

Houston Asian American Archive
Chao Center for Asian Studies, Rice University

Interviewee: Rathna Kumar

Interviewers: Renuka Rege, Jarvis Sam

Date/Time of Interview: June 20, 2011 at 6:30 pm

Transcribed by: Jarvis Sam, Renuka Rege

Audio Track Time: 01:08:51

Edited by: Sara Davis (4/6/17)

Background:

Rathna Kumar was born in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India in 1946. The oldest of five children, Kumar had a knack for learning that continues even today. Kumar is a polyglot, speaking: Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam, and Kannada, among others. Ms. Kumar began practicing various forms of dance from an early age, and later became a dance instructor. After finishing her Bachelor's degree, Kumar began teaching English at the SIET Women's College in India. In 1975, Kumar met her husband, who had been studying medicine in Houston since the early 70s. Once in Houston, Kumar noticed that many individuals were interested in having their children learn Indian classical dance, but no such school existed in town at the time. Going out on a limb, Kumar opened the Anjali Center for Performing Arts. She still teaches dance at the Anjali Center, and is a member of numerous local performing arts organizations. She also teaches a dance class at Rice University.

Setting:

The interview focuses on themes of labor and capital to develop a history of Ms. Kumar's life through the prism of her childhood, family life, and daily activities. The interview was conducted in the Anjali Center dance studio in Sugar Land, and it required approximately an hour and ten minutes. [Indian classical music playing in the background while students practiced adds a colorful dimension to the interview].

Interview Transcript:

Key:

RK: Rathna Kumar

RR: Renuka Rege

JS: Jarvis Sam

—: speech cuts off; abrupt stop

...: speech trails off; pause

Italics: emphasis

(?): preceding word may not be accurate

[Brackets]: actions [laughs, sighs, ect.]

RR: This is Renuka Rege...

JS: and Jarvis Sam...

RR: ...and we're here from Rice University with the Houston Asian American Archive project, and we're here today in the Anjali Center dance studio, with um, Mrs. Rathna Kumar.

JS: So, you were born in 1946.

RK: Yes.

JS: Can you tell us a little bit about your background, or what was it like back home?

RK: Um, o —of course, I mean I have great memories because I only came here in my late twenties so I had lived there in India for all of that uh, time and um, I have wonderful memories and I keep going back so my memories are constantly replenished, so to say. Um, I was born in uh south India, in uh Chennai, which is a major city, the fourth largest in India, born and raised there, I lived all of my life in Chennai, and um, from the age of four, I started learning, formally learning dance, so I have been dancing since I was four, I've never stopped doing this, so my memories are all connected with my dance. And music as far back as I can remember my earliest memories, even before that I remember being a very small child, and my mother singing to me. My mother and my father were both, um, my mother is a singer, my father was a singer and uh, so we grew up with a lot of music in our house all... plenty of music. And since there was no television in those days, and the only entertainment was the radio, it was on all the time, and uh, my father and mother and—and my aunt, my mother and aunt are professional singers, uh everyone used to sing to us, and uh my— even my grandfather was a—a stage actor, and could recite chant, um, Indian um, they were chants that uh he used to say all the time. So we grew up with all this, and there was you know it was an all pervasive thing music like from early morning, we used to wake up to music, and go to bed with music, my mother singing to us, and entertainment was we'd sit outside we—we call it a veranda where we have this big like a porch

thing, big—on—upstairs, under the moonlight, and um, my mother and my father both of them played what is called the harmonium it's like a—a mini piano, with you know like the bellows you start pushing it with one hand and you play with the other hand, and both of them would play and we'd sing and they'd make us all of us sing, so, it was, we entertained ourselves, so, it was a great childhood.

RR: How many siblings did you have?

RK: I have um, four siblings, I'm the oldest of five, I have two younger brothers and two younger sisters. And except for one who lives in India the others all live in the United States.

RR: Ok.

JS: And so growing up what did your parents do professionally?

RK: My uh mother and my aunt were professional singers, and uh they were very well known, so they traveled a lot, and uh as kids we traveled with them. So every time they went for a performance my mother never left us behind, so we would go with them, and so we knew all their songs, and often as a kid I remember insisting on standing with them on stage, [laughter] or sitting behind, and whether I—and I would be lip syncing, because I knew all the songs, and I wanted to be a part of the act, see?

RR: Yeah [laughter] from the beginning.

RK: I—I just wanted to be on stage from the time I was a kid it—it was a hard time getting that—me off. [Laughter] So, it was um, it was always, you know, I—we were—we were always there when they were performing. My father was in the construction business, so he would travel a lot because you know he was busy, like constructing roads uh, in the villages and, um, houses and building things like that so, that was his profession, so...

JS: So would you say that your family was able to live a pretty economically stable lifestyle?

RK: Um, for a while. And then there was a big slump there also, and then my, uh father there were—there were uh natural disasters, um like when he was laying roads in India in the villages, and there were huge torrential rains and floods, and everything got washed off and you know how the contracting business is they won't repay you for what you have lost, they pay you a—a lump sum, you're supposed to work within that budget, but then, you know there were huge losses, and so you know how it is in the game of you know snakes and ladders, you fall, you know the big snake swallows you and you come back to the beginning?

RR: Yeah.

RK: So we lost uh, almost everything, and from an upper middle class family we became a really a very lower middle class family. And...

[00:05:01]

RR: Approximately when?

RK: This was when I was actually um, I finished high school.

RR: Ok.

RK: It was at that time. Um, so my bachelor's and my master's, uh pretty much, I uh, supported myself, and educated myself, with the help of my aunt who was—had a steady job she worked for the government, at the All India Radio, in music she was a producer for folk music. And uh, my mother's um, assignment—musical assignment she used to do direction—music direction for some movies and other things and performances, so that's how we all got um educated, all uh of us siblings that's uh, my master's I did on my own completely my —through my performances, um, and I was able to help my siblings to the best of my ability, but pretty much it was you know, my um my own um hard work, which uh...

RR: Was it mostly through performing or did you work other ways too?

RK: As soon as I um, finished my master's I got a job. Because um, it was very difficult to sustain my dance which is an expensive thing.

RR: Right.

RK: Um, pastime, and I needed something else to subsidize, and so I uh, started working as an assistant professor of English in colleges in India and then I got a job as—working for a government college which paid me a little more, and was a government college jobs are permanent jobs so, that was much better. And um, for seven years I worked teaching, and uh continued to perform, and never, never stopped dancing ever. And uh, then I of course I got married, after that, and then I uh came to the United States.

JS: Do you recall how much tuition was when you were getting your Bachelor's or Master's degrees?

