
- I:** So, you get there, you're in a car, you met your father and how did you feel because you haven't seen your father for a long time?
- R:** Do you know, I kind of probably blocked it out. I don't know.
- I:** Okay so did you come through Heathrow airport?
- R:** Yes, we came through Heathrow.
- I:** From Heathrow where did you go?
- R:** We drove what seemed like forever and ever and we drove to the West Midlands because our parents and the uncle they lived in Wolverhampton so we arrived in Wolverhampton.
- I:** So, you're now in Wolverhampton, you and your sister reunited with your family?
- R:** Yes.
- I:** Was there any surprises or...?

- R:** Oh yeah there were surprises – well, not surprises as such because when we were in India we had received news that my mum had – we’d got two new brothers like born one year after the other but we’d never seen them and yes when we got in there were two little – one toddler and one baby in a pram.
- I:** How beautiful, so you’ve just realised that you’re now not the baby of the family and you have baby brothers so you’re then – so was there a community – was there an Indian community there? Had your parents made friends or connections with other Asians?
- R:** Oh yeah, they had so in the three years they’d been here, they’d made friends through the uncle. Obviously he’s a friend because they’d been in England 10-15 years prior to my parents so they were well attuned to western life or English life and the year before we came my grandparents they came from [Keenya: 0:18:13.0] to England and they lived on the street behind us and we’d never seen our mum’s family at all so within a few days we met my mum’s parents and my [massies and mammas: 0:18:33.7] we’d never set eyes on before so we left my dad’s family to come to my mum – to be introduced to my mum’s family.
- I:** You still had that family set up and that community around you so now as a child you’re eight maybe nine years old, you’re obviously going to school and how did that feel going to school? A different language – was there any barriers that you faced as a nine year old going into school?
- R:** Yeah, a huge one initially because although we went to school in India, we had English lessons. I mean that was in the nursery or in infant school so the lessons we had were probably an hour a week, an hour here and there. You only had to write bat and cat, two or three letter words. I used to know my numbers. My sister knew more because she was older and she actually went to a private school where her schooling was done in English. I hadn’t quite reached that age yet so when we went into school we didn’t start in May, we started the September so for about two or three months we were at home because you couldn’t go in mid-term, you had to wait until September. When mum and dad had bought this house next door to them were a Punjabi family on the one side then the other side there was an English family. The Punjabi family they had a little girl who was the same age as me, so I played with her and I went to school with her so basically when I started school in September I was in her class. We had picked up Hindi by this time because they used to speak Punjabi-Hindi and she was amazing because without her I would have been totally lost so she helped me for the first two years when I was in her class until we left primary school.
- I:** Did you struggle with the language in school or was it something you comfortably fitted and learned when you were in there?
- R:** Uh, struggled to some degree but fitted in comfortably because I’d always got my friend to fall back in the language but picked it up. I think because [Andi: 0:21:16.1] as we called her, they taught us at home.

- I:** It sounds like it was a nice flow – a steady flow from India to schooling, and then how was it in your teenage years going into secondary school and college?
- R:** Secondary school was tough. Primary school was good, the teachers were lovely and everything because one of the teachers lived not far from where we lived and everything but when we moved to senior – secondary school we got split up from my next door – because obviously she was born here, her English was a lot more and everything and when you did the 11 plus you were graded into different classes. I didn't quite meet the same – what they needed so we were split up but within the year we were back together again because as I said, we were always home schooled so although you went to school you had to come back home, do your chores and then back into doing education so the following year I was back in her class which was nice.
- I:** What subjects did you like? What was your favourite subject in school?
- R:** Art.
- I:** Were you very good at it?
- R:** I wouldn't say I was good at it but I used to like drawing. Yeah.
- I:** So, a secondary college and then what happened? How did you go into university? What was the route that you took?
- R:** I didn't get to university, I did go to college so through – due to family circumstances I couldn't continue my education. I went to work then that was it really.
- I:** Okay so you're at work now and what was your first job?
- R:** I was an administrator in G K N Sankeys in the accounts office. Did that for about six months or so and then that was working -like I had to do two busses to this place and then another job came up locally. I moved there and I worked in the communication department and I worked in there for 10 years.
- I:** Is this still all in the same area?
- R:** Within a five to 10 mile radius.
- I:** Okays so [Anju], you are married?
- R:** Yes.
- I:** ...and you have children so when did you meet your husband and how did you meet your husband?

