

Interviewee: Sulekh Jain  
Interviewer: Taylor Ginter, Sara Davis  
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Transcribed by: Taylor Ginter, Sara Davis  
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Edited by: Sara Davis, Taylor Ginter (3/14/2017)  
Approved by: Tyler Smith (4/4/2017)

Background: Sulekh Jain was born in 1937, in a small village in India. He was raised in a Jain household, and to this day Jainism remains a major part of his life. He attended college in India, where he earned a B.S. and M.Tech. in Mechanical Engineering, then moved to England in 1965 to earn his Ph.D. He has worked in Berkeley, CA; Worcester, MA; Cincinnati, OH; and now currently lives in Houston, TX. He has two children, a son and a daughter, who both work in the medical field, as well as two granddaughters. In his retirement he remains active in the Jain community.

Setting: The interview was conducted in a quiet room in Fondren Library, located on the Rice University campus. The interview focuses on the professional and religious aspects of Dr. Jain's life—in particular as an Indian immigrant—as well as his childhood, and various aspects of his personal life. The interview lasted approximately an hour and a half.

Interview Transcript:

Key:

SJ	Sulekh Jain
TG	Taylor Ginter
SD	Sara Davis
-	Speech cuts off; abrupt stop
...	Speech trails off; pause
Italics	Emphasis
(?)	Preceding word may not be accurate
Brackets	Actions (laughs, sighs, etc.)

TG: All right we are here um on February 20<sup>th</sup>. My name is Taylor Ginter.

SD: And I'm Sara Davis.

TG: And we are interviewing Dr. Jain about his life.

SJ: Sulekh Jain.

TG: Dr. Sulekh Jain. Um alright, so to start off, could you tell me a little bit about your childhood, like maybe um your siblings, your parents, what they did, um if your home was rural or urban, um and maybe like about the religious activities you participated in growing up?

SJ: That's a very good intro. Uh I was born eight zero - eighty years ago in a very small village in India, which is not too far from New Delhi and um my parents were basically run a small business in the town. We belong to a fairly uh practicing Jain family all around and my siblings were my—I had only one younger brother and one sister, uh and they both are dead now, so I'm the only one huh left, hm. And over here in Houston I have uh my own—I have one son and one daughter. And once my son—he's a Rice graduate, 19- class of 1985—and he lives here in Houston and his daughter is my granddaughter. She goes to now Rice, so we have the second generation going to Rice. My daughter, she's also graduate of Rice U, 1986, okay, but she does not live here, and she lives in the—near Chicago in the state of Iowa. Okay, and we were here in Hou—we left India about fifty-one years ago, so we've been here all—all these years, and in Houston itself—or Sugar Land nearly nineteen years now, and we have lived in Massachusetts, and we've lived in Cin-Cin-Cincinnati, Ohio and now in Houston. Okay?

TG: Um so what language did you speak at home?

SJ: Uh grew up—mother tongue is Hindi, H-I-N-D-I—which is the language of the people in India in that part of the world, and naturally when I was going to school, I picked up English, so now I'm bilingual. English and Hindi and maybe one or two words of Spanish hm. That's it. So, but I can understand few other Indian languages, uh cannot write or cannot—I can speak and I can write some of them—no I can speak and I can understand. But my basic language is Hindi, so me and my wife most of the time we speak in Hindi.

TG: And your children, they—do they speak Hindi too?

SJ: Uh, my children, so they grew up here. And uh we tried to teach them Hindi but they will—all the atmosphere outside everywhere was English. Just I'm sure you've probably felt the same way. And uh so but they picked up some Hindi, but when my son got married, his wife also from India, but she comes from a different part of India, where they do not speak Hindi, so mother tongue is not Hindi, so the only language they could converse in was English hm. And so the language for them, mother tongue if you will say, is English. And their children, my granddaughter who is here, their only language—mother tongue is English.

TG: Mm, um so obviously you are still practicing Jain- uh Jainism, did you pass that along

to your children, and do they practice it with their children, or...?

SJ: Ah, yes, but you got to understand there're two ways of passing on. One is how we live ourselves. Okay? And second is from the community, okay. And of course the community can be very broad definition. It could be the Jain community, it could be the Indian community, it could be the community where they go to school, all of that, okay. So as far as the at home, yes, since we are living as Jain, we are practicing as Jain, we are behaving as Jain, okay, [vehicle starts beeping] they picked up as part of their growing up. We did in those days when we came here fifty-one years ago, this community was a very Jain community very, extremely small, very rare. And now it is reasonably grown up. So that time the chances for them to mixing with the other Jains was not as much. But still they had some. We send them to uh some of the few—summer camps where the other Jain kids will come from throughout the country, and they will spend one or two or three weeks together. So they picked up some of those and these memories we also taught them, so they—they had reasonably good understanding of Jain values are. Now their children, uh, where they have two of them, my son has two uh daughters, my daughter never married so uh they live here only one mile from here.

[00:05:05]

For them their children, it was mostly, the responsibility was on us, on grandparents, to teach them, and so which we did, but not in a systematical way, not in a very regimented way. There's the Jain Society, the there's a Jain Center, there's a place of worship here, they also did go to their—some of those uh classes, but quite a lot they also learn from their parents and from us and we also taught them whole value of non-violence. Okay, as a practicing, as a uh as a as a really something uh to look forward to. And when they went to Jain temple, which is only about five, six miles from here, and there they did learn something. But there- was more—more—so Indian traditional way of teaching them in Indian language and things like this, where of course they did not pick up so much, so they felt hm out of place, because they were—the teaching was not being done in an English language, they were in either Hindi or Gujarati or whatever that Indian language was. So uh we had to supplement that lack of and what they could not get from there. Me and my wife we had to supplement them. So they have grown up with very basic, very good foundation and understanding of non-violence. Much better than my pa-children did or I did. So I think they are much more hm, how you say, critical thinkers hm rational thinkers, okay. So they grew, yes. And the result is that uh many Indians when they come here they sidestep, they walk a bit, they make compromises with the concept of non-violence. But not with our children. So th-three generations here my-myself and my wife, and then our children, and then their children, they all have stayed very close to- in that, the whole concept of non-violence, which is the central theme of Jainism. And I'm sure you are probably studying from Dr. Brianne Donaldson.

TG: Mmhm. Ahimsa.

SJ: And, I don't know if you know, hm. This is a book which I hm.

TG: Yeah, yeah, Dr. Chao sent us the PDF.

SJ: Yeah, so the whole talks about, and for you Sara, ahimsa means non-violence.

SD: Mhm.

SJ: Okay.

TG: So if I understood you correctly, you said your grandchildren grew up more learning about the non-violence um in everyday life, more than you had when you were growing up, um so h-when did you really start learning about it or start living your life that way?

SJ: For me and for my wife [clears throat] it was part of our completely f-system growing up. Seeing our parents, our grandparents okay. But we never questioned them [TG: Mm.], we did not ask critically and rationally. Why do we do these things? Why do we ha—why do we eat this not eat this? And and is there broader value, broader scope of non-violence than just food, okay? [clears throat] So coming h-over here, and especially our grandchildren—they started looking at broader landscape of non-violence, okay. And in that then the food is one aspect, the human aspect, the—what do we do with human behavior, with others—with each other. Okay, interpersonal relationship, living with people who are—have different beliefs and systems, okay, how do we treat our fellow human beings at work? And what ethics okay? And whole scope of that and non-violence, there we took it for granted in India, because those are the kind of people we met. Over here you have to question hm, how I can increase the scope of non-violence? So this is my grandchildren; I'm so happy because I mention in this book also, that they—since they question many of those value and say, "Grandpa, how come you are not thinking in that direction?" [TG: Hm.] Okay, and uh and that was a really lesson for me to be looking at beyond, hm, my own uh narrow scope of ahimsa, non-violence. So they—they really widen the horizon for me.

