

This is Your Heritage –

South Gloucestershire Stories of the Indian Community

Interview: Dr Sandhya Sinha full interview Audio (08-12-2021)

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Interviewer: Halima Malek

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Location: At home in Yate.

Participant prefix key:

I: Interviewer
R: Respondent

Transcript begins 0:00:06.7

- I: Hello, my name is Halima Malik and today is the 8th November 2021 and I'm sat here with Dr Sandhya Sinha. Could you please introduce yourself?
- R: I'm Dr Sandhya Sinha.
- I: How do you spell your name?
- R: S-A-N-D-H-Y-A.
- I: Thank you so we are here to interview you for the Indian Heritage project. Where were you born?
- R: I was born in one of the small villages which was sugar industries called Bihta, Patna, Bihar State
- I: Which part of India is that? South or North?
- R: It's North East India so Bihar State estate.
- I: What was your village like?

- R:** I have no remembrance of that place because we moved from there but we come from a village in Bihar which is called Aphar and my grandparents were landlord plus they were leading lawyers as well so that's what we come from there.
- I:** You did a lot of travelling?
- R:** Yeah, we moved in India in different parts because my father was in the sugar industry, so wherever he used to get offered he will move from one place – so we stayed a few years in our village home and so I had a little vivid memory of those things but after that we moved to Anandnagar_which is in UP, (Uttar Pradesh), near Gorakhpur. Gorakhpur is actually a hub of sugar industries so both side around that are quite a lot of villages there they are all sugar industries so in Anandnagar we went to Anandnagar which was Seth Jaipuria's industry so that was the place and then from there we moved to Sadarnagar_which was other side of Gorakhpur and the owner was a [inaudible: 0:02.23] Meztir so that was Meztir family from Punjab, so they've got another big history, royal history like, so yeah and very nice atmosphere because it's like a little township just like Yate and that's why I like Yate because to me it feels like same size we had a big factory area and then surrounding you have a colony with all the people working in the factory. Houses were built according to their position so big officer will get big bungalows according to decisions it will be another side so it will be a huge colony with all the facilities, park and medical facilities, school, all those things.
- I:** So, you come from an industrial but very educated background?
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** You've just mentioned you father was in the sugar cane industry and how about your grandparents, were they also in the sugar cane industry?
- R:** No. They were lawyers.
- I:** Both your grandparents?
- R:** Yes.
- I:** Okay so you come from a very – could I say elite sort of background in India?
- R:** Yes, you can say that, yeah.
- I:** Okay. Thank you. do you have any memory as a child of your school – a school memory or something you could share about how it felt or how it was in India?

R: It was very nice in Anandnagar at the primary school I did in there and that was just after – very close walking distance from our house in the campus but other middle school and the senior school was a little further, so I did my primary school there and we used to – all the colony people and some worker children went there as well and we did well and played and, yeah.

I: What is your mother tongue?

R: Hindi.

I: Apart from Hindi was there any other languages you were taught through school?

R: No.

I: So English...?

R: English, yeah, English is the curriculum so in the primary school you learn A, B, C, D and all this and math's and all those things and in those days in the UP (Uttar Pradesh) it was primary school not a kind of connected so you have to give a board exam and then we have like a written exam for math's and then interview like oral, so they will ask you question and you will answer all the things. My parents said that I was very good in those days. Straight away I used to give them answer and so I had a scholarship throughout though it was a small sum but 50 - because it was for boarding school so I was given 5 rupees per month. I used to get a scholarship then in my secondary I also got in metric also I had a distinction so I had a scholarship but because I left UP (Uttar Pradesh) and went to Behar for my higher study to go to medical school so that stopped but that's how.

I: Okay. You mentioned the word boarding school so when...?

R: Boarding school I went – when we moved to Sadarnagar.

in that there was a little girls school but it was only up to the 8th class and after that there was not much – you had to go far away to another school – college, so my father preferred my other sister was in Kanpur already so I went to Gorakhpur boarding school in Convent St Mary's College.

I: Could you tell us the name of the boarding school but also, 8th school, what does that mean in terms of English schooling?