R: Okay, so while we were growing up we had the Gujarati community and we also had [Shree Krishnan Mandir: 0:24:25.7] and both – we used to go to both, the [Mandir: 0:24:31.5] we used to do [Garabas: 0:24:32.5] and dramas and so on and same with the other community as well. I met my husband through the dance area so the gentleman who was organising the dance and drama thing was my husband's father. He didn't actually come to these events but his sisters who we were friends with so we do [garabas] and so on occasionally my husband now, then he would drop his sisters off to where we practiced or rehearsed or collect them. We did have such luxury, we used to walk and I think occasionally he may have given us a lift and that's how we knew him.

I: So, you mentioned [Mandir and garabas: 0:25:37.1] What's a [Mandir: 0:25:39.2]?

R: [Mandir] is a temple. A place a worship where we used to go regular as clockwork on Thursdays and Sundays. Thursdays we'd go for the [Suksan] which was prayers and on Sundays they used to run a school so we could keep up with our Gujarati classes, reading and writing.

I: And a [Garabar: 0:26:04.7] is?

R: [Garabar] is a festival which is [Navaratri: 0:26:08.5] nine days of festivals. We have them once a year just before Diwali, about 15 days before Diwali and we worship all the goddesses.

I: Okay so it's a very – sounding like it used to have kept with your Indian heritage. Did you have much to do with the Indian communities and through your [Mandir] did you have a social network?

R: [Mandir] was our social network. I mean my parents used to go a lot more but we as children had to go on a Sunday because that was at school and Thursday we used to go for prayers, yes. As I say, mum and dad would go a lot more you know with all the other occasions and everything.

I: I feel like you've still kept the culture and your parents have instilled...

R: Yeah we do have the grounding, yes.

I: ...the traditions and your religion. Were you still wearing your traditional clothing, eating traditional foods still at home?

R: We always – yeah still even now we have our traditional foods. Yes we eat you know, all the other foods, Chinese and pizzas and so on but at home it was always home cooked food. There was one day off, Friday, fish and chips day but every day and that didn't come in until much later but it was always home cooked food.

I: Was your wedding a traditional wedding?

R: It was.

I: Can you tell us what you wore and some of the traditions that you had on your day?

R: At the time we had two ceremonies. One was a civil wedding on the Monday and then we had the Indian ceremony on the Saturday because no place was ordinarily registrars couldn't come out to you. It was hundreds of people at the wedding nothing like nowadays, yeah it was a very big wedding. Your parents did most of thing so both parents invited and their friends and family respective. For us it was unusual because we lived in the same town, literally 10 minutes away from each other so same people. You know, my mum and dad knew the same people as my husband's parents. Obviously the families were different and they would be scattered all over England.
The food was all cooked by my gran and all her friends. It was catered in that way. The ladies helped do all of the cooking. We have a ceremony in the morning where the bride does a ceremony with her parents and then you get changed into your wedding outfit and then the groom comes, the priest does all the ceremony, we walk around a fire seven times – five times? Gosh I'm forgetting. We walk around the fire and then lots of presents giving and food afterwards. There was the party as such – reception like you have now. As I said there were hundreds of people. People you didn't know but a lot of the people I knew in Wolverhampton because they were all local. They're the people we'd seen at the temple all of the time.

I: What did you wear?

R: What did I wear? I wore a white sari in the morning then a plain white sari with red border with [dikis: 0:30:08.0] sequins and stone and then when you – during the ceremony your in-laws give you outfits which is the outfit you change into before you leave so after the wedding was over and you had your meal you get changed in to the sari that's been given by your husband's family.

I: So, the family kept with the tradition from India...?

R: Way back, yes.

I: Yeah so in your wedding you had all of those traditions and you respected obviously both the families and kept with their traditions?

R: Yeah.

I: So, you're married now. Did you stay in Wolverhampton? What was your family home, where did you move to with your husband?

R: Okay so for the first year we lived with my in-laws and then we bought a home not far away. It was about a 20 minute walk probably and we lived there.

I: How did you then get in connection with the Indian culture and your Asian art projects, how did that come across?