TG: Yeah I really liked the story where you were playing Go Fish with your daughter. And she said—

SJ: Oh you did read this book!

TG: Yeah and she said why can't it be um go—Schlitterbahn, like the water park, I laughed I thought that was funny.

SJ: Tell Sara.

TG: Yeah so I guess, she was sick right, and she was like, "Grandpa, can we play a card

game?” and you were playing Go Fish and she was like, “Well why is it ‘Go Fish?’” like isn’t that—like that’s harming fish, if you’re fishing. Can’t we say “go Schlitterbahn” instead?’ So...

SJ: There are two examples I have given in, this book, is not about them [TG: Mmhmm.], but I’m sure I’m glad you read that.

[00:10:00]

Uh when they were only about five, six years old, over here, and I said they only live about a mile from here [TG: Mmhmm] so not too far, and when the Christmas came and I mentioned the book, that I’m sure you remember, and the Christmas came they got all their toys, which all they do, as I’m sure you did, so they got from grandparents, from both sides g—both sides grandparents they live here okay, and from their parents and a few other— and so one of them was dart board game.

TG: Yeah [laughs].

SJ: And now this will be interesting for Sara. Dart board game. You know dart board game?

SD: Yes.

SJ: Okay, so my youngest one, who’s now going to be—going to college this year. She’s a senior in high school right now. She probably was five years old. And uh she said, ‘Grandpa can I play dart board game?’ I said ‘sure’. So she uh take the board, and she puts on the wall, okay, and she had this arrow hm. And she ready to throw that hm. Okay, and uh the ‘grandfather, grandfather’ she’s saying, Divya, her name—my granddaughter’s name is Divya. Divya hits the bullseye, hit the bullseye, you know what bullseye, and her hand is holding this arrow, and ready to go and it stops. She said, “Why should I make that bull blind? Why should I kill his eyes?” you follow? Hit the bull’s-eye, eh. And she turned to me, she said ‘Grandpa, can I call it center point?’ I said ‘Wow, if you can start thinking in that direction of not to speak violence, not to behave violent, okay, not to think about violence, then you will not commit the act of violence. Okay, and uh this um, have you heard of Jane—Jane Goodall.

TG: Oh like the chimp...lady?

SJ: Yeah.

TG: Yeah.

SJ: Okay so Jane Goodall, I met her once long time ago.

TG: Oh wow.

SJ: She very famous by the way, you know that.

TG: Mmhmm.

SJ: Okay, she had done fantastic work with chimpanzees and hm. Okay and written many, many books, okay. And um when they were growing up they did some project at school hm, both my grandchildren [SD: Oh, okay.], and uh they asked me, 'Can I—Grandpa, can you get me some autograph uh and some other pictures or photos of uh—of uh Jane Goodall?' So I wrote to Jane Goodall: 'I have two granddaughters who are doing a project of wha—hm. And she wrote back to me, you must be creating uh creating Gandhis in your family, I'm so glad [TG: laughs], okay. So those kind of things. So, what I'm saying is they're—they're busy here in electronical [sic] engineering and, you know, all of that, but the foundation of non-violence that has come to them hm at a young age, far better than I questioned hm. [TG and SD: Mm.] Okay, I think it will stay with them. So they will not go and take a gun and start shooting that uh in that Connecticut high—uh elementary school, Newtown—what was it uh, Newport, Connecticut, what year, what was it five six years, they will never....

TG: Yeah.

SJ: Okay.

TG: Um so we'll come back more to Jainism, but we wanted to know uh more about your education? Um so you got a B.S. and an M.Tech. in Mechanical Engineering in India, and then moved to England uh in 1965 and got your Ph.D., correct? Um so why mechanical engineering?

SJ: Okay, uh first of all, where I was growing up, hm, engineering was a very profound profession. It was a highly respected profession, number one. It was a profession that would in India pay you reasonably well and you will lead a reasonably good eh way of life, hm. So the family's parents all that, they would naturally push their children to go into—uh direct their children to go into profession where there's job stability, you will make a good living, and also reasonably well respected, number one. Number two, again when I grew up, India had just become independent; India became independent in 1947 from British. And so when I was in high school, which I'm talking in the years of fifty—fifty-two, fifty-three, fifty-four, in that time frame, okay, uh India needed all kinds of people to develop India. Just like you've been to Shanghai, and you know what a transformation...

SD: Mmhm.

SJ: ...Shanghai has done.

SD: Yes.

SJ: Fant—from a—from a muskrat-infested colony, Shanghai's one of the most beautiful cities. It has more high-rise building than anywhere in this country, not even Chicag—not even New York.

[00:15:01]

Okay, you've been there, so I've been there too. So there are a lot of opportunities India needed, lot of tailors, lot of engineers, lot of this. So that was another attraction that we can do something. So I went to engineering, nobody had gone into my family, they did not know what engineering is. So it was an opportunity for me, hm, to go into that one and I was very lucky. And uh so I did my um engineering and then I went for—work for a in company for about a year, in an automobile company, pretty large automobile—automotive company, with about 20,000 people, so pretty large. [TG: Mm, yeah.] They were making automobile. And then from there then I went to one of the top most school in uh engineering in India, where they call IIT, the Indian Institute of Technology, which are like MIT, not at same level but with the same status in India, hm. And I did my masters from there in engineering. And then I went to teaching in an Indian school, in an Indian college, hm. I taught there mechanical engineering for three years. And then an opportunity came for me to do my Ph.D. Okay, (?) advance. So I came to England, as you mention [TG: Mhmm,] , and I did my Ph.D. in mechanical engineering again same plan. And after my Ph.D. then I got uh an offer from the University of California, Berkeley, hm, as a postdoc. Okay, which I did got there for a few —only one semester, postdoc. And when I was here then I got a very good job offer in a research company in uh you will know, oh you—you are from New York area, do you know Worchester, Massachusetts?

SD: Yes.

SJ: Worchester, Massachusetts?

SD: Mhmm.

SJ: Okay, there's a RP—no there's a WPI there, Worchester Polytechnic Institute.

SD: Okay.

SJ: Hm, so anyway so I got very good offers, and uh again following engineering, I stayed there 12 years. And I also taught as an adjunct at WPI, hm, and a couple of other places, and I also for three years as a guest lecturer at uh MIT, hm. Where is close to from Worchester, you can drive to MIT within one hour, hm, so not too far. So that's how I continued following engineering because I saw the—the contribution I can make to society. Okay.

TG: And then you also lived in Cincinnati, Ohio for a bit, right?

SJ: Yeah.

TG: How did you end up there?

SJ: How did I end up there? Uh, sometime by design yes, but sometime just by luck, okay [TG laughs]. Well I was working in uh Worcester, Massachusetts for this research company, and 1980 a call came from what you call headhunter there, over there. By the way I do not like the term 'headhunter' it as if you are killing the heads of...

TG: What term?

SJ: As if you—'headhunter.'

TG: Oh headhunter, oh yeah. [laughs]

SJ: Again, I do not like the whole terminology in America, developed around this uh whole violence [TG: Mhmm.]. Headhunters those people who want to find a job, hire job for you, they call headhunter [TG laughs]. If you want to fire someone, hm, you say 'fire.'

TG: Wow, I hadn't thought of that, yeah.

SJ: Yeah, yeah, okay. And there many, many, many terminology like this where this—where there—where there used to be the stockyard here, the animals, okay, they used to count the how many animals you had, they would count the heads [SD and TG: Mm.], hm, you think they—the whole terminology, the concept of violence. Hm?

TG: Yeah.

SJ: Okay, anyway, so I got a call, and uh said we want to—to offer you a job in Houston, Texas. Uh very nice job, anyway, job was director of R&D Technology as well as their plant manager. So in 1980 because of the—the very good job offer, I came here. And I took that job—it's not too far from here. And that's when, 1981, since we move here, uh my son, he went to Rice, okay, if we would have stayed in that part of the world in Mas—Boston area, eh he would've gone to—whatever, uh, Harvard, or U Penn, or what—okay, okay. In fact he had an admission there, but. So we moved here and he went to Rice. So we stayed here for—I stayed here, me and my wife three years. My—my son and family here, my daughter hm they were both high school from Boston area hm, and, so then in 1983 the economy in Houston completely tanked, went south, okay, it was very bad.