R: It was a Government affiliated school and all the subjects will be done and in that school that was a good experience or odd experience - first time in my life because we had a servant so we never used to – and I was youngest in my family, so I used to do just run around but I have no experience of doing much work, cooking or anything but in there because I had to study there for hour so exam because it was a girl’s school you had to do home science, so in exam you had to do cooking and examiner will see what you have done so I was given a practice how to cut the potato! I had to make a dough which was very difficult so somehow I did and I didn’t know how to roll – as to do anything and my parents said, ‘Cut with the glass,’ the servants said, ‘Cut it with the round...’ – so the teacher was very amused and looking at! Then I learned – in an examination we had to do stitching as well. Like do pyjama or petticoat in two or three hours you had to cut it and stitch it with hand, so all those things so that’s how I learned a little bit of stitching and all these things and then I went into school and I was a science student who never had any inclination in my household, my family, my sister, everybody, embroidery and all this craft work was very tight and my father used to promote. He used to bring lots of things, magazines. We used to get magazines from England, Women at Home and Stitch Craft and all these things because were five sisters so my father used to – every month he used to be so we’d learn all these things to do so that’s how my side – thought I become a doctor but my inclination is on the craft side as well.

I: How old were you when you went into boarding school?

R: 14.

I: So, it was like a secondary school you went to...?

R: Yeah, for the ninth and tenth, yeah for GCSE and from there for A level I went to another boarding school, Patna Woman College which was a missionary school, yeah

I: Okay so you were a teenager so you did your further education in a boarding school and then you did your so called A levels also in boarding school.

R: Yeah.

I: From what I understand the school wasn’t only teaching education but life skills?

R: Yeah.

I: ...As well as the cooking and sewing and stuff, so what made you want to become a doctor? Was this something that was promoted in your family or was this your choice?

- R:** No in my family nobody was doctor. My inclination was science because I didn't like the literature bit so I'm moving to and we had a choice that if you were a science student you would just – but Hindi, English was compulsory and your science students, so all five subjects of the science that what you have to study, you don't have to do any other thing, so that's how I moved on.
- I:** Okay so it's because you didn't like writing, you thought okay, you're going to take a different – very clever. I almost feel like your whole family was really promoting education, especially in the girls, like you said, you're one of five sisters and you're all very well educated. Was this the norm at the time in India, in your area for girls to be educated?
- R:** Yes, and especially in our community, education is the main thing and we – our family promoted education in our village in [Aphar](#) and my auntie and my great gran auntie, they all went home to home because in our village we had two schools. Primary school and for the boys and the secondary school running for long time and proper building and everything but for girls there was no proper school so they started inviting them to our house in the back because we had the three part big house we used to call Havili so all the girls will come, they will learn to read and write and also my auntie they used to teach them cutting, stitching, embroidery, so basic skills for the house so they can be well sufficient and at least they can read their letter and from that it moved on to proper school and now it's a fully-fledged, affiliated and a proper building for the girls so in our village all the girls are educated.
- I:** That wasn't the norm for the rest of India..?
- R:** No – I think not everywhere.
- I:** From what I understand is your family has made a lot of positive changes like you said...?
- R:** Yeah, in our village.
- I:** [Inaudible: 0:12:07.7] home and educated them and did your family have connections to other people or other areas of India maybe through politics or like you said you had a Haveli and you were part of the sugar cane industry and you were quite elite, very educated from your grandparents to your parents.
- R:** Yeah well our family was highly educated and my gran – one of my maternal Grandfather was a barrister – from England he came here, did his barristry and went – so in Ranchi where is now I did my medical school everybody knew who I am. They said, 'Oh Barrister Saab Ka Hai' 'Not me, granddaughter huh?' So, he was so famous and in those days it was a small town so everybody respected and he had quite a lot of apart from his job, the philanthropy work in the town as well so people – so my grandparents' house was well respected so even now there's the old people they still say, 'Oh Barrister Saab Ka Hai' ' It was like that yeah.

I: So, you came from a...

R: Even in our village because were landlord it wasn't a bad landlord. It was well – our house – family house was open door. Anybody needs any kind of help they knock our door to come and seek help, advice or whatever.