RK: It was not that high but then I went to a private college. Um, the best schools in India are the parochial schools, the, run by missionaries, so I went to a Catholic um school, um run by Franciscan missionary nuns, and I went to a Catholic uh—schoo—college, also run by the same nuns, and um I think I got an extraordinary education. They were great teachers, and I think—and, it didn't seem to matter to my family that you know, it was run by Catholics because they looked at it as a great educational institution not like oh, they're trying to convert my kid.

RR: Right.

RK: And actually until fourth grade I think I used to cross myself and say Hail Mary every night. [Laughter] On my knees. And nobody in my family stopped me. Nobody ever questioned, nobody thought oh my God! Is she becoming a Christian? Because my family is a very liberated kind of a family, no hard and fast—we were not into rituals and things like that—that's—we're

just so different. You know we didn't—nobody insisted that I have to keep going to the temple to pray regularly and things like that. And um, my mother actually had gone to a missionary school when she was young, she's 91 this year. So evidently it didn't matter to them what kind of school so long as the education I—that we received was good and of a high caliber. And this definitely this school was considered to be one of the best there. And the private schools and private colleges are more expensive than the government—run institutions which are, um, at that time their standard was very low. And um, so we went—and it wasn't—I don't remember how much it was, you're asking about a distant past young man. [Laughter]

JS: So you would say that receiving an education and economics was more important than the social issues to your family? In terms of not looking at you going to Catholic school...

RK: No, no, no.

JS: Gotcha.

RK: And in fact I was not the only one. I don't think anyone—people, um, all, everywhere across India, those that wanted their children to have a good education were very happy to send their children to the parochial schools which to the—those run by the missionaries which were the—some of the best schools because for discipline and for the caliber of uh, high standard of education, they were very well known. And um, Indians are very concerned about—about their children getting a degree. About their kids becoming you know, doctors, engineers, lawyers, you know they are like gung ho about it and it was dinged into us from the time we were kids that we do need to get a good education so, I think that was something important so they were willing to choose the best, the best um, um institutions for us to go to. Educational institutions so...yeah the social issues didn't matter at all.

JS: Now while you were in India there was definitely a lot going on. How would you say that for example the riots of 1965, how did that affect your family?

[00:10:02]

RK: Which riots are you talking about?

JS: With making Hindi the official language.

RK: Oh in south India.

JS: Yes.

RK: Oh yes I know. And my Hindi was my second language. [Laughter] And of course there was a big riot we didn't join. But then schools and colleges were closed we were having a lot of fun. Because you know, there was no college.

RR: Yeah.

RK: So we just sat home. And, you know, sang songs.

JS: Was your school closed?

RK: And we used to go hang out with friends. [Laughter] And go to the library and check out books. The British Council and the American library both of them, the USI's they had a great library, the British Council had a super library, so we just keep going to the library [laughter] reading books and, you know, and of course there was no—no theater showing Hindi movies so, [laughter] couldn't see those. But um, um, we did—we didn't get effected because after a while they stopped that anyway because Hindi was, you know, every country needs one language which is a medium—medium of, you know, so...where you can—can converse with anybody you—wherever you go you need one language to hold everyone together, and you know, they needed an official language, finally they accepted it, very reluctantly so, once it became a legal mandate you know...[Laughter]

RR: But you know so many languages so how did you come to know a little bit of everything?

RK: I think being from south India, of Telugu parents, because my parents speak—are from a different, uh state, they're from the State of Andhra Pradesh, but in those days, it was all called Madras State, there was no Tamil Nadu, no Andhra Pradesh...

RR: Oh!

RK: All of it was one state. So the Telugu Tamil everything was one. And then this guy decided to fast until death, and he died.

RR: [Gasp]

RK: And then so everybody said 'Look! He died, just for this. You give us this State. We want to become autonomous!' So they split it.

RR: When was that?

RK: And gave—this was in uh, 1950—um—1956.

RR: Ok.

RK: November 1st was the inauguration of the State of Andhra Pradesh.

RR: Oh ok.

RK: 1956 March 16th was when I had my arangetram. I was nine. And that year I was the youngest dancer to have been invited from—I mean we chose to stay back in Tamil Nadu. My family decided not to move because of my dance. And I was invited from Tamil Nadu to perform in Hyderabad at the inauguration. And the one who inaugurated this new state of Andhra Pradesh was pres—was Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. And I have a picture with him there.

RR: Uh-huh I saw that.

RK: And I performed for him.

RR: Oh that's from that day. Ok.

RK: A—and there's a picture of these tall adults all dancing and me one little one I'm looking up at them like this. [Laughter] There was one small creature there. And I was small for—I mean I'm still small. [Laughter] I'm small—I was very small for a nine year old I'm looking up at all these tall dancers next to me, and they were male dancers from the village of Kuchipudi, all tall fellows. And there I'm looking up because everybody seemed so large, [laughter] and I was like so small, and I was the only kid dancing. So it was a lot of fun though because they made much of me. [Laughter] And I liked the attention. So...

RR: The arangetram that she said, that's what I was telling you about, how at the—when you're, um fully trained...

RK: It's like a graduation. It's like when you, and like—like a Doogie Howser I properly graduated early [laughter] a Doogie Howser of dance, I graduated early. But uh, um...

JS: Can you tell us a little about what the ceremony includes?

RK: Um, it is like a—like a coming out party kind of thing, except that you know it's very formal and it's very like uh, more um, it's very sacred event, because—very serious thing, because um, you are uh, the dances used to take place in the temples before. They came from the temples out, to auditoriums. But still that atmosphere there you know that you know you cannot wear shoes when you enter the stage because it is sanctified area, and we pr—keep our you know the deity on the side for us—to remind us ok, originally we danced in the presence of God so we keep him there. So this is the first—the introduction of this young person as a dancer in her own right to the public. So you have to hold the attention of the audience for like two and a half hours, dancing by yourself, and uh, it's a—it's a tall order, it's a lot of responsibility on the young dancer, a lot of responsibility and, um, a lot of work, a lot of work for the young person.

Numerous hours of rehear—practicing every single day, so much of strain on the body, and uh building up of physical stamina because the dances are extremely demanding. To dance alone for two and a half hours is really not a joke. And um, it um, is a very special day in the life of any young dancer. Because you know you, it increases when you—when you've completed the—the sense of—of self realization of feeling, oh my God, I can do this, you know, of you—the increase in your self esteem, self confidence, it's—it's just amazing. It transforms you as a person.