- R:** Oh, that was a long – okay so we’d been married for about six or seven years, probably six years and [VJ] was applying for jobs elsewhere or he was – because where he was he couldn’t progress any further. He was in the accounts offices and then I had my son and about a year into it [VJ] got a position in Bristol so it was basically job relocation and we moved to Bristol. Yeah that’s it.
- I:** What year was that in?
- R:** 1990.
- I:** Okay so you’ve left your childhood home, your childhood town, you’re now moving to Bristol. Did you know anybody in Bristol? Was there an Indian community here? How was it for you guys?
- R:** It was quite shocking actually because we came – well, [VJ] was working a couple of weeks, he already worked here and just trialled it out and then we put our house up for sale in Wolverhampton. That was all going through. In those months we’d driven up to Bristol, we even stayed over in one of the hotels, checked out the area, what we’d like and that’s how we ended up in [Bradly Stoke: 0:32:58.7]. We knew a lady and she does live in Bristol still. Both our parents, they told us of this lady who lived here because her in-laws probably lived in Wolverhampton or locally and they said, ‘Oh wow, her daughter-in-law lives there,’ and we were introduced to her. Yeah, that was the only person we knew in Bristol.
- I:** How was it? Did you – obviously it’s exciting...
- R:** It was.
- I:** ...an adventure, you, your husband, your son...
- R:** Frightening also.
- I:** Yeah, frightening also, completely leaving friends and a community – you know, familiarity kind of thing, so what was it like here? Did you then make connections with the local temples or – what did you do to make Bristol your home?

R: The first couple of months were hard so we were just driving around and we came into [Bradly Stoke] saw these houses being built, kind of bought a house, I was still in Wolverhampton because our house still hadn't sold and [VJ] was working here, then me and my older son had moved – joined him and it was a shock because it was like, 'Oh god, I don't know anybody.' I got this toddler and that's it, [VJ] was going to work and I'm at home. We only had the one car. I don't know anyone, don't know anything. We did make connection with the temple so we went to the local temple and soon afterward a lady moved across the road [Denise] and we're still great friends and she had a little daughter so we kind of just went for walks and went on to mother and toddler groups, nurseries and so on but when I was going to one of the mother and toddler groups, a little park just in [Bradley Stoke]. I was there with my little one and me and Denise were there and another Indian lady came up and she was just looking at me and I looked at her, didn't know what to say really and it was only when I spoke in my mother tongue, Gujarati to my son she realised that I was Gujarati because I wasn't sure if she was Gujarati either and she thought, 'Oh...' and then she came up and asked me and then we became friends and we're still great friends to this day and through her I met a few other people because she was living in [Bradley Stoke] also and she knew of another lady who lived in [Bradley Stoke], so at the time I think there was three or four families – Indian families living in [Bradley Stoke] and there were two families living in [Little Stoke] or [Stoke Lodge] yeah.

I: So slowly it became home?

R: Yeah it took about six months to a year before it really felt home. The first three months I did cry – not every day but you know, you felt a bit tearful because you are on your own, just on your own.

I: Yeah, you've left families, friends, everything you'd known, so you've done a lot of work with the Gloucestershire Asian Arts projects. How did this all come about?

R: It's different so when [Aaron] went to school he was five - when he went into nursery and I think it was the year after probably... Um, he was told he was different by one of the other children in the bathroom and he came home and said, 'so and so said I'm different you know and they used the word colour.' He wasn't fazed by it because he was born here, he didn't know anyone. I mean yes he had a few – my friend's children and he knew [Sian: 0:37:31.6] so they were you know, they're children, they don't know any different but it did get a little bit more difficult therefore I went into school and spoke to the teacher and we came up with a project and what is known as World Week now, I kind of went into school and held that once a week just to – so that the children would know that we're not different you know, because he was the only Indian child in his class, probably in his school I think so it was quite difficult for him although he didn't find it difficult, I think I found it more difficult in the playground. You know, I'm there, no one would talk to you.

I: Obviously now you're a mother and your son is having – well, you know being racially attacked I guess in a sort of way because of a lack of understanding?