[00:20:09]



And you know, if you know Houston, in those days, especially this Texas Medical Center was very small [TG: Mmhmm.], now you see like a city. Rice University was also very small, we could walk—it was a beautiful campus, in terms of open campus, beautiful plants around, okay. But the whole industry basically was dominated by oil, hm. And when the price of oil went down, the whole atmosphere in Houston turned very bad. Hm, so that time I start seeing the writing on the wall hm. And I got a job offer from General Electric, GE, hm, and they have—General Electric's a very large company and also they—their aerospace division. Jet engineer craft engine division. Okay, and since that Ohio visit their headquarters, so I got a job offer in their R&D. And in 1984 I moved there.

So we lived there for 15 years, with GE. And then as soon as I became eligible for some kind of retirement and, what do you call it, medical coverage and all that, eh, I gave them one year notice that I want to retire. So 1998 which is coming very close to 19 years, we immediately moved here within one week. And there is a reward here, because my son, he had already moved after—he's a physician by the way [TG: Mm.], and his wife is a physician [creaky door closes], and so they already moved here. So naturally the Indian community likes to be closer to their children hm, which we did, hm. So we've been here 19 years, and but we did live in Cincinnati for 15 years. So three places basically we have lived, uh little bit in Berkeley Ohio- Berkeley, California, as a postdoc, but short.

TG: Okay.

SJ: Then Worcester, Massachusetts twenty years and then if I count three—two times in Houston, before and now, so about twenty-two, twenty-three years in Houston.

TG: So how do, like those three cities where you were saying you living, uh, Wor- Wor-

SJ: Pardon.

TG: Worcester, like in Massachusetts, Ohio and Texas, um how do the cities compare? Um regarding a Jain or Indian community?

SJ: Okay, uh, we—I've been involved significantly in creating Jain communities. Both in—everywhere, in Boston as well as—in Cincinnati and here, everywhere I've been involved in, hm. So because when we came there were not that many institutions—Jain institutions. There were not that many Jains. So in Boston in 1973 there were only three Jain families. Now there are maybe six—five, six, or seven-hundred Jain families.

TG: Five, six, or seven hundred?

SJ: Yeah.

TG: Oh wow.

SJ: Yeah six, seven hundred, something like that. So we started, along with another friend of mine, we created what we called Jain Center of Greater Boston, in those days, and then we saw it grow. Develop the whole infrastructure, the programs for the kids, for the youth, for the other people, for hm, to maintain some of their upbringings, maintain some of their traditions, and also teaching. Then 1980 when I moved here, I found the number was less, maybe more, about fifty families. But they were not organized, [TG: Mm.] hm. So that time also I established uh Jain Society of Houston. Now there about eight-nine hundred families here. Okay, so I again saw the growth. After 3, 4 years when I moved from—from here to Cincinnati I saw the same opportunity. Okay, so everywhere I've been part of the Jain community, and by the way I just don't remain only as a Jain, I don't practice as a purely, as a what I call 'orthodox' uh system, hm, [TG: Mm.] I consider Jainism a religion; if anybody who believes and practices non-violence is a Jain. Anybody. So you can be a Muslim, you can be Christian, you can be whatever. But if you, you don't need any title, there's no baptism, there's no proselytization, there's no evangelism, there's nothing. But if—just like you take Brianne, okay, Brianne is a Christian, Brianne Donaldson.

TG: Yeah, yeah.

SJ: Okay I'm talking—Brianne Donaldson is a Christian, okay, but she's very much in tuned to the philosophy of non-violence and the ethics and bioethics of all that.

[00:25:02]

So she probably as good a Jain or better than many other Jains [TG laughs], okay. So there are no titles here. So for me and for the whole family, okay, when you say Jain community, Jain community to keep on the tradition, you have the treasure of non-violence, and don't dilute it. Okay, don't walk away from it. So that has been my role. Okay, I'll like to take one-minute break to go to restroom.

TG: Yeah, of course.

SJ: Hm, is it able to see me when I move my face around is it...?

TG: Yeah, yeah I think it's good.

SJ: It's a wide angle?

TG: Mmhmm yeah.

SJ: Okay.

TG: Um, okay, did you wanna ask your question?

SD: Sure, you mentioned that Indian communities were initially pretty small; Did you ever face any sort of discrimination while you were in America?

SJ: Uh actually not, and the reason is the American society is very broad minded. Extremely broad minded, that I will find that even uh within my own India, Indian community, okay, over there in India. So it's pretty open, and uh over all these years I have not had any incident in my life where, number one, somebody said, 'Go back to your country,' okay. Which probably I read now, is happening now. Okay, I read that in the paper, but not me. So, my children never been discriminated an—anywhere, okay, in opportunities or jobs, or admissions, or anywhere. I was never discriminated in terms of finding—there was only in my days there was little bit glass ceiling [TG: Mm.]. Okay, how high you can go [SD: Mhm.]. And the reason in those days was, you do not speak with American accent, or you do not play golf [TG and SD laugh], okay, you know, some of those requirement, how people used to perceive hm. Okay, those uh stereotypes, those barriers are gone. And if you look at Silicon Valley, okay, more than 60, 70 percent of the entrepreneurs over there are foreign born [SD: Mhm.]. Many of them Indians, hm, very large corporations, you look at Google, you look at Microsoft, you look at any of those, they are loaded with Indian engineers, they're very high...In fact, the CEO of Microsoft is an Indian, hm CEO of Microsoft [TG laughs] is Indian okay, CEO of Google is an Indian, okay—so those opportunities in those days were not there for us. But they opened up, so I think this country is pretty welcoming. I did not feel anything that um hm, uh that I should have. Or some people made jokes about I'm a vegetarian, hm, that was purely a joke because in those days people did not understand what vegetarians are, fifty years ago, and they also thought vegetarians—they did not know what they eat [SD laughs] okay. Those—those were not discrimination, those were just because they did not know.

TG: Yeah, especially in the South, in Houston.

SJ: Ah yeah, even other places, because vegetarianism was not much known. They thought these people—they have some mental problem [all laugh]. Okay, no, no those—those are just ignorance, okay.

TG: Did you—oh were you going to say something?

SJ: No go.

TG: Okay um, I was just wondering if in India you ever faced any discrimination being a religious minority there?

SJ: Say it again I did not...

TG: In India, if you faced discrimination there because you were an—a religious minority.

SJ: Oh, no, no Jain, number one, Jains don't look any different than Hindus. Okay, Jains are very insignificant, I would say, very small part of-of percentage of Indian population. Did you know that Jain's are not even 1% of the population of India? [TG: Mm.] [SD: Wow.] Okay, but they are very influential, extremely influential, both in terms of economic power, okay, and also their intellectual brainpower. Okay, so the Jains have stayed in that areas, so that have a they-they—but from that perspective as a Jain, hm, uh I did not feel, even though I did not live all those years in India, but did not feel any discrimination. In India the discrimination is a very different kind. Uh and that not just for Jains, that in general—they are very what you call original or straight-centered.

[00:29:57]

Okay, supposing over here if I had lived in—as somebody who was born and raised in New York, okay, and comes here, by the way they—those people who come here they're called Yankees [SD laughs]. Hm?

SD: Yeah.