[00:15:14]

Because it makes you feel that you are indeed more capable than you realized, of doing something so difficult. And I think it's a great, great uh thing. For any—every individual. It was—it's a journey. It's a very special journey not everyone takes it. Because everybody learns, but then not everybody takes this big step of actually performing in the presence of an audience. That is something that's an individual decision. But once you make the decision there's no going back and it is um, ind—indeed a—a—um, very big thing.

JS: Did your siblings follow in your steps and do the same...?

RK: My s—my younger sister she was the only sister I had at that time, and she was six years my junior, so she was a three year old. [Laughter] But uh, when eleven years later, when we did our Kuchipudi which is a different dance style, that is the dance style of Andhra Pradesh that's from—where my family comes from so my mother was very insistent that I learn the dance of her state. [Laughter] And uh, but I'm very proud to be from Tamil Nadu because I was raised in that so I'm like steeped in the Tamil culture lot more than Telugu culture. I speak Telugu at home and I read and write both languages because I felt that I belong to both states, and so I felt that, and that's why I felt I needed to learn both the—both the dance styles because I am like, of two cultures like the children who are born and raised here who are Indian and American. They are not Indians they are Indian—Americans so they have dual cultures, it's the same thing I had dual cultures in India. And uh, so that my sister and I did together.

RR: Did you feel at—at the age of nine that you were able to understand how serious of an occasion it was?

RK: I don't think so; I think I just had a ball.

RR: You just had fun right? [Laughter] Yeah.

RK: I was enjoying myself. [Laughter] I loved being on stage. I always, I always loved being on stage. I was acting in movies from the time I was like three, [laughter] and I just loved the attention. And I loved people coming and telling me I did well. [Laughter] I think I was a little show off at that—at that age, I must have been quite bratty and a pain, [laughter] but uh, it was just wonderful. It was uh, I've always felt so strongly connected to dance, I mean for me, it is—it is—it is me. I mean, I—I cannot imagine myself doing something else. I love teaching, teaching English I enjoyed myself I loved it I felt it was a very rewarding experience but there's nothing for me like dance. I—I can sit and be in dance class all day long [laughter] and never feel tired. It will be—and I go home very happy when I'm choreographing something. Renuka will tell you what an extraordinarily happy time we had going through dances and choreographing dances it's just a—those—those moments are you know, they're irretrievable the—there's something there they—they're with you for life it's—that's dance for me. I live and breathe it that's you know... somebody said about uh, I think uh, Leonardo da Vinci, that you know I think it's in the movie when I—uh when I saw it says uh, if you cut him open what you see is not blood in his veins but paint.

RR: Oh!

RK: So I feel that if you open—you'll see you know dances going on in my brain [laughter] you open my head and you'll see little dances you know moving around like you know, a life of their own.

JS: So what did you major in in college?

RK: English.

JS: And so, when did you first learn English?

RK: From—from preschool.

RR: Because of the Catholic school right? Yeah.

RK: I think and—you know the um influence of English was you know quite widespread in India because you know that's the—the only—the one good thing the British did [laughter] bringing us the English language.

RR: Yeah.

RK: So, though we kicked them out they left that behind so, very happy because definitely that's what probably one of the reasons that Indians are able to do well in other parts of the world because they have—they can communicate.

JS: Very true. So what were your years in college like?

RK: Oh I loved it. I loved college. I didn't want to stop. [Laughter] I wanted to do my PhD, and if left alone I would have continued to study, but then that's uh when I uh got married and came here so I uh, couldn't um, actually had registered for PhD there. I came here, and I was accepted to the PhD program at Rice. In the English Department. Professor Dowden, he was the head of the department.

[00:20:00]

I just applied for a Master's thinking that I may have to redo something and I had done my um, my GRE and everything and uh, when uh I went to meet him he said why do you want to do your master's again I said oh I—[laughter] oh am I not supposed to [laughter] repeat something? He said 'no, you seem to have great grades from your Master's you—you know your professors have sent these great recommendation letters so why do you—you can do your PhD' I said 'oh, wow, ok'. [Laughter] And um, and then I was weighing the pros and cons I thought what will I do with a PhD in English, what did I want to pursue and I realized that I really wanted to do my dance so much more. Concentrate on my dance spend all—the rest of my life doing dance. So one day maybe before I die I'll get my PhD but in dance. [Laughter]

(0:20:59.5)

RR: Sounds good.

RK: I'll use my English to write about it.

RR: Yeah exactly!

JS: Very true.

RK: But I'll—I'll do my dance as my main thing. [Laughter]

JS: So what was your motivation for leaving India?

RK: Husband. [Laughter]

RR: So how—ok I guess how did you feel about leaving India and moving to the U.S.?

RK: It was very difficult.

RR: Right.

RK: Was very exciting. When you're newly married you know everything is very exciting and everything is new and I said you know following my husband here was all fun. But I—for some reason I thought that you know after couple of years we'll go back. But then that's all a myth. [Laughter] Most people—most people say that you know, but uh, it didn't happen and I was very homesick for like a year. More than anything else I missed my dance I just could—I thought I was not going to be able to live without it. Um, once I started teaching somehow I felt a little better.

But you know I—I go back every year only because I need that reconnect. I have to—I have to um, rejuvenate myself I have to plunge into the action there and be a part of that scene and meet all my—my dance colleagues and my teachers and, just you know imbibe all that you know that atmosphere and everything before I feel that ok, now I can go on. It's like taking a break you know, that's my, that's my like sabbatical, every year, short period of time away.

JS: But coming to the U.S. wasn't your first time in the so—called Western World because you spent time in France, right?

RK: I was—I spent a year in France, but I knew it was only a short time because—I mean I spent—went to spend like a week in London.

JS: Ok.

RK: One week, as a representative from a theater con—theater conference that I was sent to. And uh, from there I—I met a—a very famous dancer, who had seen me perform in India, and had asked me actually to come with him and that he was going to promote me as a dancer and I didn't think that I wanted to I was doing my Master's, first year, and I did not want to stop, and, you know just go away, and I was still very young, my family said no.

[Laughter]

RR: Definitely not.

RK: No no no no no. She's like twenty she cannot just go off like that. I mean this was a much older gentleman and he was very, very well known, and um, he was genuinely interested in—in our dance and he had spoken with my teacher, and asked him permission and my teacher had said yes she will do very well but no. I guess I didn't think about it that way so, we—I didn't go but I, then he was the one who recommended my name to this lady in France who was producing, um, documentaries on dance, so I went to—I went there to participate in it, and just ended up staying for a long time. I knew French before I went, so I felt quite comfortable I was—I honed my French skills before going.

RR: Yeah. [Laughter] So, what did you think that uh Houston or the U.S. would be like before you came?

RK: Um, well only my knowledge is from movies.