I: Sounds like you have a lot of fond memories of your childhood. You're smiling as you're talking and it feels like – like you said, even now when you go home people still respect you because of what your grandparents and your parents gave back to the community. There was a little mention about a little connection to Gandhi Ji as well with your family could you share this?

R: Yeah, my chota baba who name is Gorakh Prasad

I: What does chota baba mean?

R: My grandfather was elder brother, there were two brothers so the younger brother so he was practicing in Motihari one of the small towns of the north part of Bihar and he was also involved with the congress at that time and he was a president of the congress committee in that area, so Gandhi Ji decided to come to – and that area used to call Champaran you know in Bihar estate and then you've got province so you've got Champaran and you've got Saran and you've got – like that, so Champaran District so there was indigo farming going on and the farmers were having problem because of the English rule and all those things so that's why Gandhi Ji came to decide – came to see what is the situation and how it can be solved and these are all the stories from my father. He has narrated and he was young school boy at that time so Gandhi Ji came and stayed in our house and he worked along with Gandhi Ji went to work with him and he was there for a month Gandhi Ji for the Andolan (Indigo Agitation) in Champaran: so my father was very much affected because working and seeing him it affected his life and all his life although he was in a high position we had four, five servants in our house but he used to all his own personal work. He will do other things, cooking, rest of the servants will do and he was well looked after and kept so that's the connection with Gandhi Ji.

I: That's absolutely amazing to have...

R: Yeah and funny enough I've never seen the house because somehow they sold and gone, so when I went to India in one of the – in Uphill station there are some of Gandhi Ji and in that there was an exhibition. It was written, 'This is the house he has stayed in with Motihari I said, 'This is my house!' so I took the picture of him...!

I: So, it was true, your father's stories they weren't just stories...?

R: No, no. It's in there as well.

- I:** Oh brilliant. Thank you. Gandhi Ji in Champaran. That's amazing. It's so nice to hear and thank you for sharing so many of your childhood stories about your family so we're going back a little bit now. You've done you're A levels, you've decided to go into sciences and how did you decide what kind of doctor you wanted to be?
- R:** In India, no matter what doctor – and it wasn't that much common to go in other – you can go into medicine but being a – the public will anticipate because you are a *lady* doctor you are a gynaecologist, so that was the trend that you go in, obstetrics and gynae rather than – surgery was a no, no. even in England it was no, no. It later on became for ladies to become surgeons but that time it was a no, no. They said, 'No it's not a girl's part. So, obstetrics, gynae was the line for girls to go. Some went into medicine – general medicine but people – patients will expect you do deal with all these problems so that was the normal so I went into that line.
- I:** So, you are now educated, you've now become a gynaecologist doctor.
- R:** Yeah, I was in the training. I completed my training and got married and came here and then the hurdles started.
- I:** Okay, so let's stick to the bit where you're still training. Tell us how you met your husband.
- R:** No, it's an arranged marriage.
- I:** Okay so please share how this marriage was arranged.
- R:** Uh, because my father wanted – when my education is completed then one day he will marry me, so they were looking and some relative - two of the relatives suggested my father that, 'So and so has got a son, he's gone to England. He's coming back, why don't you...' and they introduced – talked to my father-in-law as well and my father and both parents met and they decided yes we do have – and that's how the wedding was arranged.
- I:** What did your father say to you when he told you...?
- R:** No, he told me – well, by then they used to ask us - the boy is so and so – and he had asked me and I said, 'Oh I want a surgeon,' so he said he's a surgeon and he is in England so no problem.
- I:** Did you not ask to see his picture?
- R:** Yeah, we used to sort of – photo, yeah you see a picture, yeah.
- I:** So, you got yourself a surgeon and you were happy with the picture?

