

This is Your Heritage...

Stories from the Indian Community in South Gloucestershire

Interview: Shiv Sama, Sarika and Devin Morrison Full interview Audio (19.11.2021)

Transcribed by Bristol Transcription & Translation Services and edited by a member of the South Gloucestershire Museums Group, June 2022.

Interviewer: Halima Malek

Recorder: Hardik Gaurav

Location: At Sarika Morrison's home in Bradley Stoke

Interview

Participant prefix key:

I: Interviewer
R: Respondent

Transcript begins 00:00

- I: Hello. My name is Halima Malek and I'm here from the Indian Heritage Project. Today is the 9th of January 2022 and I am interviewing Mr Shiv Sama. Hello Mr Shiv. Could you please introduce yourself?
- R: My name is Shiv Kumar Sama.
- I: Thank you. Okay Mr Shiv. Could you please tell me where you were born?
- R: I was born in a town, Jalandhar City in Punjab, that's north of India. I'm one of 11. I have seven sisters and four brothers. Jalandhar is a very famous city for sports goods, still is.... They export all over the world. I remember my childhood was a brilliant childhood. My father... we had a joint family. We had a big, huge house. There was my father, his three brothers, their families. We all lived in one house and I remember childhood. There were so many of us. There's 11 of us, then my cousins. There was about 22 kids in that house.
- I: Amazing.

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- R:** We had our own courtyard to play in the house. We didn't have to actually go out to play with somebody, there were enough people in the house, and the childhood was brilliant.
- I:** That's beautiful. Thank you. Obviously, just from what you've expressed, family was really, really important?
- R:** Very important. It wasn't like we had cousins, we were all brothers and sisters. We had games we'd play. I remember, especially summer nights, all my cousins, the one who were married, they would come home with their kids. It was tradition in those days all the girls who were married they'd come to spend two months at the family home with all their kids. So, at night there could be maybe 50 people in that house. Sometimes my mother would tell stories to everybody, sometimes my father, my uncle. Every night was a story night before we went to sleep.
- I:** That's beautiful. What was dinner time like at your house?
- R:** Mad!
- I:** [Laughs].
- R:** The tradition was you sat on the floor. Everybody sat on the floor and ate together.
- I:** Who cooked?
- R:** My mother. You can imagine cooking for so many people. It used to take two hours for breakfast, two hours for lunch and two hours for dinner.
- I:** That's cool. What was a traditional meal at your house?
- R:** We were purely vegetarian, so there was no meat, egg, fish, nothing allowed in the house. No drink allowed in the house so it was totally pure fresh vegetables and lentils and that was amazing.
- I:** That's beautiful. Thank you. What was your mother tongue?
- R:** We lived in Punjab so Punjabi was our mother tongue. But, saying that, because we lived in a city it was a mixture of Hindi and Punjabi. But at school we had to learn three languages. We had to learn Punjabi, Hindi and English. There was no option. These three languages you'd have to. The Sanskrit was optional, which is our ancient language. I did study that until my GCSE.
- I:** Okay. What was education like for you? Did you enjoy it?

- R:** Yeah. Education was good. I was very fortunate. My primary school was across from the house so as soon as the bell rang we ran from the house. We just had to cross the road and there we are. My secondary school was about 200 yards, which was handy enough. Every lunch time we went home, had our lunch, went back to school. It was amazing.
- I:** I can almost picture your town and your house and it's beautiful. Do you have a memory you'd like to share about something that happened in your school years with us?
- R:** [Sighs and laughs].
- I:** A memory that sticks out for you?
- R:** I was very young. I was always bad tempered, so I'm told. I think I was in primary two. As I say, the school was across the road. I wanted to go to the toilet and my teacher wouldn't let me, so I was angry, so when it came to a break I got up – it was in January or February, I remember because I had a sugar cane so I hit my teacher on the head with a sugar cane and ran home! My mother said 'what happened?' and I told her so I wouldn't go to school. My father took me to school the next day and I had to apologise to the teacher. But at the same time I said I really wanted to go to the toilet and he wouldn't let me. From then on they were... that never happened again!
- I:** They were too scared they were going to get hit by the sugar cane!
- R:** That's true.
- I:** Was this the start of Shiv's personality, this very strong dominant person?
- R:** Yes. Yeah. I was always very independent, very outgoing, very outspoken. It wasn't too bad because I was one of the youngest in the family. Plus, when I was about 11 I had typhoid and the doctor had given 24 hours for me to live so the whole family got together and they thought I was going to go, but I'm still here. From then, after that, I got special attention.
- I:** So, you were really spoilt?!
- R:** Yes, I was very spoilt. I was my mum's favourite and I got away with... whatever.
- I:** Brilliant, brilliant! Okay. So, as a child, could I just ask you, what was your father's job role?