RR: Right. [Laughter]

RK: From hanging around USI's where everybody was a friend, um, bu—so, I knew that um, it would be pretty much like um, other parts of the western world that I had visited but uh, um, I found the people in maybe Houston I found them extremely friendly when I came there were less than 500 Indians at that time, in all of Houston, but the non—Indians I found very welcoming and very friendly, and it made me feel so much better. And I was hugely welcomed by the—by my husband's Indian friends who threw a reception for me the day I arrived [laughter] and uh, were so loving, and so kind, and so you know it was um, I didn't have any problems. I know people who come here who don't know a soul and poor things they feel so sad, I didn't have any—no problems.

RR: So there was no kind of any culture shock or anything?

RK: No.

RR: No, ok, that's good. Um,

JS: Did you come straight to Houston?

[00:25:03]

RK: Yes.

JS: Or were you able to visit anywhere else first?

RK: No, I came from a very hot Chennai to a very host Houston. [Laughter] Because I came in August. And I felt right at home. [Laughter] I sweated there, I continued—[laughter] I came

here, I continued to sweat here, [laughter] and I said wow! Feels like home. [Laughter] So it when—made me, you know, um, integrate myself faster, into [laughter] because the weather is exactly the same. Pretty much...

RR: So were there any differences between life over there and here?

RK: Yes of course, I mean the—all the amenities and all the comforts you know definitely are, just uh, there's no air conditioning in India and we didn't have a car. I used to take three buses to go to work! Not one, three! And um, you know, long walks to the bus—the bus stop and, you know, and then I'd go for my dance class after that I mean I lived a hard life it was a lot of physical strain but you know I mean, it doesn't matter when I go back I'm willing to do all that again, it um, was very nice all you know it was a luxury to have an air conditioned car and air conditioned house and all that, it's very nice but you know if I have to give it up, um, when we were hit by uh Ike we didn't have air conditioning, no electricity for ten days, eleven days. And um, somehow it didn't bother me that much as I expected it to, because you know it was like hey heck why should you complain? We had similar situations in India and I, you know survived those, you know, grin and bear it. So...

RR: I guess we can um, move to when you started the Anjali Center. So how did you first get the idea?

RK: I um, when I arrived here and I performed the first time, I had a whole bunch of mothers say oh my God please you have to teach my child. And I was saying, no you know really I want to be a performer I'm not looking at uh, teaching right now and I—probably I want to do my PhD too I'm—just I have lot of options I'll think about it. The phone calls never stopped [laughter] I mean one—day after day after day. Finally I think I gave in. In one weak moment I said ok. And then, my first class I had two girls. My next class I had like about, um, seven or eight, and then next class I had like about fifteen, and I kept increasing I said wow! And, I was charging like—like ten dollars a month or something. And it was not the money that mattered to me at all. I was just so happy I said [gasp] I can use my art I can actually teach it I can impart it to other people and I was very excited about that.

And it was uh, no costumes, we used—we had all makeshift things, no music and you know I would sing for them, and it was a lot of fun. A lot of learning. We all—we grew together. I—I learned a lot from my—my students. It was uh—from the parents, it was so much of give and take. And um, so Anjali—Anjali was born in October, 1975. Because I kept thinking what name, Anjali means offering, and I thought ok this is my very humble offering to my—to this—new—my new country. And, I've come to live here, and they—this country has given me a lot, and so I need to give something in return, so this is my offering, so, and I thought this is short simple word, so, just used Anjali so, it was called the Anjali—Anjali School of Dance, and then later on it started going and became more of an institute you know not just a little school, dance school, so then it became the Anjali Center and we started um, integrating music, and dance, and other forms of dance, and it's now it's like a center for the arts not even performing because we have visual art.

And we have also like uh, Vedic, like uh, Vedic mathematics because it's as taught in the olden times in India so there's a lot of things that are going on so, it's uh, more comprehensive kind of uh, an arts uh, center. So this year we'll be celebrating our 36th anniversary.

RR: Wow.

RK: I'm very proud that it's the oldest in Texas.

RR: Yeah.

RK: There was nothing and in fact the only dance school was in, uh North America—I mean—was in—sorry—in um, uh, New York at that time. They were actually requesting her to come and teach in Houston, and she said I can not be flying here. [Laughter] Not—there were not that many flights too no she said I'm not come—flying out to Texas to keep teaching the kids regularly, wait till someone comes, and then when I came then she told them she said you've got one of the best people because she was a very famous film actress and a great dancer called Padmini she was one of the old—old timers, and so she said 'Oh I've known her from—since she was little, she's great dancer you don't need to worry'. So I came with good recommendations. [Laughter] From a senior dancer so, I stood in good stead. [Laughter]

[00:30:02]

JS: So were the students in your first class in 1975 pr—uh primarily Indian students or did you have a mix?

RK: Yes! Yes. No, no no no, no, no, later on, um, 1976—77 I had uh two students from Rice University. Yeah, she graduated later on with a PhD from La Jolla in I think um, oceanography. Rachel Hayman. Beautiful girl, I still have pictures of her dancing, oh she was so beautiful. And then one of my earlier students I think way back in 1981, Claire Clemens who graduated from the High School for Performing and Visual Arts, became a Presidential Scholar. And she did Indian dance for her uh, competition.

RR: Wow! [Laughter]

RK: And there's another—another beautiful African American girl beautiful girl called Lenore Stokes. I'll never forget her I still have the—the—the card she wrote to me. And her parents were separated and she was uh, oh she used to take so many buses to go, finally I used to drive to the school, HSPVA, to teach her because I felt so bad I said, because she did th—and I said I couldn't even take money from her because she, really she came from a poor family but she was—had prodigious talent. Then I think she went to live with her father because he I think wanted to take care of her, and he was better off and I think I'm so happy for her. And she sent me a beautiful note from California, which I treasure. So, and I had Dr. Theresa Nelson, now Theresa Zimmerman, a pediat—pediatric endocrinologist who actually did her Arangetram. She studied dance, pursued it she would come in scrubs from call. And, beautiful, she even went looking for blond false hair to attach to her, to make her braid long. [Laughter] And, beautiful dancer, very beautiful dancer went to India stayed with my family, and we are still very good friends.

RR: Wow.

RK: So there have been people who have studied, uh, uh non—Indians who've studied and done well, in uh, but I think the Indian uh parents feel more connected to this they want all the Indian kids to learn dance, you know whether or not their children feel inclined to do so they will bring them, some of course continue because they take to it like ducks take to water, and others are not uh, not the avenue for them they need to try other things. [Laughter] And if they're very recalcitrant I tell the parents I think you need to find something else.