- R:** Yeah. I went – I came and we saw each other in a shop. Like I went, ‘I’m going for shopping,’ and he’s just standing there with his brother and whatever and they saw like that but we never – in our time it wasn’t like – unless you have a love marriage you don’t need to get a boy like that – it wasn’t the norm.
- I:** Did you have a conversation with him at the shop?
- R:** No.
- I:** [No conversation? 0:20:11.2]
- R:** Although I was a medical student we hadn’t had a courage to talk what are you going to talk and like that.
- I:** That’s amazing.
- R:** No, it was totally arranged marriage.
- I:** Okay so did you properly meet him on your wedding day?
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** Can you share like was your wedding a very Indian, Hindu cultural wedding?
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** Do you mind sharing some of your wedding memories with us and how the day went and how you felt?
- R:** It went very well because my sister were in America, they came as well and they wanted all this [inaudible: 0:20:51.1] so they did all the – lots of things added up and yeah because my wedding - not from our house. We came to – because my in-laws Ranchi and so my uncle said, ‘No I haven’t got daughter and they want to wed – they don’t want to travel during this period so let’s do the wedding in my house,’ so my parents came and my wedding took place from my grandparent’s house.
- I:** Oh, that’s beautiful.
- R:** Mama house- Maternal uncle’s house.
- I:** Yeah. Did you wear a traditional dress?
- R:** Yeah, saree. Yeah, we did – in our family it’s a red sari. It’s a red Benaras or red colour so it changes like Jamala you wear a different saree then – Lahenga wasn’t that popular. It was at times but then I said no I’m going away and who is going to wear lehenga so there’s no point having all this fuss. I’ll wear sari and that’s it.

- I:** Okay so after the wedding did you move in with your husband's family?
- R:** Yeah. It was only a few streets away yeah, so, another function took place and we stayed and then came back to my house and then came back, went again and that's it.
- I:** Okay so now the next chapter of your life has begun. You're a married woman. Did you further on with your education..?
- R:** Yeah, I completed my training because you know after – I had my degree but you had to do a house job so different stages of house – in apartments so that I finished that and then came to England.
- I:** Okay so husband was already in England?
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** He was already settled, he had a job?
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** So, you are now coming to be his wife or were you coming to be a wife but also to become a doctor?
- R:** Also – yeah to doctor but because my examination took late GMC has put up certain date because something happened so they decided that all India doctors have to give exam which was in those days it was PLAB so there was a cut-off date and we didn't have our degree and things by that date so I got into trouble. I had to do – I couldn't work unless I passed the PLAB but I found PLAB was difficult for me because it was multiple choice question and we have never done multiple choice questions, so I found because in that it's negative marking and all this thing happened so under similar things get caught so I was in the habit of essay writing so somebody suggested why don't you do the Edinburgh Glasgow degree and you'll get full registration, so I tried for that and I did the exam in passed and got full registration and then – but because of that I had to do the house job. Like a newly qualified doctors, they do – so same thing I had to do – do a job and different so one job I did in Isle of Wight and another one in Llanelli in South Wales and then after that I started – but in those days getting a proper full job wasn't easy you have to apply and wherever you get you have to go and job used to only six months if you get a proper job and then you have to apply again, so system wasn't very good and especially for the foreigners, yeah.
- I:** Okay so now you are how old when you got married?
- R:** 27, 28. I got late marriage because our education system there was a problem, so it didn't finish in time.

- I:** You're 27 years old, you've known nothing but India, your family, your grandparents, your siblings, your friends so when you got told that you are now leaving India to move to England, how did you feel and how was your journey from home to the airport and then...?
- R:** It wasn't difficult because my sisters were already in America so for me it was either I go to America or England and in India it was for doctors – England was the main thing because we read the same book and England degrees FRCS or MRCS all those things are more valued and not in America so I had a choice to go there then I got married, my husband was already here so I came here.
- I:** So, you came...
- R:** It was excitement to see England, but we knew quite a bit about England and things and culture and all those things so...
- I:** Who dropped you off at the airport from India?
- R:** Oh, in those days the whole family will come through and drop you at the airport!
- I:** It was a big family day out?
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** So, what date and year did you move to England?
- R:** It was in July 1978.
- I:** When the doors opened and you saw the beautiful blue skies of England because it was summer, what was your first reaction?
- R:** Yeah, we'll see what it's like! Yeah, you know that we have to adjust to lifestyle and what food and what not.
- I:** So, you come here and like you said a little bit...
- R:** Yeah, but it was summer but still I think at that time I felt cold!
- I:** Compared to Indian summer it's cold.
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** How did it feel? You were in a foreign country and you've got a bit of the language and you understand that this is part of your life now because of your husband and work and it's good for your career but surely still as a young lady of 27 you left something that you've known all your life to come here so how was it for you to make friends and was there already a community here for you?