R: My grandfather had a shop in, as they call it, Mandi then. Mandi means that's where the grain wholesale market. After my grandfather died my father was only nine. My father and my uncle, who was 15, the two of them took over the business and that's what they did all their life. We were supposed to go into the business but because it was old type of business none of us wanted to do it, so after my father died we sold the shop and that was it.

I: Okay. So, now, as a child, what was your dream? What did you want to be?

R: Oh. I wanted actually to be a pilot and when I'd done my studies... after I did my A-levels which is called higher secondary, I wanted to become a pilot. In those days there was a war between India and Pakistan. They were recruiting for air force and army. I wanted to go in but my mother would not let me go because without her consent I couldn't join. She said 'I'm not sending my son to the war'. So, I got a job in an Indian newspaper, which still exists, it's called Hind Samachar, Punjab Kesari. I started as a clerk. I worked there for four years and left as a press manager. I started my own business and made a bit of money, went on holidays, didn't care, lost everything. I had a friend who went to Canada in 1969 and he promised me that he would call me over. From then on my head was set that I wasn't going to live in India. That just triggered it off. Though I was doing business, a job, my head wasn't... I just wanted to go to Canada. As the time went on my interest got less and less on business and more and more on going away. I was going to go to Canada in 1972, booked my seat and everything. Unfortunately Canada closed that night.

I: Why did they close?

R: They were asking for people to come, immigrants that weren't waiting ...immigrants. You don't have a visa, you just got the plane and you got there. From that night they started a visa system so you couldn't go. So, I was very disappointed. I had sold my business. So I started a new job as an accountant in a finance company. Then my sister lived in London. Her husband came to India in '75 because his mother had died so I was in between jobs so he said 'would you go round with me' so I did. We were in Delhi in one of his friend's' house and he said 'What do you do?' I said 'Nothing'. 'What do you want to do?' I said 'I want to go to Canada', so he said to my brother-in-law 'Why don't you take him to London?' He said 'No, no, no, I can't do that, he has no...' He said 'Have you got a passport?' 'Yeah'. He said 'Well, go back home, get a passport, come back tomorrow'. So, I caught a night train, got to Jalandhar, got my passport, got back that night. They sorted everything out for me and I left in the air on 22nd of March and flew from India to Amsterdam.

I: Can I just stop you there, just for a minute? Okay, so how old were you, first of all?

R: 21.

I: So, your life seems like it's going very, very fast?

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R: Yeah.

I: What did your mother think?

R: Because I didn't want to live there... my mother didn't want me to go anywhere because I was her... because, as I say, because I was bad tempered at the time, I would argue with my mother. I would say 'I'm going to go away and never come back to you'. So, I got the visas sorted, the tickets and everything, so I went back home to say goodbye. I was very brave when I left the house but as soon as I – because my mother was crying, she didn't want me to go – I sat on the train, I broke down. The journey from Jalandhar to Delhi was eight hours in those days and I cried for eight hours non-stop.

I: Why were you crying?

R: It hit me then that actually I'm leaving my mother. I got to Delhi, got my flight from there. Went to Amsterdam because a friend was living there. I stayed with him for a week. Flew from there to London. I stayed with my sister. After a week or so I got fed up sitting in the house so I said 'Listen, I need to do something, I'm here to make money, to earn money' and then I realised actually I want to make a bit of money and go back to India because I was missing my family. I was really missing my mother, brothers, everybody. I didn't think it would be as hard as it was.

I: What was your first experience? Was this the first time you flew out of India?

R: Yeah. My first flight was actually from a place called Birganj to Kathmandu. I went on holidays.