RR: Yeah.

RK: So...I'm glad Renuka and her sister [laughter] they came to me when they were li —very little, in fact when her—her younger sister was so little she used to draw pictures for me, and I still have them she used to put them on the wall paste them on the wall for me, saying I drew this for you. [Laughter] She was like two or something. [Laughter] Two or three. And then she joined her and it was...And her parents still are very dear friends so we—it's a lifelong relationship. The teacher and the taught become, you know, family.

RR: Yeah that must be one of the best parts about this kind of profession.

RK: Absolutely. Absolutely.

RR: People you get to meet.

RK: And the—and the wealth of—of uh of this, you know, your circle becoming bigger [inaudible four words] just the wealth of your friends I think you know...and outlasts everything else, friendship.

JS: So when you first moved to Houston you said it was because you got married, why did your husband want to come here?

RK: He was here—he left India wh—n 1968. He worked in London for Barros and then um things were becoming very rough there because they had the Paki dash. And anyone who looked um, you know, brown skinned was considered a Pakistani and they were very anti—um anti-Pakistani, and people were you know—they were—there was a lot of problems. And things got so so bad so many people left at that time. And um this was in 1968, no 1970.

RR: Okay.

RK: So two years after being there and working there, then Barros had a [?] it was at Rice University actually, he used to work. So I'm so connected to Rice. [laughs] So he used to work for Barros in Houston, that's how he came here in 1970. Then later on he worked for Texas Instruments. And then with the huge slump came in 1985 and uh like many many many many many people many lost his job, he just decided that he would work for himself and started video production, which was like way before its time. But he and his friends owned the first Indian

restaurant in Houston, called the Maharaja, in the Rice Village. See how many ways we're connected.

[00:35:00]

JS: Right

RK: And it was so popular. All the Rice childrens and professors were very busy eating Indian food there. They made beef curry, which I never tried being vegetarian but I know we used to give (?) and straining (?) out all the fat. So, and we helped. All the wives. Engineers— four engineers get together and started this. [laughs] So it's part of— part of Houston history, Texas history. It was the first Indian restaurant in Texas. Called the Maharaja. On Amherst.

RR: That's really interesting.

JS: So what was your life like when you first arrived? What kind of house did you live in?

RK: When we first came our friends who—two of our friends they also just got married, they said no you can't go anywhere come stay with us. And uh so we were all together. So I didn't know how to cook. So my friend cooked and I washed the dishes. So and I was feeling very bad, I said, 'You know their also newly married, we can't just live like this'. So then we within a few months, you know couple of months, we moved into our own apartment. It was you know setting up house and all. It was nice you know. Then we bought our condominium, then we bought our first house, then we moved to a slightly bigger house where our children were born, in the Westbury area. Then we moved—we've always lived in Harris county, no, haven't moved very far. We haven't moved to Sugar Land like many of our friends do, we continue to stay.

RR: Neither have we. When were your children born?

RK: Uh the first one in 1978 and the second one in 1981. Two boys. They actually learned dance when they were little. And uh then they protested because mom was very mean to them. She said, 'No, no, no I do not want them to make mistakes.' And then they said, 'No we want to play baseball.' The older one said. They younger one wanted to learn piano and I said fine, do what makes you happy. So the older one did international relations and political science, maj— dual major from Boston University. And the second one went to Boston too, graduate from Berklee College of Music. And um did music synthesis, and works for Harmonics and is still in music and so he's taken after his mom.

RR: Great

RK: I'm glad someone did. Take the arts seriously. [whispers]

RR: Yeah.

RR: So, on the topic of family um what were some of the challenges and also the benefits of raising your children in the United States?

RK: Challenges umm because uhh umm there's no—there's no help right? Many—In India, you have servants you know you have your mom your in—law everyone taking care you can just say 'Mom, please keep your eye on this kid I have to go.' There is nobody, my oldest son had colic and night after night and I'll be crying with him. He was my first child I had no idea why he was crying so much and I would be sobbing away you know carrying him around and umm my second had severe congenital asthma, life threatening, in and out of hospitals like critically ill so many times and I used to think Dear God I mean nobody I mean my husband and I were the only ones all night long we would be carrying him and the next day I would be teaching and had to go to work. It was very difficult. Very difficult.

Those were the things but then the Texas Children's Hospital was so fantastic so you know you keep thinking you know this child I don't know about his survival rate in India. You know considering that he was so ill. I'm glad that he was so ill here because you know. I—I guess for that reason he was safe, was okay. But um other than that you know just challenges of not having help otherwise it's uhh everything else is, I don't know. It was great I— Friends became support system because they would take, my friends helped out. I had um c-sections both my deliveries umm they were you know umm and it was very difficult, so my friends came to my rescue. They would take turns to come and sit with the baby, help me bring food and you know stay up with the baby. Oh, they were wonderful. And my sister, one my sister came when my older one was born one came from when the younger one was born so they came and helped too.

[00:40:04]

Well for a while cause they had to go back so umm but you know everybody you know that there are challenges you just rise to them. What else do you do? You know when you forced—you're faced with them you learn to cope. And I think it makes you um better person, stronger person because if you're, okay I can do that, I can do this too.

RR: How are you able to balance raising a family with such a busy teaching life?

RK: Umm when I was little I would just take the kids, they would just be in the infancy watching the dance and then by the time my older one was about one and a half—two he'd tell me, 'Mommy, she's not sitting in the alamante.' And then he knew all the names of all the hand gestures. He knew all the dances. We have videos of him dancing A Way to Glory. Every single dance and umm he was very entertaining of course everybody you know the grandparents would love to have him show off all the dances so I feel also they learn to appreciate the arts to because I would take them to music and dance performances and both my sons love music. The older one actually a good singer. I mean Western, nothing Indian and um then the younger one loves all kinds of music—Indian and Western, so I think um it made them. I feel that this—this uh opening them to their you know their eyes to uhh greatness of Indian dance and you know their mother's work made them appreciate my work too a lot more to understand and and see how hard I work and you know what it means to me because they've been very supportive. I used to leave them all alone for you know um what my husband go off to India for performances and

you know they never, never complained or never said you know, 'You don't care' Of course once in a while my older one would say you like your students more than you, you love your students more than you love us. But the usual you know emotional blackmail every now and then. But um otherwise uhh yet I don't know I never found it very difficult from all the other women who were able to manage. When I had to teach class my husband would be with the kids you know.

RR: Yeah, that's good. Um. I read and I think I knew before that you wrote a couple of books on Parnathian and one on Kuchipudi.