R: No not at that time because my husband was already here so he knew few people, even – it was in East Glen Hospital in South Wales near Cardiff. If you go anywhere in England, any hospital there is lots of Indian doctors. At least a handful of doctors will be there so that was your community so we knew each other and he knew them so – no I met a few times but at that time the main focus was education, study, have to study for – so I found it difficult to do the housework – all the housework, cooking. Though we had a well-furnished house from the hospital that was the norm at that time in NHS, that married couple will get a nice house. We were lucky to get – wherever we went we had a really nice house and all basic things will be given to you so we had no problem with that but you have to your housework, cleaning, cooking and then have to find the time to study. In those days apart from that not much socialisation because the rest of the time you have to focus on your education to do the exam.

I: So, your main purpose at that time, both of you was to be educated to become – like you said, to get your certificate, your degree. Was there much here for your religious purpose? Was there a Hindu temple? How did you find a Hindu temple...?

R: No at that time there was no Hindu temple. Nothing at all and when we were young we were not that much bothered about it. Slowly we realised – a few years passed we didn't even know what is – but later on we started getting information like when I moved to – six months later we moved to Greenock which is in Scotland near Glasgow so there at least seven or eight Indian doctors were there and we were all like next to each other, so that's how we started like meeting together and then said, 'Yeah when is Diwali?' When is this and that and you write a letter to India and find out. They will send you the dates this festival is then and we started at least we know that it's then and do something but there wasn't much. Slowly – it took quite a while after that. Now we are fully-fledged and we celebrate everything and we got proper temple in Bristol, Cardiff, most other places but in those days there wasn't anything.

I: Did the lack of community or lack of a temple to bring you together, all of these things, did this make you very homesick because you have your husband and you're there and you know that this is very good for you but all of these things are not there, the norm, what you're used to, especially for your culture and religion so did you feel homesick?

R: No. Yeah because we had our parents so you do feel homesick for seeing them because that is the magnetic attraction and as long as our parents were alive we had no holiday. Our holiday – because we had a limited holiday from job so we used to collect all those and go for one month to India and spend two weeks with my parents, two weeks with my in-laws like that and come back. That was our life in those days. If we can manage to go to India but apart from that we had no time to go to any other holiday or anything at all.

I: So, you visited...

R: ...and neither we had money that much because those days money were limited.

I: So, you did visit India quite a few times after you came back?

R: Yeah because there was – unluckily my father-in-law died soon, within six months we came to England – I came to England so like a year after and he died on Christmas day so that was a very sad part for our life and that changed my husband's motivation that responsibility came and you know and that's why slowly and also there wasn't – in those days there was no set structure procedure for foreign doctors to proceed into complete their education because you are struggling to find a job unless you get a job - a long term job which wasn't there, how you complete your training and do your examination? So those were harder and it took a long time to do that and then we changed became GP and say it's not working so GP life is more stable rather than moving from one part of the UK to another part of the UK so that's why my husband changed and become GP.

I: So, you made a joint decision to – what was working for your career.

R: Yeah.

I: Did you initially have an idea of how many years you were going to stay in England and go back?

R: Well, our main focus was to do the higher education and go back and work there but life event changed our thing like my father-in-law died so family responsibility and think how we are going to go and set up there and all these things and then you've not cleared your exams, so you are nowhere, here and there. That's how – longer you lived you got used to here and he said, 'No I don't want to...'

I: So, England almost became more home for you and your husband and you got more – you made more friends and your Hindu community, Indian community started building up so when did you then move to Bristol?

R: Well first we wed in 1978 we were in East Glen then from there we went to Greenock. After a year and a half, we went to move to Jersey, Channel Island. There we were for two years where I had my daughter – was born there, then we came back to East Glen again and from East Glen we came to Newport where my husband did the GP training and from there in 1986 July, we came here in Yate to set up the practice and start working.

I: How was Bristol because obviously you've moved, you've lived in very different parts of England. Did it feel like home? Was there, maybe, a small community already set up here?