SJ: Okay and they are not as well accepted in those days, thirty, forty years ago, Yankees were not very well accepted in South as they are probably now hm. Okay, so those kind of—where you come from where you discrimination based on your um, so in India—India has uh thirty, thirty states but uh so many different languages, so many cultures, so many religions, so many food habits in India, it's not—it's not one country. And because of that uh the discrimination can be—oh this guy is not a Texan, for an example, hm, oh he's from Massachusetts, so then the preference in jobs, preference promotion will be given to your own people as if Texas is a separate country [TG laughs]. Hm, so that is a—different kind—a very different kind of discrimination, but not as a Jain, but not as a Jain, okay.

TG: Um, so why is Jainism your passion, and why did you decide to become so involved with the Jain community?

SJ: Okay, uh, Jainism is more than any other religion, its central tenet is non-violence, okay. Ahimsa, ahimsa, non-violence, mentally, verbally, and physically, okay, not do it, no—unconditionally, no condition will not do it myself, will not ask anyone else to do it for me, and I will not support anybody who's doing, okay. Okay, and so and not only to humans but also to non-humans, any—any species, okay. This kind of philosophy, even though this may be in many other religions, but the beauty is that for a Jain, and I'm using that Jain word in a very broad sense, as I mentioned to you [TG: Mmhmm.], okay, for a Jain non-violence, ahimsa, is a daily practice, daily experience, but for many people

non-violence is a daily experience, no, violence, violence.

TG: Oh.

SJ: Okay, they will not even think twice, okay, uh what violence means. Okay, and that's increasing more and more throughout the world, hm, there's so much violence now than it used to be in hundred years ago or whatever. So violence is increasing; the kids are being brought up in the whole atmosphere of violence. You look at the kids today—there are hundreds of factors that are contributing to the violence. Number one, their family breakdown, yeah, there's not much training when they see TV all the time, carries all the—the every news, and everything about violence. Their sports are violent, their television, their—their toys are violent huh, and the kids their, ah gun—availability of ah every—everything weapon that you can commit violence is all around. So the kids have very little chance if the—whole ah what I'm saying—Sara and you, I forgot your name.

TG: Taylor.

SJ: Huh?

TG: Taylor.

SJ: Kaylor.

TG: Taylor, with a "T."

SJ: Oh, Taylor, Taylor, Taylor.

TG: Yes.

SJ: The—the whole world teaches our kids about violence, there are very few places that teach them about non-violence, there's another way. I was raised and born at a time when Mahatma Gandhi was still alive okay. I was about eleven, twelve years old when he was assassinated. I did see Mahatma Gandhi from a distance not—I never came to shake hand with me but I did—I did see. So I saw the whole hour of non-violence, what Gandhi brought too, hm, okay, and what he was teaching, what he was preaching. And I saw the relationship with Jainism-Jainism had been doing this. I also saw that Gandhi was made—oh you know his name was Mohan—Mohan before—actually his name is Mo—M.K Gandhi- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi—that's his name.

SD: Okay.

SJ: But from Mohan, hm, he become Mahatma. Mahatma means 'great soul'. I'm sure you've heard that, Mahatma Gandhi [TG: Mhm.]. Mahatma means the great soul, okay, that's—it's for the title that was given to him. So he became from Mohandas to

Mahatma from ordinary person, hm, he became that great soul. The influence in making him was significant of Jainism.

[00:35:04]

Gandhi—Gandhi brought into forth the whole concept of non-violence from Jainism, so Jainism had in—in—though Mahatma, through Gandhi, great influence, in thinking and shaping the thinking of many, many people throughout the world, okay. Not just in India but throughout the world. So for me to be associated with that kind of philosophy Mahatma Gandhi said there are thousands of causes—there are thousands of causes I am willing to die for, but not a single cause I'm willing to kill for. That's beautiful, hm, so those are the kind of things—so, so much uh collaboration, so much the—the—the extension of Jain philosophy that I think is beautiful. So for me, of course for my upbringing, for the whole family all that, but then I saw this, that why I started to promoting. Not Jainism is a fanatic religion, not Jainism to convert some people, not Jainism to change their title, eh and that I have a big sign, I am a Jain out, hm, Jainism is a way of life, ahimsa is a way of life. Okay, so that's why I promoted this. I'm still doing it this whole book—in fact this book as I'm sure you read- where did you get a copy, Internet?

TG: Yeah, Dr. Chao sent it to us online.

SJ: Okay, okay, okay. The whole that I see that people are taking shortcuts with non-violence. Then a Jain should be practicing non-violence, hm, do a lot more than they're just doing now. Whether they have started walking away, they are started taking shortcuts. So my book is point out, eh, there's something most beautiful. The whole concept of 50,000 years ago whenever—there was a—a very big document made from England by Dr. Michael Wood, who once shown on BBC. He said Jainism had the most profound philosophy of non-violence, to not only the human beings, but also to non-human beings. And got him 50,000 years ago, who knows 50,000 but Jainism has that, hm. And so Jainism has never fought a war, hm, never gone to occupy any territory. So that—those are the influences I have to talk, and in the same respect, I'm promoting quite a bit of the uh Jain academic education. Last year you know I create this uh a—a—um a—postdoc fellowship, we had to combine with the Chao Center for Brianne Donaldson, that the whole purpose we brought him here. And we are funding that, hm [TG: Mhm]. Okay, uh, today is Monday...last Friday, just three days ago we created a—a full uh, chaired professorship in Jainism and non-violence at University of California, Riverside [TG: Mm.]. Okay same thing, okay, tomorrow is the 21<sup>st</sup>, we are creating another chaired professorship at University of California, Davis. And one year ago we created the same thing at uh at University of California, Irvine. Okay, and many others. The goal is that we need to teach non-violence, otherwise we'll be just trying ourselves, there will be—lot of atom bombs will be flying all around okay, people will be making it home, and that way we will distract ourselves, unless we start thinking relatively. Okay, good, keep on asking, good questions.

TG: [Laughs] Um, so...

SJ: I hope I'm not preaching—I'm just...

TG: No, no it's—you're great [laughs]. Um, so as you've mentioned Jainism is non-proselytizing, so like you're not gonna go out and try and recruit people or do that, so is your—so your goal is teaching—like spreading the teachings of non-violence, um so do you want people to make decisions for themselves, I mean like the title of your book is *You Decide* so...

SJ: You decide—who am I to tell you, hm? Okay, if you like the concept of non-violence, you decide whether you want to follow that path, and how much, how deep, where you follow, okay, based on your own circumstances, your environment, okay [TG: Mhmm.]. You decide, I—for Brianne and for me and all of those, we can—we can tell you what non-violence is, ethics—what ethics is, okay, what uh animal rights are, okay.

[00:40:05]

But for you to decide hm is based on your own rational critical thinking. Okay, that's why I put—throughout the book I use this word 'you decide'.

TG: Mhmm. Has your line of work as an engineer ever challenged your Jain beliefs?

SJ: Ah, some. But uh, first of all, religion and uh your professional life—uh they can come in conflict, and they might not come in conflict, okay. Uh, let me tell you what that means. Uh, Jainism naturally we are talking all of that non-violence, hm, I worked for General Electric, okay, if as an engineer I was working for a company—I'll come back to General Electric—if as an engineer I was working for a company, an engineering company, that designs and builds equipment for slaughterhouse, okay after all somebody does it [TG: Mhm.], hm those are pretty large pieces of machinery. Supposing I was working there, supposing, which of course I would never, hm, I will never work for a company, hm, that design and builds machines to kill animals. Okay, so that—I stayed away from those kinds—that, I never saw those jobs offers either, but in my line of work I'm sure there's some technologies that I developed, okay, that might be used by somebody to non—to in a violent uh way, or in industry where there's violence. Okay, for which I probably have no control. Huh, somebody, Einstein and all that, they developed the whole philosophy of atom.