I: Okay, so you had flown before?

R: I had. Then my next flight was from Patna to Delhi.

I: So, you have had experience of flying...

R: I had.

I: ... but obviously it was only in India?

R: Yes.

I: So, when you flew from India to Amsterdam and then Amsterdam to London, what was your experience? What were you feeling? I mean, it's a different town, it's a different environment, the weather.

R: My flight was actually from Delhi to Bombay, from Bombay to Geneva and then connecting flight from Geneva to Amsterdam. My flight got delayed so I had to stay overnight in Geneva at the airport. I'd never seen an escalator in my life, so when I got to Geneva I had to go up, so I stood beside the escalator to see how people were using it because I didn't want to ask, embarrass myself that I didn't know it, so I saw people, how they were going up, so I went up. I had to go to the counter because the flight was delayed. They were giving you food vouchers, so – this is a funny bit – though I could read and write English, I couldn't really speak. In those days speaking in English wasn't a big thing, in Punjab especially, so my English was broken and I went to the counter. I said what time my next flight is, which sounded like 'what time my flight'. She told me '7.15'. I said 'what's my flight number?', she said '7-1-5', so I said 'what time flight?' She said '7.15'. I said 'what's my flight number?' She said '7.15'. I said 'this woman doesn't understand me, she's stupid'. She was Swiss. I was Indian. She thought I was idiot. I was thinking she was. She couldn't understand me. So, after 10 minutes, 10 minutes I mean, she realised that this guy doesn't understand me so she got a pen and paper. She wrote '7-15 flight time, 715 is your flight number'. So, she said 'there's a voucher'. I was so embarrassed and then I said 'no, I'm fine'. She said 'no, take the voucher, you need something to eat'. So, I said 'okay'. When I went to the restaurant or whatever that voucher wasn't enough to get much so I was so embarrassed but I had to go back to her to ask for another voucher! So, I got something to eat. The guy in front of me, he couldn't understand, he said. When she said something he said 'pardon?' So, that was the first word I learnt, 'pardon?', so every time she told me that I would say 'pardon?', you know. Then I was instructed I only had £3. That's what you were allowed when you went out of India anywhere in the world. The government only allowed you £3. So, my brother-in-law had told me 'when you fly from Geneva to here buy a bottle of Whisky' – it used to be £2.99 – so I couldn't spend any money because I had bought the bottle of Whisky. I got a flight from there to Amsterdam which was easy enough. My friend was there to receive me, so that was fine. Same when I came to London and they asked me if I wanted an interpreter, I said 'no, I can manage', and I did, there. I had an interview for about an hour and a half before they gave me a visa.

I: What year and date did you arrive to London?

R: 31st of March.

I: So, it was cold?

R: It was cold but not that cold.

I: Were you dressed for the weather?

R: Yeah, I was. I was, because I was staying in Amsterdam. It was the same weather. They had bought me a coat, everything.

I: Okay. So, you were prepared?

R: I was prepared.

I: That's good.

R: Because it took so long at the airport my brother-in-law was sick so he went home but he had told me how to get home.

I: Okay. So, you arrived in Heathrow. Where were you now going?

R: I was going to West Kensington.

I: In London?

R: In London. So, he told me 'get a bus from there to West Kensington and get a taxi from there to the house'.

I: And how were you going to pay for it?

R: Oh, he gave me the money. In Amsterdam they gave me the money.

I: Brilliant. Okay.

R: Up until Amsterdam I had no money but when I was leaving Amsterdam I had plenty of money so I had maybe £50 or £60, whatever. I don't remember, but I had money. When I got out I wanted to ring... I had some change in my... they'd given me. I had it in my hand but I didn't know how to use the phone. So, it says two and 10. It used to be two pence and 10 pence. So, I put two 10 pences in. I tried. That's what I thought it was, it meant you put two of 10 pences. So, I did. I rang my sister that 'I'm out, I'm going to get a taxi' and I got home. We used to live in a flat in West Kensington and in my head a Rolls Royce was a black car with a grill. I'd never seen one before so we used to stand at the window where we lived on the main road and all these taxis used to go by and I used to think they were Rolls Royce. I said 'my god, everybody has a Rolls Royce here'. Little did I know these were taxis. After two or three days I found out. After a week or so I went to... my sister had two shops so they said 'right, you take one shop and we'll take the other one'. Funny enough the shop they gave me to look after was ladies' underwear.