R: Well, we came to Yate and well we were used to moving everywhere so it doesn't matter you have to focus on what you have to do and so my husband started practicing here because that was the health authority suggested that this is the area where a doctor was needed, so you moved to this area. We came and we liked the area so we bought the house and we moved here and then later on within a year we bought the land from church and we build the surgery and that was the first purpose built surgery in Yate because there was three practices – English practice and they were all in Yate Health Centre in the same building and they used to do like musical round one practice finished their surgery then in the same room the other practice will come and do the surgery like that so – and after that when they saw the other surgery built and we are practicing here so then they got idea and one after the other and the other two practices moved out of the Yate Health Centre and they build the Kennedy Surgery was built and West Walk – no, West Walk is still there. The Baxter surgery was built.

I: So yet again a bit like your family back home in India you've also now built and put your stamp on a community but as Indian doctors being in more of an English sort of European town did you face any hurdles from the locals?

R: No, we didn't have hurdles. There may be some but we had good patients and patients used to love my husband and unluckily my husband died quite early, so that was another life event for me. I was still working – although I was trained as a GP but I didn't like the GP life because I was trained in Newport and you have to do house visits and all these things and situation, I said, 'I'm not doing all of this,' but this area – Yate is very nice area and we have got all – mostly educated population so there was no problem in our practice so I felt more – from time to time used to help my husband and give him a hand, so after he – the rule was: I wasn't a partner so they said, 'He's died, the surgery is gone, you cannot work here,' so there was a dilemma and everybody saying, 'Oh come to Birmingham, move, leave this place, move there.' Some said, 'Come and move to India,' so decision making was there and with a sad time you don't know, my mind wasn't working at that time. Then we decided with my friend and my brother and they said, 'This surgery was baby to him so why don't you give a try?' So, we applied but patients were very adamant. They said, 'We want her,' and they applied, they petitioned and later went to the health secretary and within a month approval was given. Everybody was surprised that this never has happened. I mean after the GP has died and there is no partner the practice is finished, patients will be distributed to other practices but they allowed me and then when the phone call came that I can start working and have to come and sign some papers. It was a challenge to me, though I wasn't in a very good state of mind and things, I went, my brother took me and they were – even Health Authority were so helpful, I must say. They had filled all the forms they said, 'Just sign in these lines, read it and sign here. You don't have to do...' so everybody was so helpful to me at that time in my great need so I'm very grateful for the people so it was a challenge to me because until now although I was trained but I was still working as an obstetric gynae department and all these things so I took it a challenge, I had to do a lot of study because in general practice, especially when you were singlehanded you don't know, you have to have a knowledge of all the subjects. You don't know whether there is a medical problem or a surgical problem or a gynae problem or a neurological what coming next. You don't know and I had open surgery so we gradually started. It was a very emotional period. Patients even used to cry and so that – but we went on and I did, I worked for 15-16 years singlehanded and decided to end.

I: Before we go to the end of your career I'm just amazed and it's beautiful how you took on your challenge and you flourished, you did flourish. At the same time now, you have one daughter, so how did it work as being a mum and now...

R: Yeah that was...

I: ...You're a GP of a very busy establishment.

- R:** I found that because being a GP I was able to manage singlehanded to look after my daughter as well with help of some people and my staff as well. Like I had a morning surgery, afternoon surgery so in between I have time but my daughter used to go to Redmaid's School at 07:00 her bus will come, she will go and then when she comes so I had made an arrangement so some people I knew their house was near where she used to get out of the bus so they will keep her for a couple of hours when she was little or sometimes will change the bus stop she will come – my receptionist will go and pick her up and she will stay in surgery so somehow this way we managed and later on when her school activity is started and they have sports and other things she will stay there and her friend's parents will keep her. They used to – their houses are very close to the school, walking distance so she will stay and then I'll go after surgery and pick her up so life was hectic in the initial phase but we managed.
- I:** How was your culture? Did you instil a lot of culture and your religion and your mother tongue in your daughter? Did you still hold on to these...?
- R:** Yeah, we did. Whatever we are doing they are watching it but unfortunately because of the busy life I never had time to teach her our Hindi language so she understands and she speaks very well but she doesn't know how to write. She can write her name but apart from that no and if it is written in Hindi she can't read it.
- I:** But she has enough language and understanding so if you went back home to India...
- R:** Yes that's what – everybody is amazed at how beautifully Hindi she speaks.
- I:** She has conversed and
- R:** Yes because I always spoke to her in Hindi. I made a point that unless you speak – we speak English as well but mostly in Hindi so that's how she picks up the language and the accent.
- I:** Okay so what does your daughter do now?
- R:** She's a gynae consultant. She's a doctor.
- I:** So, she's also taken the family traditional thing in medical practice.
- R:** Yes.
- I:** So now Dr Sandhya you're here and you've mentioned that you've worked for 15-16 years, what was the reason behind your taking an early pension or retirement.