But somebody built up the whole atom bomb [TG: Mm.]. Hm, okay, several in—in 1920s and whole philosophy of the whole science of atom came, hm. They did not create that to develop atom bomb, hm, okay. Now when I was working in GE there was a few times that I thought that G—GE makes engines by the way, aircraft engines, they are the largest builder of jet engines in the world. Okay, and so engines are used in all kinds of

aircraft, Boeing, Airbus, hm, all of those, these are Boeing and Airbus, Boeing does not solely make commercial—commercial airplanes, in which you and I fly from here to Arizona, or to wherever all over the world, those are commercial airplanes. Boeing and Lockheed and many of those people they also make planes, bombers, okay, they have fighters, okay, now those planes, they are not—they are not for commercial flying, they're to kill people, [SD: Mm.] hm. So some of my work in technology is—has been applied to them also, okay, so that is a little conflict if you will from Jain values. Did I develop for only for that purpose? No. Did I have a role to do that? No. Could I have stopped it? No. Other than just leaving my job hm, okay, and then go somewhere else. But the line, uh, so—becomes so broad, hm, that uh, where do I stop sometimes, okay, how do I have control. So, it was not a major uh conflict with me because many of my thing did not—I did not know where they end up anyway, hm. They were used, and—but I'm sure for peaceful uses of uh engines, and also uh destructive uses of engines, technology. So some of that did happen, but in life those are the very, very few, uh, that clear definition and choices that one can make, very few, hm, but uh one has to be careful, as I say very careful that I will not work for a company, uh technology that designs and builds machines to kill animals, okay. Okay, that's very clear, the rest are negligible in terms of uh, just a grey line, hm.

[00:45:01]

**TG:** Umm...Okay can you talk a little bit about your experience with the Jain Society of Houston?

**SJ:** Experiences?

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** Uhh...

**TG:** Or maybe, like um...

**SD:** Your involvement.

**TG:** Yeah.

**SJ:** Well, I-I mentioned that I moved here in 1980 from Boston area. The society community, which was a very small community, of maybe hardly forty-five-fifty Jain families, as opposed to now we have seven-...eight-hundred Jain families now. Uh, they were just not organized so number one I organize them. I, so that now we start meeting regularly at some place, there is no place to meet. We will rent a basement – oh no not basement here – but some, some uh buildings one week and some church building or some bank building where we can meet, or some school building. So slowly, slowly. The whole idea was that the kids who were growing up small, they should know their



identity, they should know their upbringing. They should know what kind of uh philosophy, background they have come from otherwise they will never know. So, three years I reasonably worked very hard to assimilate that values, organize the community, and uh, and uh just start on a regular basis so that...then after three, three and half years I left, I went to Cincinnati. So, then—then I was gone for fifteen years. And, but I used to come here quite regularly because my, both the children were here and going to Rice and medical school and all that. So, I was in touch with many of them but uh they-it kept on uh increasing. Um, they bought a building, an old warehouse to convert into a Jain temple. And then they start many many activities. They start Sunday school for children and so many other things. So I stayed in a little bit but not as a, what do you call it, a official, administrator, not as a manager, not purely as an advisor. If-if need be. Now after, when I came back here, fifteen-eh nineteen years ago, I turned my whole attention because now, uh the-the regular infrastructure had been created and so many other people they were moving and uh organizing those activities which I was involved in with my youth.

So I turned my-all my attention, practically, on uh the creating the facilities, promoting, establishing center for Jain academic studies in universities. Okay. Because that's something, this is another brand new area which these people were not doing. Hmm. And uh so last uh, I would say, at least fifteen years, hmm, and my first job [?] and I made along with others. Nobody does it-anything alone. So, it was, if you want to promote Jain studies in-uh-at Rice University or wherever, okay, or any institution, we need scholars. We need trained professors. Okay, who-if you did not have trained Brianne Donaldson, who will teach here? Okay. And since Jainism is a very small religion and its foothold in America is there very much, hmm, we did not have many scholars. Okay, so I started working. How do we create-train new scholars? And that-that activity started fifteen years ago. And with that we got—we created an International School for Jain Studies. And the purpose of that was to take some uh faculty members who were already faculty members and who have an interest in Asian religion, who have an interest in non-violence, who have an interest in Jainism and Buddhism and uh-but they do not have much knowledge, enough knowledge to teach Jainism. They know some, but not [?] amount. So with their interests we start taking them to India during summer. And uh giving them a uh intensive course in Jainism during summer for two months and the course was absolutely the whole program and absolutely academic. It was not proselytizing, none-none of us were. And the people who were teaching them there were also professors in Indian universities, okay. Not preachers.

[00:50:01]

They are different—preachers and hm academics. So we were doing that uh and then we expanded that to uh to undergraduate students so that they get at least a...uh some sort of...the intro-introduction to Jainism. And to graduate students and to professors. And now we have expanded that program also to high school teachers. And uh in that, Breanne went there two or three times, in this program. And uh there used to be one

over here there was a doctor, uh she did PhD from this place, uh Andrea Jain. Okay. But uh she was born in a Jain family, didn't know anything about even the spelling of Jainism, hm. And uh now she teaches at University of Indiana now, hmm.

**TG:** What was her name?

**SJ:** Andrea Jain. Andrea. Jain.

**TG:** Can you spell that for me?

**SJ:** Eh?

**TG:** Can you spell her first-

**SJ:** Andrea. A-N-D-R-E-A. Andrea.

**TG:** Oh! Andrea. Oh, okay.

**SJ:** Andrea. Okay? Uhh.

**TG:** Thanks.

**SJ:** Uh...uh...like "Taylor"...so...uh Jain. Okay?

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** But uh she did not know anything because uh what happened her—her father who was a Jain from India, her mother was a Catholic, okay, from here. And then so, then because of this combination she did not pick up any—because they did not practice any religion at home practically, hmm. So she did not pick up. So but she came here and did her PhD from uh from here from—do you know Professor Jeffrey Kripal? You don't know...okay. He's in department of Humanities, hm.

**TG:** Okay.

**SJ:** Okay, so she did a Ph.D. and now she's at the University of Indiana. So, but many other people have gone. So 700 people have gone to this program in India during the last uh fif-twelve, thirteen years, fourteen years. And after that, seventeen people have done their Ph.D.s in Jainism. Okay, which were then none. And Ph.D.s from University of Chicago, University of U Penn, uh Harvard, okay, here Ri-Rice University, and you know, a few other places. So, now, and that many more are in pipeline, working for their Ph.D. So what we have now is we have some talent available, hm, that if you want to create center for Jain studies, hm, now there are some people like Brianne and there are a few other people. They can they can, they can, we may have money but if there nobody to

teach what do we do? Hm?

So now at least we create this infrastructure and we are progressing in the direction-so my whole effort, rather than just spending time with the Jain centers and there running day-to-day function, I'm involved in promoting these kind of uh avenues and programs and of course I work with many universities and I also work with many Jain centers, not just one, hm, because many times I'm involved in helping raising funds. Th-these things cost a lot of money to create a chair, hm. You're talking two million dollar minimum, hm. And uh so we have to go and talk to people who have the money, hm. And so that's where my time-um, I'm also give a lot of talks, I'm also this uh Thursday which is only three days from now, I'm giving a keynote lecture at uh Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, hm, okay. So, I remain busy because this gives me an avenue to meet with the academicians, the professors, with the-to interact with them, see, you know, what their needs are. All day before coming here this morning I talked to uh University of, U-UT, uh UT Austin. They have a pa-they have a professor who teaches Jainism. And we were talking, you know, what more can we do, how should we do that, what are the opportunities? So, this what I spend time on.

**TG:** Umm...in India, is there a lot of Jainism being taught in schools?

**SJ:** Uh...not really. Uh in terms of-there are two different. First of all the schools in India, there are government schools and private schools. Just like over here, there are public schools and private schools. Any of you went to private school or public school, any of you?

**SD:** I went to private school.

**SJ:** You went to private school.

**TG:** I went to public school.

**SJ:** You went to public school. Okay. Right. [all laugh] Well good. So in India we have both. And...public schools uh because of the secular secular nature of the country they do not teach any religion. And I'm sure to a great extent it's true here also hm.