- R:** Yeah, a lack of understanding.
- I:** Did you feel like it was your job now to educate and bring awareness into his school?
- R:** I did and from then on I kind of went **the** school and every year I would take [Rangoli: 0:38:56.6] art, the Sari dressing, I would do Diwali, I would [Holi] so there was a few occasions that we have, I would do those in school.
- I:** How did the other children and their parents embrace the cultural diversity that you are now bringing in with your traditional art pieces and bringing awareness? Was it something they welcomed?
- R:** Do you know, all the children were amazing. They found it fun to learn to dance, 'Oh we can do dressing up,' and things so they were amazing. They took it really well. As far as the [Rangoli] arts go, because we couldn't use powdered paint and everything because of health and safety we did that with pulses, mung dahls and rice, pasta and so on, other coloured seeds and things. I was aware that there were a couple of parents who weren't totally embracing it or happy – well they questioned the teacher, 'Why is my child doing that?' and I think it was explained to them that this is learning you know because today your children are six, seven but one day they'll be travelling away you know, they'll be living amongst other people, they'll be going abroad and things and I think it was handled really well by the school.
- I:** So, you obviously brought a lot of positive awareness culture diversity in the school for your son and for yourself and for the other children. Did you further that afield? Did you take it to other communities or other schools?
- R:** Do you know I was only learning. It wasn't my field. I was just a communication officer. I spoke a lot and talked to people. That's my gift but as far as the education part goes, showing cultural diversity and all that, that all came in small stages in my life [0:41:05.2] you know. It wasn't something I knew. I kind of learned it as I went along.
- I:** Which is the best way so where did this take you?
- R:** This – so for a number of years I worked part time and then – I still worked with Mandir and I worked within our community so it was always – you've always had your own knowledge but work with Asian Arts Agency and they used to promote arts and culture within schools in Bristol, Bath, North Somerset sort of thing and I became their development coordinator and again, I learned on the job. It's not something I knew, I had help from the person who was there already, taking arts in to school so I took [inaudible:0:42:05.2] Bollywood, Rangoli Arts, into all the local schools.

- I:** That's fantastic so obviously there was a big need because there was a lot of maybe lack of understanding, lack of diversity, understanding your culture, somebody else's culture so well done because you obviously were part of this amazing journey which made it easier for other parents.
- R:** Yeah. I mean it was always there but we never saw it. Although the Asian Arts Agency existed in Bristol we didn't see it in this neck of the woods so my sons went to The Ridings School, they didn't actually have it. It was only when I was working and my children had left school by this stage that I actually brought the arts – the dance into the school. It was in the city schools but you know, so the outskirts kind of missed out. They didn't receive it until quite a lot later.
- I:** So, you've been a very big influence and advocate for the Hindu culture, the Indian culture. Have you then – did you develop any more projects, did you take it elsewhere or did you keep it very local to Bristol and the surrounding areas?
- R:** With Asian Arts we took it to Gloucester, we took it to Bath. There was a few other areas, Taunton but they would be like world week projects or I've taken it to Cheltenham in the library. They were always small projects. You couldn't do too much because this was all funded by arts council. I know, you always had to make a case for it sometimes you win, sometimes you don't.
- I:** Well, done because it's obviously helped and I'm sure the parents who from the Asian children, their parents would have been very happy to see that their culture was being celebrated and the children were being educated, the other children to understand the differences between the children and the colour diversity and food so you must be very proud that you were part of this journey?
- R:** It's not something I set up. I think it was they were always there but it just didn't have that – it wasn't out there.
- I:** You pushed it?
- R:** I just took it more locally I took it to the schools in [Easton.] It just wasn't out there. It was out perhaps in some of the main schools but didn't seem to go into the little schools.
- I:** No, that's fantastic. Thank you.
- R:** It was only in a small bit but...
- I:** Well, every small – every effort is an effort and every awareness brings more awareness so you've obviously lived a very full life and you've advocated a lot of – and educated other people so home life now. With your children, did you keep up with your Indian traditions, your language in your own family setting between you and your husband and your kids?

R: We do. We keep up the main Diwali and the New Year and [inaudible: 0:45:40.8] all the Hindu religion has loads and loads of days which are festivals but I don't keep all of them but I keep just a handful.

I: But your children are ultimately...

R: Aware.

I: Yeah aware and [inaudible: 0:45:56.2]. Yeah. Do they have the language?

R: They're reluctant to speak but they understand.

I: Have you visited India since you moved here as a child? Have your children been to India?

R: I went the first time back in – so I came in '69 and '79 I went back. I'd been working for little while, saved up and went.

I: How was that? You went back 10 years later did you say? So, you are now a young lady...

R: 20, yeah. Well, 18 actually I was 18-19.

I: You left as a child, you've gone now as a young woman. How was that?

R: Oh, it was lovely. It was great to see, honestly my grandparents had passed away by now. It was great to see you know, our home and family.

I: What are the memories you have of going to a country that you were born and grew up in until you were eight and to be there. Do you remember any smells...?