I: Lucky you!

- R:** And that was a big shock to me, coming from India, knowing very little English. It was in Shepherd's Bush market. The very first day the customer came, I don't know what she was asking. I couldn't understand her so I called my sister, I said 'would you see what she's looking for because I can't understand. It's not that I didn't know English, it was the accent I couldn't understand. So, she explained it to me. After a few days I got used to it and some woman would come, you know, she said 'I'm looking for this bra', they would put their hands like that and I was like 'Oh my god', you know.
- I:** Because obviously in India, in Punjab, they wouldn't have had underwear shops?
- R:** Not at all. There was. I'm sure there was but...
- I:** But not openly ...
- R:** Not at all. Never heard of it. It wasn't... even in the house, although I have seven sisters and mother, their underwear was never really seen anywhere, if you know what I mean.
- I:** So, you must have had a real culture shock, just like that, with the shop that you are now running?
- R:** Yeah. I remember one of the women she wanted to buy a nightie. I said 'take this, this is your size, take it home, try it, if it doesn't fit, come back'. She said 'you don't mind if I try it?' I thought she meant she'll go home and try it. She just came round the corner and tried it on. I nearly ran out of the stall. I was so embarrassed because my sister was watching me. She was standing across the road. Anyway, the life went on and I lived there until '77. My mother went to my aunt's house and my wife's mother was her best friend so my aunt, my mother and her friend they were sitting in the house in India. They were talking about it. They said 'Oh, my sister's daughter in Ireland, they're looking for a boy' and my mother said 'Oh, my boy's in London, why don't we...?' So, they sent my photo to my in-laws and they sent my wife's photo to them. I had no idea about it. Eventually we got a phone call from Ireland. They said 'We got this, would you come and see our daughter?' I said 'No chance'. Ireland was a troubled time there, so all the news was shooting people, killing, that stuff. I'm not going to get killed. I'm not going to Belfast to get killed. I'm not going. So, that was the end of the story. Then, out of the blue, January '77, Sunday morning, we got a phone call from my wife's mother that they were in London, they would like to come and see us. Sure. So, we met, we talked about it and we were sent into one room to talk to each other and that was it. Then after they said 'Well, what do you think?' I said 'Well, listen, I need to write to my mother and see if she is okay with that, then I would say yes'. They said 'Well, actually your mother has written a letter. There's the letter which says she likes the woman'. So, I was engaged that day. I wasn't sure that I wanted to get married but because my mother had said she has accepted her that was good enough for me.

- I:** Was there a part of you – and you don't have to answer this – but was there a part of you, because you felt that your mother was upset with the fact that you had left, that you wanted to do something to please her?
- R:** Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. My mother could read but she could barely write. In those days women didn't go to school. I am the luckiest one in the family. She has written one letter in her life and that was to me. I used to write – I promised myself – I used to write her a letter every week and I would get a letter from my mother every week. She would get one of my brothers or sisters to write it, but it was from her. My father could only write Urdu, which I couldn't understand, so he would write a letter now and again because my brother-in-law could read it. So, I got a few letters from my father which I couldn't read but I could get it read, but my mother only wrote one letter in her life, that was to me.
- I:** That's very special.
- R:** I was missing her so much. I still do. Well, I said 'if my mother has said okay, that's fine with me, I will get married'. So, that year in July, 15th of July, we got married in Ireland. We got officially a Court marriage.
- I:** What year was this?
- R:** '77. Then October 16th the same year we actually got married.
- I:** Did you have a traditional Hindu wedding?
- R:** Traditional Hindu wedding. Actually, they got a horse for me and because it was a race horse I did a trial, sat on it, and I wasn't very comfortable so I did a bit of a walk, I said 'That's it'. We had friends in Northern Ireland. We were staying with them for the Baraat. We were going from there to my wife's house.
- I:** So, can you, for viewers who don't understand these traditions, what does a Baraat mean?
- R:** Baraat means the procession of the groom's side going for a wedding to the bride's home.
- I:** So, did the girl's family visit you in London?
- R:** Yes.
- I:** And then your family then went to Ireland?