[00:55:02]

They may talk about what religion hm over here there may be a course in public schools in your high school about what religion hm but not much. They-but private schools, just like uh Catholic school, Protestant school there are so many other schools they do teach eh but their own denominations. Okay. I'm sure you probably went to a uh some Catholic school then huh?

**SD:** Uhh...my school wasn't associated with any religion, but we did learn about like Christianity, Buddhism, **[SJ:** Okay okay] Judaism...

**SJ:** But some schools basically there is a Jewish school, there is a Catholic school, or whatever, they naturally will teach that. So, in India uh the public schools naturally they will not teach any religion because of their s-secular nature. The private schools eh uh do teach some. But again, they are only uh there's a limitation on them also that you do not eh you do not exist to only to teach your religion. So, in my high school I went to a Jain school. But there, Jain uh Jainism was only one subject, very little, not much. The-so what you learned was from the community, not from so much from the school hm. So my upbringing was uh was mostly what I learned hm, uh from the community, from the monks and nuns and from mendicants and from holy people and from temples and eh all of those. And how it reflected by my-my family. But over here, I started studying more. Okay, there it was purely watching and seeing what was there, you never questioned. That happens in any way. But here, over here you know when you do a study in religion, if modern religion is available on Internet, on Wikipedia, in books, and hm, and then you start seeing with a different microscope, with different lenses okay. So, it has continued in that fashion. But in India, I would not say that I got much education in Jainism.

**TG:** Okay. Umm...so you say that the practice of *ahimsa* is slipping in the Jain community which inspired you to write um *An Ahimsa Crisis*. So, in this day and age, do you believe that it's possible to be truly, one hundred percent non-violent? Um, I recall that even you mentioned you're only vegan like 95% of the time. So what do you think about that?

**SJ:** You read this book very thoroughly then. [laughs]

**TG:** [laughs] It was very interesting! I enjoyed it.

**SJ:** No, no, no, I-I'm glad because we-you find very few people who have read it so nicely okay. Uh...all Jains are vegetarian. [**TG:** Mmhmm.] By birth by thousands of years okay. Okay I do not know when my family became Jain or if they were always Jains I—I do not know. But I will say for generations and generations hm we are Jain okay. So, vegetarianism is a given. So there is nothing uh [?].

The journey to veganism for me started only about uh twenty-five, thirty years ago. In India we had never heard this terminology, 'veganism.' It's a very much Western hm concept which has start challenging us. We had not thought of uh...cruelty uh that takes place in so many, and I'm sure you read that, in so many other things hm. We are not taught cruelty in milk or dairy products, in leather, in use of uh silk, in use of wool, or medicines, or sports and entertainment and even on and on. We had not questioned those because our number one—in India these things were not part of so much of your life. Okay uh and if they were they were kind of behind, they were hidden. So we uh and there was a blinder, okay, blinder, we did not really question. So what happened, this thing called Jai-veganism started and I of course started questioning and looking at hm uh is there ahimsa involved, is there violence involved. And when that started popping

up in my head and I start mak-started making that journey.

Okay. So I became thirty years ago I said I will not drink regular milk, for example, that comes from the cow's uh okay. Uh...but even now uh your question 95% is very correct. And uh because I make small compromises. Small compromises means, tea has become in very big fashion when you go to somebody's homes or hm function. Eh hot tea or hot coffee, whatever it is. [TG: Mmhmm.] So and normally in that you use some kind of cream.

[01:00:02]

Okay. And my host does not have that uh vegan cream. Okay and then if I don't take sometime he will feel offended eh. All-always he say 'what can I offer you? You don't take this, you don't take this, you don't take...' eh. So in order, purely from those reasons, just to be part of this society, even though I say I am a vegan hm, but uh everybody is not a vegan I go to. Okay. So that's why number one uh I am 95%. Number two, uh...no matter how much I try, even though my wife is from Jain tradition, she talks all the time about veganism but she will not follow veganism. Okay. She-not that she's against [TG: Mmhmm.], but she has not made the journey. Hm. So at home, in my refrigerator, there's almond milk and there's soymilk and there's regular milk. And almond and soymilk is for me, hm, and I do not like that there is a yogurt, two different kinds of yogurt. [TG: (laughs) Mmhmm.] You follow? So, uh there are some compromise. Okay after all we live in a practical society. So for me to become hundred percent, I can do it, not that it is a complete... I can do it but it will create some uh...little hardship for many people where I go to hm. For example, just give you uh I go to I go to in three days I am going to Loyola Marymount University. They have a dinner. Okay. And there will near a hundred people dinner. It will be vega-vegetarian. It may not be vegan. It's the university you know huh. They know they may have a special plate for me. Okay but uh if it is not there hm then I will pick up minimum thing that I can hm. So those kind of choices when I make okay I do not use leather, completely, at all. I do not use silk. I do not use this I do not...Medicine. There are two kinds of medicine. One is what the doctor prescribes. And there are those vitamins and capsules and all those supplements okay. Now, what doctor prescribes I have no idea where they come from. What those con-uh what they contain hm. Blood pressure medicine. This I'm giving huh [TG: Yeah.] okay. I have no idea what those contain and if I don't take this there's no other choice. Hm. Okay. Capsules and those vitamins I buy from uh man-uh there are many many companies, Vitamin D, vitamin this, vitamin that, that you can buy from vegan shops or vegan... [TG: Mmhmm.] So tho-what I'm trying to tell you, hundred percent? Some people may become hm, but uh I have not taken that path. The...I have one foreword in the book from Professor Gary Francione. I'm sure you read that. [TG: Mmhmm.]. Hm. Did you read that?

TG: Yeah.

**SJ:** Okay. He's a...uh...university distinguished professor of law and ethics at Rutgers University in your [Sara's] backyard. [**SD:** Mmhmm.] Okay. And author of at least thirty-five, forty books. He is a pure vegan. Okay. And when I say "pure" I do not know whether that is 900% or 99%. But he is more vegan than I am.

**TG:** [laughs]

**SJ:** Hm. So one can hm but I have not taken that step yet, maybe someday. But I do think about them. Okay.

**TG:** Do you [Sara] have any questions?

**SJ:** You've been very quiet!

**SD:** Yes. Umm switching gears a little bit, how did you meet you wife and what does she do?

**SJ:** How did I meet my wife and what does she do?

**SD:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** Okay. Extremely good question. And then-follow up that I will uh tell you something of our story. Okay. Uh [clears throat] I never met my wife before the—on the wedding altar. We did not see each other, completely. [**TG:** Wow.] Okay. And uh I was working that time, I was what twenty-four, twenty-five years of age. But was working in Bombay, I come from New Delhi, the difference between-distance between Bombay and Delhi is uh...mmm...about nine hundred miles. So pretty far. Probably as far as from here to Chicago—something like that, not quite. Okay. So I was working there in those days uh the old facility of email and Internet and cell phones, they were not there.

[01:05:05]

You-you even cell-in your own lifetime cell phone only came around hm ten, fifteen years ago. So even the telephones were not easy to get hold of. So you write these letters. So that was the means of writing uh letters to my parents and vice-versa. So when you get to that age, parents get uh...active that we-our son or daughter needs to get married. Around...previously it used to be younger age people used to get married at fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, hm. And now they're pushed back more and more hm. So I was about twenty-five. So. But they were in India, because of the arranged marriage system in those days, there was not as much where you meet and uh it's become common now but not in the uh. Many people will come to my father, okay, and uh proposing some kind of relationship with their daughter. Okay. This is quite common. Even then it was uh significantly hm okay. And the parents normally uh they will look at so many common factors. The people that lived in same community, within the same

village, within the same food habits, within the same economic status. Okay. Not that uh Bill Gates will come to my father to offer his daughter. [SD and TG laugh]. You-you follow me? Hm?