RK: I used write a lot of articles also— also when I was in India I used to write articles on—on dance and then when I came here I continued to do and I used to do a lot of reviews um critiques and things like that not just in about plays and other things. Uhh I was quite involved with the theater also in India and um then uh when I came here and I found out that the students are having a very hard time remembering and it was before the time of video cameras.

RR: Okay

RK: And I didn't know how to help them. I thought they would come to class everyday and the parents were horrified. Oh my God no we can't bring them to class everyday they have other things to do. We'll see you next week.' And I said, 'Next week?' And I was surprised. I said, 'We didn't go to class once a week in India. I went everyday.' You know now of course people go three or four times a week and I said, 'How did you learn the number at the end of a week? How can they remember what I showed them today you know?'

After the passage of seven days, so I said I had to devise some method where they can so I started drawing pictures, little stick figures representing movements and positions and I'd write detailed you know explanations below so these pictures became very important and they became and excellent tool for the children to remember and I would explain to the parents and the parents would sit with the kids and then as they grew older the kids were able to understand perfectly. They look at it and 'Oh right, right now, I know what we have to do our hands like this and I remember you told us to put our foot like this.' They look at a picture and they knew exactly what it was. So I used that and um using my little diagrams I wrote two books umm on the basic, the fundamental techniques of the two styles of dance that I have studied uhh studied more thoroughly than other styles I have also learned a little bit smattering of so I did publish these books because uhh I felt that they could be useful to people elsewhere if they want to take a look just at the positions and see if they can decipher from that and umm lady friends of mine who looked at it and said, 'Wow that I think that I know I can do it by looking at it.' And I was very gratified to hear that.

RR: When—When was that approximately?

[00:45:00]

RK: The first one was in um '90 I think, '92 or something the first one. Umm and the other one was in two thousand uhh six...

RR: Was it easy to get those published in the U.S.?

RK: Um, no I—well what I did was I published them myself but then they everybody lapped them up they were lots of them—lots of places um asked me to sell them and actually we had to reprint the patent on the book four times and they're all gone and I have to um reprint them again because you know I don't have the anymore.

RR: There's a lot of demand for them.

RK: Lots of, I'm surprised because I think when they have the annual festival of music and dance in India and lots of people come from abroad. Many, many, many, many, many dances go from all over the world they find it very useful so they buy the books and all so.

RR: Oh, okay.

RK: Okay

JS: How much do the books usually sell for?

RK: Not much because they're little the—the Parnathian one was uhh was ten dollars and the Kuchipudi one was a little more. I think it was fifteen because that one had uhh color uhh you know photographs too with the every—everything that was drawn was represented in pictures and photographs with students actually holding those positions so they were you know two—two tools for them to work with, the drawings and the pictures, so a little more—much more expensive.

JS: So this enabled you to combine your love for English with your love of dance yet again.

RK: There was not that much you know the English didn't play a major part in that because all that I had to do was write the explanations for each of the movements and um I had to be extremely careful because I was drawing each one and I was drawing mirror image so I had to be careful how I drew. Make sure that I told them this is right and they knew but they won't say it but you learn the left you know and I had to explain it's all in mirror image for people to follow.

RR: So how did you start um teaching at Rice and did you ever teach at any other universities?

RK: I taught at the University of Houston also...

RR: Okay.

RK: For uhh a couple of years. Rice because I heard that they were opening up a position they were looking for someone so I went for uhh had an interview.

RR: And when—when did you start teaching?

RK: Two thousand—two thousand two.

RR: Okay. So great.

RK: I love it.

RR: Haha yeah.

RK: Such intelligent students. So, so wonderful.

RR: How is it different from your regular students?

RK: Um. Well the fact that they are not uhh many of them most of them are not Indian and still are interested and want to learn and they learn very fast. It's just you know it speaks for their—their how smart they are. It's uh and it's so interesting to me a different group of people you know people that are from a different uhh totally different perspective you know on dance. They're learning it you know for the fun of it at that time but they learn it very seriously

RR: Yeah

RK: And they learn it very quickly, so it's uhh exciting for me to meet all these young bright young people and uhh I love meeting them and we have a I get to knowing a different group of people each time and learn to appreciate all the things they do. I always ask them what subjects they're doing and I get very interested and I'm just so amazed at how bright they are. I—I love Rice University. I love coming there.

RR: Hahaha we love it too.

RK: I tried to persuade my kids to go there but they went far away. Well I tell everybody, if all my students were graduating from high school I tell them you have to go to Rice and insist them, force them to apply.

RR: Haha Rice is great.

RK: It is, a very good school.

JS: In your experience what would you say is the difference between teaching males versus females? What are the challenges?

RK: You know I don't find the uh. In this country well because the boys keep have the feeling that it's—it's a female prerogative and they really swallow the girls so there's some boys who don't feel, there are—I have a brother and sister who are learning and the boys, actually he is more serious than the sister and umm otherwise you know it's uhh there's not that many male students interested in learning. I had two boys at Rice University last I was surprised...

RR: Really? Oh and you were...

RK: They were very good, very good. Both of them. One of them actually studies publa with David Courtney so he's very interested in—in all things Indian. He used to keep asking me lots of questions about India. They came to all our shows and theater and—and uh. They were very interested in not only enjoyed all the events.

[00:50:10]

RR: Yeah. Um. Oh, I read in some article online something about developing online Kuchipudi courses?

RK: The University in India

RR: Uh—huh

RK: ...had planned, but you know it's uh the university is run by the government and the governments a bureaucracy, so it's just taking them forever to make their decision.

RR: Oh, okay.

RK: They have the budget and everything in place. They asked me to go for two meetings. I gave the curriculum and everything because we have a pretty thorough curriculum here. We follow it, so I gave it to them and I said this is what we do, but nothing has come out of it. It's a pity.

RR: But how would you do that? How—how can you teach that online?

RK: Umm there's a lot of theory involved too.

RR: Okay

RK: And then um they would be they would send examiners. There's online in the United States too so that can be integrated in the courses there. So they—they would send examiners that could go to where these people are taking and then help the—the practical part of it

RR: Right

RK: They would have them or they would have a central place with like people from Killeen from Waco or you know Austin, Dallas or something maybe they would all come to Dallas or come to Houston or whatever the central city and the examiners from India would go administer the exam, and if of course they were and—or go to California so a few states and they would give them the practical exam and theory they would answer questions two things like that.

RR: Okay.

RK: That was what—was no I had proposed giving them the full, well maybe one.

RR: Right, that's taking a while. Yeah. Um

JS: So you hold the honorary Doctorate degree, that correct? Can you tell us a little more about that or how you received it?