R: Yes. And so my friend he said 'Listen, we're going to do it a big way'. He said 'I'm going to buy a brand new Mercedes for your wedding' and he did. So, I went in that to Londonderry. We were in Castle Dawson and there was a big, big wedding and that hotel where the wedding was, had just opened. Our wedding was the first Indian wedding in that hotel.

I: Did you have a priest and your temple? How did you do all your...?

R: Yeah, we did everything traditional. We had a priest. We did the... how do they call it Laavan, go round the fire. Everything was 100% traditional Indian. My wife wore a traditional Indian sari. I had a suit with a Sehra [groom's headdress] and everything. Everything was done according to the Hindi religion.

I: Did any of your family from India come?

R: No. In those days it wasn't easy even to get a passport and the visa was a different story, so none of my family could come, only my sister, my brother-in-law, his kids. I had a friend who had just come from India. He came to the wedding and my friends from the family from Northern Ireland, they were all with us.

I: So, you're still very young, ambitious [R: yeah], you got your Mercedes [R: yeah], you even sat on a horse, and now you've married this woman and your mother is extremely happy [R: yeah]. What's next? Where did Shiv go from here?

R: We got married. We came back to London to live because my business was there and everything. Before, I was living with my sister, so we got our own flat. We started living in Acton but my wife she was missing her family so much. Londonderry is a very small, small city. Even though it's a city, in those days the population would have been, maybe, 30,000? Coming to London was a shock to her. She couldn't adjust. She just wanted to go home. Every three weeks she wanted to go back. We had just started life. Money wasn't that good. I said 'Listen, this is not happening'. So, she was very anxious, she was feeling sick. In those days business in London wasn't very hot either. It was a recession time so we decided to go to live in Northern Ireland because the business over there was better than actually in London because my friends were [inaudible 30:49]. So, we went, packed everything and we got a house, a council house, in Londonderry before even we left. My wife had gone and sorted everything out. We got a three bedroom house. I still remember it used to cost just £7.01 a week, that's including rent and rates, so I thought that was brilliant. So, I wanted to buy a house there. In those days the houses were pretty cheap. [S.I. I said 'ah, no, no, we'll do that' 31:30]. Anyway, I started business with my father-in-law. They said they were going to train me and hand me over... I bought a part of business from them.

I: What was the business?

R: In those days most Indians did door-to-door kind of business. We had a shop. Customers would come and get their stuff from us. Mostly the people were farmers. Ireland was a poor place in those days, people didn't have money, so they could pay every week. The people who couldn't come to the shop they would order the stuff, we'd supply it to them and then we would collect the money every week. It was a good business. Personally I didn't like it. I didn't like going to everybody's house for money. To me that was kind of degrading in my mind so I didn't want to do it. I wanted to do markets those days but that was against my father-in-law's principles so he wouldn't let me do that. Anyway, we started that. That was okay, and we lived in that house. That's where my daughter was born. She was born in December 78. End of December my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law, I left them to the airport, they were going to India. After leaving them there I went to leave and I came home. I got a telegram in the house waiting for me. It said 'mother's serious, inform Krishna', that was my sister. So, in those days it meant in generally people thinking that my mother was dead. The phone wasn't the thing. If you wanted to ring India it could take up to 24 hours, two days, before you get through. We didn't have a phone in our house in India so we had to ring next door. Try to ring. Couldn't get through. But I rang my sister and we booked the flight the same night so we went to India. We went home to Jalandhar. Then we found out that my mother was actually in a different city in a hospital. So, we went there and saw my mother, found out she had cancer. Seeing me, that lit her face up. She said 'oh, son, you're here. Just give me two days. We'll go home. I'll make you this. I'll make you that. I'll make your favourite things'. We got a room there so I stayed there maybe two weeks and then we found out her cancer was really in the last stage so they still decided to save her and do the operation. After the operation they said 'well, she has about a month to live so you can take her home'. So, because I was staying there, my brothers told me 'you go home and sort out a room downstairs for her and then you can come back tomorrow'. But we took a train from Ludhiana to Jalandhar and when we stopped at Jalandhar I saw my friend coming. It clicked on me then that my mother has passed away, but that's what he was coming to tell me. He had a car so we just went in the car back to the hospital and she was dead and I was devastated. I just didn't want to live, didn't want to come back home, didn't want to do anything. But as everybody... we had a talk and I stayed I think 16 or 13 days you have to stay there anyway so I stayed 16 days and came back. My wife never met my mother. My children never met my mother. Because Sarika was only six weeks old we couldn't take her out of the country because she didn't have any vaccination. So, anyway, the life went on. We had another child and we all went to India. My son [s.l. had a haircut there 36:48]. We had come back to the UK. We were staying in London. We had just landed and were staying in London that night and we heard that my father-in-law had passed away. So, we had to wait all night. We got the next morning flight and we flew back to Northern Ireland and then my mother-in-law she was still in India so she flew back the next day. After that, after a few months, we were just... there were new houses built so just for curiosity me and my wife went for a drive just to see the houses and there was this house just being built, just completed. I knew the foreman and he said 'do you want to come and see the house, Shiv?' I said 'okay', and we went and saw the house. My