**TG and SD:** Yeah.

**SJ:** Okay. And so many of those that they know, huh, that the community knows each other very well and upbringing, and. So, the type of match as many factors combined as possible. So, so many of these were coming to my father. And one of them was from my wife's parents. And her father was my teacher in high school. Okay he taught me mathematics hm. So he was...but we had grown apart, I had, you know, gone to high school and then I went to college and then engineering and then working. So we...whenever I came to Delhi if I happened to see him I would say hello to him on the road but not. So that came through my father. And naturally there was a lot of fit. A lot of match there. Match between...he's Jain, they're Jain family. Similar background. More or less similar economic-economic status. So many things were common. And he was my teacher so I knew him eh reasonably well.

So my father wrote to me, hm, and uh said that this person has come, hm, and we are seriously thinking. And why don't you come. Uh take a train and come and hm. Okay. And then we will be going on such and such day to meet your future bride okay. That is the custom that you go and see the hm and you don't go alone. The whole uh community goes with you. My-my brothers, and my sisters, and my-her family, and my aunts and uncles, and twenty, thirty people go. [SD and TG laugh] It's a, it's a big procession and I was [?]. That-that's the custom in those days. So I thought about it and I said normally when these-if so many people go, what is going to happen, I have seen many other similar stories when...so there um my would be wife, she will come all dressed up hm. And she will come in front of these fifteen, twenty, thirty people hm who were kind of doing her interview hm. It's kind of interview. [SD and TG laugh] Job interview okay. Marriage interview. Okay and she will be so, so shy and hm all of that and uh she will probably you know speak something and they will, and then she will be gone okay. And I said, 'What will I see during that half an hour, twenty minutes?' She will see me, I will see her. We will indulge them, by the way, the whole, well not much involved taking pictures, and photos and all the...I'm just telling you this time. Now see you take a picture with this and then you can see on FaceTime and all that you know? None in those days. So I'm talking very archaic time as if I were living in Stone Age [all laugh] okay. Not too long ago, by the way okay.

So, I said to myself, 'What am I going to do?' I will see her face, she will see mine. She has one nose, she has two ears. [SD and TG laugh] Yup. She has this, okay. That's all I will see okay she will not know me and our nature.

[01:10:02]

I will not know her nature. I will-she will not know about me much okay. Not much. Okay. And that's how people used to do. So I wrote back to my father, 'I'm not coming.' Okay. And the reason I am not coming because there is not much use to. Even th-even in those days, Taylor, the father of him asking you their children-son, then you come and see what, again, knew even before that. Only the parents will go and make the decision. Even the-the groom will not know. His-his opinion was not even asked for. But in my case, my father was a little bit more open huh and uh he did ask me. So, I said 'No, I've known you, I'm your son'. And no f-parent want to make a bad decision for their children. No-no you always wish good for the children. Every parent does, okay. And you know more for them, much more perceptive eyes because uh for my age I would only to see the uh facial beauty hm. Okay not the-not the person. Okay oh this is attractive this is not attractive, that's all okay. But you will see so many other things that uh uh a person of twenty-five years age will not see but a man of sixty years will see okay. Is it compatible? So I say, 'You will make the decision and that will be accept—one hundred percent acceptable to me.' Okay.

Now the story does not end. [SD and TG laugh] Okay so I left completely to my father, mm and my other relatives who, and they made the decision and they say now it has been all fixed and uh you come on such and such a day and there will be engagement and you will be married. Now, I came in Delhi and then the huge amount of preparation that go on in the Indian family for wedding, it goes on for two, three weeks, four weeks. It's very elaborate. And now elaboration has become really huge these days, big business over there. Okay, so, I came.

And then you have these invitation cards that you want to invite people okay. And there were invitation cards in those days, even now probably, two sets of separate uh invitation cards. One for my family, to my-my relatives and my uh friends. And-and there will be from uh wife-my wife's parents hm invitation cards okay to their friends and family okay. So, one day, uh much before marriage, I'm sitting at uh my classmate's house. Viral[?] my classmate from high school, I'm sitting at his house. And...some five, six girls who were my wife's uh classmate and friends. They came to invite them with the wedding card, this family uh my friend's family. Okay. And so when I was there they gave a, they did not know who I am. [TG: Mm.] So they gave that invitation card to naturally my friend's family to be invited from their side. And when these girls were leaving, there were about five, six, my friend said, 'Why don't you give one card to this poor fellow also?' [SD and TG laugh] It was me.

**TG:** Yeah. [still laughing]

**SJ:** Okay. Why don't they invite him? You have invited me, why...and they said, 'Who is he?' [SD and TG laugh] Okay. And then my friend told him-told them who I am. Now I am the center of attraction. [SD and TG laugh] I am surrounded. Okay. And now questions, have you seen your-my wife's name is Ravi R-A-V-I, have you seen her? No. She has not seen you, you have not seen here. Oh. Now the wedding is still ten days



away, by the way. Oh we can arrange a meeting tomorrow for...between two of you. At the univers-my wife was at Delhi University. We can meet at a coffee house. Hmm okay which is..So they made me this offer mm so that you both can meet. And then one girl, she said, 'Oh by the way I have her library card in my wallet.' Hm. "And it is her picture photo.' Okay. 'And let met show it to you.' I said, 'No, don't do any of those nonsense things for me. [SD and TG laugh] I tell you why, no this is important this will-this not true anymore but I said don't do-I am not interested in meeting her and I am not interested in seeing her picture'.

[01:15:02]

They thought I was some kind of really delirious man. Something's wrong huh. So, but anyway. And I thought why did I make that decision? Just you've got to listen to me hm. Whole concept becomes why did I make this decision now I'm not going to meet her okay? The reason is my father had given me a choice month ago. Come and meet with her hm. I turned it down and put all my faith and trust in my father. He must have made a good decision. If I go and meet her tomorrow, in the coffee house, or I see her picture, okay, either I will like—we both will like each other completely or we'll not say a word and will what a bad decision hm. Okay these are the only two things going to happen. Either it is a good decision or bad decision. Okay. Now if it is a bad decision, what do we do? Go back and say, 'Marriage is off.' Hm? You follow me?

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** 'We've made a mistake, marriage is off.' That's all that you can do. If it is a good decision, you are very happy. Okay. Now, in the Indian tradition, Indian families, if you are that far and if you say it is off in those days it was a kind of disgrace.

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** Very bad brought on your hm. Okay, what are you playing games like this? Okay, why didn't you do this before? Okay. So I said no, whatever my fam-I'm not going to put my father into this situation. Eh, I have given him hundred percent, he accepted my eh and I am not going to play games with him. So I refused both of those offers. Okay. If if Ravi wants to meet, she can-to her parents she can say that or say huh my fa-my wife wants to meet. Okay. And she did not express that desire either. But on the other hand, since my father-in-law, I was his student, he had seen me for four years, okay, even though I was a, you know, much younger kid. But he knew what kind of person I was, and what kind of student I was. And there were hm and so uh I'm sure he probably had told her huh that it is-he is not a bad boy hm. So, this is how the marriage happened, so we both met at marriage altar and it was very good decision, extremely Sara, it was an extremely good decision. And do you know how long we have been married?

**SD:** No...

**SJ:** Take a guess.

**SD:** Uhh...more than fifty years? Fifty something?

**SJ:** Nearly fifty-six years.

**SD:** Fifty-six.

**TG:** Wow.

**SJ:** Okay, nearly fifty-, pretty soon fifty-six years. It has been extremely beautiful huh what parents did. So I—I would say I would not have been able to do that myself as good as she. So now this one story, another story real quickly.