RK: Well all the rewards I have received in my life are surprises, cause you know I don't work for an award I never um never seek them, never; I don't expect anything and you know and it doesn't bother me if I don't get something because you know I never thought about it and um I don't hanker for them. I just got a call one day from the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor of the University and heard about saying that we are planning to give this strictly to you and I said, 'Wow!' haha And they said, 'Yeah every year we have four performing arts things and you know and the coach put it as you are very senior so we planned to give this to you this year and I said, 'Wonderful.' So I went there to receive it and I felt very good. I felt okay so finally my all my the years I have spent pursuing this art form this has not gone to waste. Somebody has actually recognized that I'm doing some work and not just in India that I'm working with this in another country where definitely this there wasn't an infrastructure when I started and I started from scratch and built things my self so they're looking at all those things and they're appreciating what I've done so I was very happy. And I um got just recently I was got another call from a friend saying, 'Hey, congratulations!' I said, 'Thanks. What for?'

RR: hahaha

RK: And, and it was like one o'clock in the afternoon and I said, 'Where are you calling from? Are you in New York again?' He said, 'No, silly. I'm calling you from India.' I said uhh it was two in the afternoon I said, 'It must be one o'clock in the morning for you. What are you doing?' 'Calling you.' I said, 'Yes, Calling me. What?'

RR: Hahaha

RK: Then he said, 'I called to tell you that the government of India is giving you this um award for two thousand an award for Kuchipudi.' I said, 'Oh. Wow. Are you sure you're not pulling my leg?' Because he always does that. Then he said, 'Why would I be wasting money on a phone call at one o'clock in the morning on this. I'm telling you the truth.' I said, 'Okay, okay.' I said—I said, 'You know what, I know you. I'm going to wait until I hear from them.'

RR: Hahaha

RK: So I just—I thought okay joking. I just kept going, Two days later I got uhh a call from uhh it's like the national endowment for the arts you know they have the national heritage fellowships here which is like the you know, so they called and uh they um sent me an official letter and said, 'Okay, can you please send us a bio and tell us what do you want on your—the plaque?' So —so they present uhh you know uhh a lakh of rupees, which is, you know, a fair amount of money, and um you know I think a plaque or something you know.

[00:55:03]

I don't know medal—Medal of Honor. So the President of India will be giving it to me sometime whenever

RR: Wow.

RK: I haven't found out the date as yet. Well. So I was quite surprised I said, 'Oh, okay.' It was the first time they're giving anyone outside of India the first ever.

RR: Wow

RK: They've never given this award to anyone who does not live in the country.

RR: Uh—huh

RK: So they made an exception and I felt very good and I immediately—I called my teacher to thank him because I felt that he—I called my mother first, and she started crying.

RR: Awwww.

RK: I called my teacher. I mean of course I was at home so I told my—my husband and my aunt and my children they were and they were all so excited, and um my mother was in California, so I called her and she said, 'I knew you would get this.' I said, 'Yes. Of course.'

RR: Hahaha. She knows everything.

RK: Oh she always thinks I should get the highest honor or something.

RR: Hahaha

RK: But I felt it—it really belongs to my—my—my guru, my teacher because he taught this to me so—so I owed him a great debt of thanks and I said you know I'm very happy.

RR: So you mentioned about building the infra—infrastructure here for Indian classical dance. Can you describe some parts of that?

RK: Well in the sense you know there was no dance school. I did not know what one charges you know fee you—you don't know new place I didn't know where to teach because we were living in an apartment, so I started uh since my husband already owned a restaurant after the restaurant closed in the evening uhh and they'd—on Mondays it was not open. It was a—it was a closed, so we moved all the chairs and used that cause I never taught at home though. I always felt I had to teach outside, so that's where and Maharaja was used as a—a dance class

RR: Hahaha

RK: ...after hours and um um, so I had to find the space.

RR: Right

RK: You know, create a curriculum and um, two things you know, not knowing not having and precedence not you know no—nobody to help and now there was how do I market this? Do I...

RR: Yeah

RK: ...how do I make this known to other people? What do I do? You—no costumes, nobody who can sew, no dance jewelry. Nothing. Everything. All my clothes, all my—my jewelry. Everything. Everything was given to people to get them ready for their perfor—for initial performances so that way you know and there was you know nothing, nobody had any concept of our—how a dance institute should be run, so it was...

RR: Right

RK: ...a lot of work for me that was in the beginning.

RR: How did you do the publicity?

RK: I used to um draw, I'm fairly good, and I created flyers and did all the drawing myself.

RR: Hahaha.

RK: and you take them to quick copy across the street from Haraja. They all became my friends

JS: Hahahaha.

RK: And so I would make and then we'd uhh distribute and put them here and there.

RR: Okay. And I'm sure word of mouth also.

RK: Yes

RR: People's friends.

RK: And I taught some leisure classes at the University of Houston.

RR: Okay.

RK: They had those leisure courses at one time.

RR: Okay.

RK: So I taught dance, and there were a lot of adults who were; a lot there came to learn.

RR: Yeah.

RK: It was fun.

JS: And so, over time you've managed to get involved with a variety of different groups and associations. Can you tell us particularly how you got involved with the India Culture Center?

RK: Well, I was the umm there pretty much when it started, so I was always a member from the beginning and I was quite involved also with the India Student Association at uh um University of Houston because we used to—I used to roll a lot of shows for them. And India Culture Center from the very beginning I was part of um you know I knew everybody was there so I became one of the directors of the board and uhh was in charge of the cultural programs and um I uhh discovered that they were beginning something here called the Cultural Arts Council of Houston, so I went for a meeting and I joined and I started applying for grants and individual artists and kept getting grants to do projects, new things. And umm i went quite enterprising. I also found out that something called Young Audiences of Houston, so I signed up and I said I want to go and I attended workshops and started working with children, lot of inner city schools and um which I really loved. I loved to go work with uhh children you know who disadvantaged kids especially and then I just volunteered time to go to Shriner's Hospital, Texas Children's Hospital, and you know pediatric centers just to entertain just those are my—my own time just because I felt that uh there's not much happening in their lives there so I said, 'Okay let me go and do something.'

[01:00:14]

Work with those kids, tell them stories, do some dancing and have some fun. And um there was at that time also a Texas Institute for Art and Education which was very, very good, and I was very much a part of that and worked extensively with other artists and we all worked on a lot of schools, taught residencies, and um I did a lot of workshops uh for many eh many schools, and I also received their apple award for outstanding service. It was it was all so be wonderful and still enjoy what—what young audiences. Very good, so. There was a some of the non—Indian, I—I teach a lot of master classes at the high school for performing arts umm and I still just start uhh in May two—three classes, and I—you know I've done that to Houston Metropolitan Opera. I went to taught some classes some time. Many places, Jewish Community Center and many summer workshops I did so many of them. So I do a lot of work outside too. I've taught at the Alley Theater. I've taught uhh um two, one for the staff and one for the uhh summer workshop for children and dance theater so.