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wife just fell in love with it. She said 'I want that house'. I said 'we have just come from India, no money'. She said '[inaudible 37:53] I want that house' and I said 'okay'. And he said 'oh, this house is for you, that's fine'. So, the next day I went and talked to the bank manager, I talked to [s.l. the accountant 38:03] and he said 'ah, it's alright, go and get the house', so we got that house. We lived in that house for 22 years. That's where my kids grew up. The life was very good.

I: Were there a lot of Indians at the time in Northern Ireland? What was it like? Did you feel very welcome there?

R: When I went to Ireland after we got married I hated it because I was born in a big city, lived in London, going to Londonderry with the trouble everywhere, checkpoints. You couldn't go here, you couldn't go there. I didn't want to live there. I still wanted to go back to London. Then came along my daughter, started a business, got busier, never looked back.

I: It became home?

R: It became home.

I: Were you welcomed there as Indians by [over speaking 39:12]?

R: When I was in London there used to be a pub not very far from our house next to West Kensington station. We went there for a drink. I was only there for about three weeks. There was quite a few people there and they wouldn't serve us. We waited and waited. [Inaudible 39:36] so I went to the bar and I said 'listen, is our money not good?' He said 'no, no, you'll get your turn'. I said 'you have served these people before me and you're telling me my turn'. So, anyway, he served but I never went back to that pub again. Back in Ireland in those days there were very small pubs, traditional old type. Going to the pub wasn't a fashion. Women didn't go to the pub. I used to drink Chivas Regal in London. So, we went to this pub and I said – first of all there was a few people there before me – the barman said 'what would you like sir?' I said 'are you talking to me?' He said 'yes'. I said 'what about these people?' 'Oh, they'll wait'. I was shocked.

I: So, it was very different from London?

R: Very different. 'Who are you?' I said 'I'm married to Mr [ph. Bridges' 40:36] daughter'. 'Oh, the drink's on me. That man we know. That's fine.' I said 'have you got Chivas Regal?' He said 'no'. Whatever local drink they had, I took that. But I was craving for it. I even went to... anywhere. I couldn't find anything. So, the hotel we got married in, somebody said 'why don't you go there?' So, I went there. It was the Everglades. We went there. I went to the bar, welcoming as ever, 'what would you like sir?' I said 'Chivas Regal'. 'Thank god', he says. He said 'since we opened the hotel we've had this bottle and nobody has even asked for it. So, I got that, and every time I went there after that 'Mr Sama, Chivas Regal'. Back in London there was a bit of racism though we didn't really experience it as such because we were doing business, we were selling stuff, people came to us, we didn't have to depend on anybody. That was fine. But going to Northern Ireland we were treated like... because we had nothing to do with their trouble, either side, so we were welcome both sides. Plus, small community, everybody knew everybody and we were welcomed everywhere. Even, it came to the point, when you had to go to the city. You had to go to the checkpoint. You had to be frisked. You couldn't take the car. You had to walk in, and they used to be very welcoming, 'how are you today? Ah, you're okay, yeah, right, go on'. They knew we had nothing to do with anything. We were generally waved through. There were a few incidents when the army came to Northern Ireland. Because they were from England they had issues with Indian people but it was soon sorted out and they got to know that it was different Indian people here, or different respect for them. There was about 100 families in the whole [s.l. Ireland 42:53] in those days and everybody knew everybody. In Londonderry there was about 15 families, Indian families, Indian and Hindu and Sikh. We would all look out for each other. Everybody knew who was who.