- R:** The thing is things were changing quite a lot on the NHS and too much responsibility was coming on our heads. Once we are settling down another one is coming. Like the consultant work was coming to our head, we were not ready for that. I saw that is one person cannot handle too many things and, also, I needed – I saw that I don't need to work. My daughter is graduated, my duty is over, why do I have to put through all this stress? I've earned my life and I've given service so it's time to take a decision before I can make any mistakes it's better to leave because there's no point getting into a stressful life and burned yourself into it and that's how I calculated and decided and said, 'Okay goodbye, I'm no more working!'
- I:** It's a very responsible educated decision that you made for yourself...
- R:** Yeah, and also I wanted to see the rest of the world. I said I maybe working and working and with the stress I might die one day without seeing the world so what's the point? I might as well finish this career and take another one.
- I:** It's a beautiful way of thinking, you have, you've given so much and obviously you are very well loved and respected in the community and in the medical field so now what? what does Dr Sandhya do now?
- R:** Uh, since retirement I did a few months some job, medical, but then I gave up completely, so my main love of life is travelling, seeing different parts of the world and learn the culture and everything, history of that part of the world so I've done that. I'm still doing but because of COVID can't go anywhere and also we are very lucky here in Yate we've got Yate and Chipping Sod where we've got such beautiful buildings and so many societies which not everywhere is available or if it's available people have to travel afar or difficult to park so they don't do that whereas for me it's only two minutes so I joined quite a lot of societies. The main thing is two – one is art society, used to be NADFAS first now it's called art society which we have – I was on committee as well and we have a lecture once a month and then **U3A** which has got multiple sections when it started and I was on committee and that as well we had one 10-12 branch like history, music and few things but now it has mushroomed. The membership of 12,000 and we've got up to 70 activities so you are spoiled for choice what you want to join. How much you have got time to join so...
- I:** That's so amazing so these societies, is it for a diverse group or is it for the Indian...?
- R:** No, it's for everybody. It's for the English people, local people whoever wants to join they can join, if you have an interest so if you want to learn something you learn, you've got a computer thing, you've got history, various branches of history and then you've got languages, you've got different parts of painting, art, wine and things, if somebody is interested in food you go to different places to eat, theatre group, quiz group, philosophy, photography, different types of dances, music, jazz group. Name it. Everything...

- I:** Almost even after retirement you are still giving back by being on the committee and being part...
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** So, when I go back to your journey from childhood to now, I feel like you've taken on every challenge that you have faced from a child to your marriage...
- R:** You can say that yeah.
- I:** ...to moving and you flourished in everything but you've given back so much to society. Is that how you feel that you are now...?
- R:** Yes. That's why I like this area very much because initially I said that it felt to me like my back home community, like sugar industry colony. It has increased – mushroomed now too much but that's – luckily here my neighbours, everything, they are very good.
- I:** That's amazing so I'm going to finish on a last question now, so what's home? What country is home for you now? England or India?
- R:** Well, I can't say – the home is this because back home is only now brother and – there is no sister -Niece, nephew, my one brother is there and in-law side, my husband's brother and family are there but actually we haven't got our own home. My in-laws home is my home as well but we don't – they live- I just go as a guest family so home if you say this is my home.
- I:** Thank you, Dr Sandhya, and thank you for giving so much to Yate and Yate's community and to everybody. Thank you so much for everything. Thank you.

Transcript ends 49:44