**TG:** Okay, yeah you're fine.

**SJ:** Okay. Uh...I have my son here and my-his family here. And his wife, she also has graduated. So we have whole Rice graduates all around [SD and TG laugh] okay? As if it is a family institution. It is. Okay. And uh they both met at Rice. Okay. And uh I will not go through all the things how it all happened and it was very pleasant wife huh okay. But, when I was working General Electric and I gave them whatever notice and I...leaving, after, they had some luncheon for me hm to say goodbye, which they did. So some of my friends say, 'Sulekh, what are you going to do now you are retired-retiring? Are you going to live in Cincinnati or will you be coming part time to GE?' you know he thought-okay all of those things. But I said, 'No, I am moving to Houston next week.' 'Why Houston?' I said, 'Because my family lives there.' Okay, my son had already moved there. And 'Do you have a house there?' Hm or 'Are you renting a house?' You know, those are simple questions people-friends ask. I said, 'Yes, I have a house.' 'How big is it? Do you have a picture?' [SD and TG laugh] Only fifteen-uh nineteen years ago, I promise, Sara. I said, 'No, I have a house and I don't have a picture and I have not even seen it.' [SD and TG laugh] Okay so again, these people say how the hell does this guy work in GE with this kind of talent huh? [all laugh] Okay. Okay so they said, 'How did you buy the house?' they asked me.

[01:20:02]

I said, 'Well, my daughter-in-law, she went looking for a house for us. She liked, she negotiated, the papers came to me via fax [SD and TG laugh], I-I signed them, and they gone. Okay, so these people were completely confused now [SD and TG laugh]. They said, 'You trust your daughter-in-law that much?' Honestly I'm talk-'You trust you daughter-in-law that much?' I said 'My friend, listen to me. I trusted my father fifty years ago to find a bride for me. Okay. Can-how come I cannot trust my daughter-in-law to find a house for me?' [SD and TG laugh] If I don't like the house, I can always sell and

buy another one. But if I did not like my bride, there was no way there for me, there was no choice. So I had made those decisions, big ones and small ones, hm, on the trust. And believe me, Sara and Taylor, the house my daughter-in-law picked is absolutely beautiful. Okay, so it's been wonderful.

**TG:** You're still in the house now?

**SJ:** Uh huh, we're still in the same house.

**TG:** Wow. [laughs]

**SD:** That's amazing.

**SJ:** And with the same wife! [all laugh] Okay. Okay. Go ahead.

**TG:** Um...oh what does your wife do, as a profession? Or did-

**SJ:** Well she-she had done her masters in English Literature from Delhi University [**TG:** Mm.]. Okay but after that then we had two children then I was teaching and then move to England hm and then moved here so she became a homemaker and mother. Okay then I started working in Boston area, I was doing reasonably amount of travel. Okay and we decided that uh we don't want to have a house as big [as] Mr. Trump has [**SD** and **TG** laugh] okay, we want a modest means, modesty, and we—it is very important for my wife to be a mother. And a homemaker. Okay because we do not need too much money for food, clothing, and shelter. And so then-and she decided that way and so she has raised kids very, very nicely, very comfortably. Of course, you know, active in the community, and active at the social events, and things like that, but uh to have a profession hm as people think of profession going out and eh no she did not and that was a mutual choice, not that I forced that choice on her but it was a mutual choice. And now, she's fully engaged in all the things that we do. We also, Sara and Taylor, for the last five years we lived half of the time here hm, and half of the time in, of all places, Las Vegas [all laugh]. Okay and uh we go there every other month, we live there for a month, in fact uh three days from now we go to L.A. and then we will be in Las Vegas for a month hm so we come back and we eh and so she's uh busy in maintaining two houses, one here one there, and she loves uh a lot of, she loves uh plants [**TG:** Mm.] okay. She speaks to them all the time [**TG** laughs] okay. So there's...very, very, I would say, happy life.

**SD:** Why Las Vegas?

**SJ:** Why Las Vegas? [**SD** and **TG** laugh] Good question.

**TG:** Good question.

**SJ:** Because you can make a lot of money there. [SD and TG laugh] I—or become pauper, lose—lose all that money you have.

**TG and SD:** Yeah. [laughing]

**SJ:** Okay, we don't do any of those things. Okay uhh two, three things. Number one, we've been—I've been going to Las Vegas on-attending meetings and all that last, forty-five, fifty years. Did not know how beautiful it is outside the casinos [**TG:** Mm.]. Did not know. So it's a very beautiful place outside the casino okay. So this we did not ha-have a concept before. Uh...so that's one. Climate is...two, three months is hot but so is hot and humid here. Over there it's hot and dry.

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** Okay. Uhh...many other good qualities are there. Cost of living is very reasonable. Then, is...lifestyle is very good, quality of life is very good. Then, my wife's younger sister, our family is there. They both are professors at Uni-...University of Nevada Las Vegas. My wife's younger sister [**TG:** Mmhmm.] and her whole family, so we have a relative hm. There's also a Hindu/Jain temple there.

**TG and SD:** Mm.

**SJ:** Okay. Combined, Hindu and Jain, combined. Then there's a reasonably eh...good-sized Jain, eh Indian community. Then there is a uh...Las Vegas is one of the most vegan friendly place.

[01:25:04]

**TG:** Really?

**SJ:** Yeah! We-we did not know that, Taylor. Hundred, eh...one of...uh this...Austin is very vegan friendly.

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** Okay. And we found out that Vega-Vegas is very vegan friendly. Hundreds of places you can go and eat. Okay. Then, five years ago, my daughter, who is also Rice University graduate I mentioned, and she lives in Iowa. She is an oncologist. [**TG:** Mm.] Hm, she bought a house in Las Vegas five years ago, okay, so she comes there quiet often, so we get free boarding and lodging [SD and TG laugh]. Okay, and so we go there and uh every month-every month we go there, every other month. So, it's a wonderful life which-it's her house, it's not our house. So what else?

**TG:** I think that's about it.

**SD:** Yeah is there anything else you'd like to...add?

**SJ:** Okay, so I appreciate, it's been wonderful and uh I think you had a good training today [SD and TG laugh].

**TG:** Yeah [laughing].

**SJ:** Okay. Uh, so what will you do? You will uh write it down or script it or you will uh...or does it stay as it is? Hm?

**TG:** Yeah so we'll go through and type it all up, transcribe it.

**SJ:** Oh you will type it huh?

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** Okay, transcribe it hm?

**SD:** Yes.

**SJ:** Okay then it will become part of the archives hm?

**TG and SD:** Mmhmm!

**SJ:** Okay. And uh then there is a follow-up for another person which will be...you will be doing or somebody else will be doing in a month or two that I have given three names so far to hm.

**TG:** Mmhmm.

**SJ:** Okay. So when do you feel uh probably you will be doing that?

**TG:** Probably as soon as we can.

**SD:** Dr. Chao will probably contact you.

**SJ:** Oh, she decides?

**SD:** Yes.

**TG:** Yeah.

**SJ:** Okay. All right. When you will meet her, please say my-a lot of 'muchas gracias'

**TG:** [laughing] Of course.

**SD:** [laughing] We will.

**TG:** Oh! And we were wondering if you had like any photographs, or newspaper clippings, anything like that that you might want to contribute to the archive.

**SJ:** Okay.

**TG:** We can always make copies of them [**SJ:** Okay.] if you don't want to part.

**SJ:** Okay uh...that will take little time but do me a favor, send me a note.

**TG:** Okay.

**SJ:** Okay, and uh I probably will be looking through those. There are a lot of newspaper clippings but they are not—some people are very well organized they keep a [**TG:** Yeah.] folder with that and all—this spread over. But I'll find some, hm?

**TG and SD:** Great!

**SJ:** Okay. And also some—some pictures hm [**SD:** Perfect.]. So let me know, send me, if there's anything else you'll let me know. But uh next person probably, when Dr. Chao uh decides mm then let me know I'll contact her and you can contact him or her hm....

**TG:** Sounds good.

**SD:** Great.

**SJ:** -and we will go from there. Okay.

**SD:** Thank you so much.

**TG:** Cool, yeah thank you.

**SJ:** Appreciate it; it's been very wonderful hm. You should be on CNN [**SD and TG** laugh].

[01:28:05] **Interview Ends.**