R: Yeah, it was still busy, yeah. You got the heat and the busyness but the food element was so amazing. You can't get food here. Like when we first came there was no Indian grocery shop or anything. There used to be a man in a van and he used to come door to door and you'd buy your bhindi and aubergine and [methi] [Inaudible: 0:47:38.4] you know, chilli, ginger and so on from the back of this van. That's how mum and dad for the first few years and then there was a shop but I think when they were first here there was no shop as such – not in Wolverhampton. There may have been in other areas where there were a lot more Asian people. It was literally, you know in the December time I was there for six weeks. We stayed for four weeks with all the family and I had been to Delhi and things with my parents before when I was very young but don't remember it and then we went to – so dad took – only I had gone with my mum and dad so we went to Delhi. I went with my aunties and my gran so five or six of us but we went to Agra and that was the biggest trip and then we went to Mumbai and then came back.

- I:** Oh, that's beautiful so now as a mature lady who has lived I would say in England more.
- R:** Oh gosh yes.
- I:** What's home for you?
- R:** Here I guess. Here is home. I still love India, yes.
- I:** So, you're here now, you've still kept your traditions, you've kept your language, your food. Have your children visited India with you?
- R:** Yes. My children – both of them – I'm just trying to think. They've both been back twice. I think one of them might have been back three times – no, they've both been back twice so yes, when my children were five and 10, I took them first time then we went a few years later but [VJ] and I, my husband now, we've been back a number of times because after my mum and dad and [VJ's] mum and dad, they'd retired. They go back every year or even before they retired because they have their home so they go back every year and we've gone back a number of times and obviously in the later few years as the parents have got older [VJ] or I have accompanied our parents will go, basically take them there, escort them home, settle them in for a week or two then come back.
- I:** That's beautiful so you've kept your connections with your home town, your home country so what does [Anju] do now? She's retired...?
- R:** Yes, she's become a free lady but not really as my son points out – he says you're becoming a carer now the parents are older.
- I:** You care for your parents and from the way you talk family is extremely important to you. do you still do any work with any of the communities, any of the art projects, do you do anything?
- R:** It's got less and less but I still go to the temple. The other thing is with South Gloucestershire Asian project who I – after leaving Asian Arts I worked with them as – initially we were volunteers so back – oh, 2000? Yeah. Because there was so lack of Indian-ness in this area my husband and three other friends so there was four of them, they set up a group, the South Gloucestershire Asian project and we had funding from South Glos council to do things you know, bring a bit of cultural diversity in this area, so as I say we were volunteers for years and years and then for a short spell, a couple of years, I was a part time [inaudible: 0:51:39.1] worker with [Fortnum: 0:51:41.8] just about seven or eight hours a week. It wasn't a lot but yeah so I fell back into my – because once I left Asian Arts I was doing other things and for personal reasons there was a gap.
- I:** So, you still have a connection...
- R:** I do yeah...

- I:** You volunteer and still take part to [inaudible: 0:52:06.0]
- R:** We celebrate Diwalis and things like that and they will help them you know, I used to do help with the contacts because when you've been doing something for 10-15 years I know we have a log and was all paper based initially but there are certain people and you always have that connection with people and say, 'Oh yeah, you know so and so? they do [Mehndi]' or, 'so and so is a singer,' and we even set up parties for the children to learn [Tublas: 0:52:36.3] so we used to have [Tubla: 0:52:37.8] classes at the leisure centre. My son went and a number of other children used to learn. It was just bringing little bits and things for...
- I:** So, you're still quite active in the community...?
- R:** Kind of a background now. Other things have taken...
- I:** But [inaudible: 0:52:56.0] before you've still got that connection so final question, you've shared so much so now as a beautiful mature woman when you look back and you see your life and it's changed so much, so much...
- R:** It has, it's evolved.
- I:** ...and the way you've come to India and everything, just a few little feelings of what you feel these opportunities has given you and how it's grounded you and made Anju Anju?
- R:** It's been challenging but I've grown and I've learned. You know from the time – when I was young it was different because I was still with family and I was eight but when we moved to Bristol it was not knowing anybody and you've grown up and we made some real good connection with other people our age and we become friends for 20-25-30 years now. We're still really good friends. There's half a dozen people I call that my Bristol family and that's so precious. Yeah.
- I:** Thank you. Thank you so much Anju. It' been amazing to listen to your journey and your story so thank you for sharing it with us.
- R:** You're welcome.

Transcript ends 54:23