RR: What do you see as umm some challenges of promoting classical dance when maybe non-classical forms are getting more and more popular?

RK: You know I think of non-classical forms as here today gone tomorrow because you know they're all popular

RR: Okay. Right.

RK: Well popular as uhh you know opposed to the word classical it's uhh you know. It's uhh some—something that you know it's—it's solid as a rock because uhh through the passage of centuries it's still—it's still there. It was there then, it's there today, it will be there tomorrow. Others are there today and gone tomorrow. Something is—replaces them, but the classical art aren't replaced. They keep going. Of course you know there are challenges, but that is um it's a responsibility of uhh I guess those of us who pursue these—these classical art forms to maintain um the same standards and uh not sacrifice them and not try to give in and maybe become try to popularize them— make them like popular you know arts because uhh I don't think you know sacrificing uhh the style this idiom umm under any circumstances is uh I think it's wrong. I mean I find it morally wrong to change what is here but I think there is also umm quite a percentage of people that believe in classical.

RR: Yeah

RK: ...traditions, and I think it's important that uhh they—they have to be continued. The challenge will be there. I think that's half the fun.

RR: Mhmmm.

RK: And there are challenges you feel like working harder.

RR: Yeah.

JS: Do you still remain connected with different events and things going on over in India?

RK: Yes, yes. I go there every year and my sister just called me today to tell me that uhh I'm due to record for the television, a national program of dance, which is supposed to be aired on the eighth of December. So she said, 'Do you have time to do it when you come in July?' I'm going for ten days. I said, 'No. I don't have time now.' So she said, 'Okay then when you come for your award you have to keep time.' I said, 'Okay.' It'll give me time to think about what I want to do and then I will do it then. I said, 'No I'm under pressure, no I can't do.' So you know I'm very connected. I'm very connected with India. I perform a lot more in India. I don't perform here that much, only my students perform here.

RR: Yeah.

RK: All my costume, my jewelry, everything is in India. I don't even have much stuff here.

RR: Hahaha. Um just one last question um. I guess what are your goals for the future—professional or personal or any kind of?

RK: To one day get my PhD in dance...

RR: Yeah.

RK: ...before I die

RR: For sure.

RK: Absolutely. And um I really want to establish the Anjali Center for Performing Arts as um very strong institute completely committed to the uh propagation, promotion and the preservation of uh um various forms of Indian art. Whether it's folk dance, or classical dance, or you know, even Bollywood.

[01:05:00]

It—it doesn't bother me. I just want make sure that various forms of Indian art, music, dance all of them should flourish here and should um.

RR: Yeah.

RK: Be seen in all their you know diverse um beauty by as many people as possible.

RR: I guess it's come a long way since when you first got here.

JS: Yeah.

RK: Oh my God, yes.

RR: Hahaha.

RK: Yes. It's like the Virginia Slims 'you've come a long way, babe'

JS: Yeah. Hahaha.

RR: Hahaha.

RK: Hahaha. I hope and it—they—it has a long way to go. But you know...

RR: Yeah.

JS: What do you think is required to help Indian culture continue to develop particularly in Houston?

RK: Believers and pursuers. You know you need people who believe in it. People who pursue it, people who are willing to uphold it you know make sure that it's uh it's appreciated, it's understood as much as possible.

RR: Mhmm.

RK: Take the message you know out to the public and—and there are many that do that so as long as that's there it will be alive and kicking.

RR: Yeah.

RR: Hahaha. Anymore?

JS: Well, I guess finally, since we are constructing an archive, we would like to know you know if you have any photographs, documents, any of your old videos, copies of your books that you would like to share with the Houston Asian American Archive; we'd definitely appreciate these resources that way later social and economic histories can...

RK: You have to open up—start a new room for me you know. I have

RR & JS: Hahaha.

RK: A lot of...

JS: That would be totally fine. Hahaha.

RK: Hahaha.

RR: You can have as many boxes as you want. Hahaha.

JS: Hahaha.

RK: Yes, I have plenty. I'll be very, very happy to.

JS: That'll be wonderful.

RK: Very happy to.

RR: Great.

JS: Okay, well...

RK: I think this is a great project here you're all doing.

JS: Thank you.

RK: There are a lot of people like me who come decades ago...

RR: Mhmmm.

RR: ...who brought with us many dreams, many aspirations you know umm not knowing what the future holds for them and having worked very hard to build umm a life for ourselves and I think we've all done well in so many different fields and we feel very proud of not just our work but proud to have been accepted by the community at large and for all that the city—all that we have received and returned to make us—give us the opportunity to articulate ourselves so well

and to the mainstream I think um ahhh India will be a very indebted to society for having given us numerous opportunities, and I'm very happy. I'll be happy to give anything.

RR: Great.

JS: Thank you. We really appreciate it. We'll definitely set up a future engagement to be able to do that.

RK: Absolutely.

JS: Yes.

RK: Let me know when. I'll—I'll tell my husband to get of course, he's the man who does all the dirty work. Poor thing. He's—He's my greatest support and in—in all my activities. The greatest, like a rock. Does everything for my dance. If—if I need to be somewhere he'll be. He does takes care of my hand is swollen so he takes care of the cooking, the cleaning. He takes care. I have a dance class. He says, 'You don't worry you go. I'll take care.' Takes care of the house.

RR: Awww

RK: Really. Many sacrifices he made for my dance so. Given up a lot.

RR: Yeah.

JS: So finally we'll be sending you further information, but we definitely want to extend an invitation to you. There will be a reception on July 25th hosted at the home of Dr. Anne Chao, so...

RK: Ahhh yeah Anne.

RR: the—the 21st.

JS: Oh, excuse me July 21st.

RR: Yeah.

RK: July 21st. I'll be here.

RR: Mhmmm.

JS: Okay. Great.

RK: Anne is an old friend, and she's a wonderful person so I'm very happy.

RR: She is.

RK: Thank you so much..

JS: Thank you very much.

RK: I mean it's an honor to be a part of this. I must say that it's truly an honor. Thanks you. I know that there are so many people and that you've asked—selected me for this.

RR: Hahaha.

JS: Thank you very much. It's definitely great to interview you.

RK: Wonderful. Thank you and all the best to both of you.

JS & RR: Thank you.

[01:08:51] End Interview