I: Did you have a temple?

R: No. There was no temple, no nothing. Then most of the people living there they had all come to Ireland between 1939 and 1950. I was the second person to go to Ireland as a young person married to a girl from Ireland. There was one in Belfast. I was the second person.

I: Did you bring your two children up in your Hindu tradition with your mother tongue?

R: Yes. My wife could understand Punjabi but she couldn't speak so we used to talk to our children as much as we can in Punjabi. Sarika, being the eldest, she understood more. My son, he totally refused to know about Indian language. Then we all got together. We thought we should have a temple. More families lived in Belfast than Londonderry and the priest lived in Belfast so we all got together, we opened a temple in Belfast in 1983. I was very much involved in that from day one. We opened a youth club. I was chairman for that for years and my friend he would be chairman for a few years and I would be vice chair or vice person and we started drama classes there. We used to celebrate all the functions. We had a local artist [inaudible 45:19]. We had a group. We had a band. We used to perform, sing, dance, everything and organise. Whatever needed to be organised, we were the organisers there. Even though the temple was 70 miles from my house generally I would go there once a week and if there was any festivals coming I'd probably go two or three times a week. The distance didn't matter because we wanted to do something for our next generation and bring up the children in a traditional way, so all the kids used to go there.

I: You wanted to hold on to your culture [over speaking 45:04]?

R: Yes. Yes. Yes.

I: Okay. Thank you for sharing all of this. So, now you're in Bristol?

R: Yeah.

I: How did that come about?

R: My daughter had moved to Bristol a few years before that and my son had emigrated to Canada where I wanted to go to begin with, which I didn't, so he went there. And I fell very ill. I was in hospital for a year and my health really deteriorated. My daughter used to come as soon as she heard I was in the hospital. She would come down, see me, then back again. When I was in hospital again she would come back. Up and down, you know. After a year or so I had a few surgeries and I got a bit better. Even at that particular time the doctor had told me that I had about 5% chance to live, so my son came, my daughter came, and they decided that it was time that we moved, either to Canada or to Bristol to live near my daughter. So, after I got a bit better the doctor had allowed us to move, so we decided to move to Bristol for the very simple reason we were within UK the medical history was here, they knew everything, and by that time I had a grandson.

I: Okay. Thank you.

R: So, we thought, and my daughter even said to me 'listen Pa, this is your time, you need to teach your grandson your heritage. It's your job'.

I: So, now the next stage of your life is going to start. Before we carry on, can we bring in your daughter, Sarika?

R: Yes.

Sarika: My name is Sarika Morrison and Shiv is my father.

I: Thank you. Okay. So, where were you born?

Sarika: During my father's story he talked about moving back to Northern Ireland so I was born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, on the 6th of December 1978.

I: Thank you. What was your childhood like?

Sarika: My childhood was great. My mother and her family, so she's one of seven, my grandparents, all my cousins from my mum's side, so it was really good to have that family connection. My aunt and uncle lived in London from my father's side, so we had lots of family connection and it was really great growing up in Northern Ireland actually.

I: How did you feel? You are born and bred in Northern Ireland, so you're Irish, but you have a very strong Hindu traditional upbringing. How was that for you?

Sarika: It was different because both my parents being Indian, both being Hindu and really proud to be Indian and Hindu, but I was born in Northern Ireland. I have a very strong Northern Irish accent and I don't think people can place where I am from, but I felt that gave me the best of both worlds. So, growing up in Northern Ireland but having a very strong connection to India, to my Indian heritage and to Hinduism. We would go to the temple a lot in Belfast. Because my dad was really active in that, again, there was the strong community of Hinduism which was great, so I had the best of both worlds really.

I: Did you have a big connection with your Irish friends in school?

Sarika: Yeah, absolutely. Again, I think because of some of the issues that were happening in Northern Ireland during the 80s and certainly 90s, there was quite a lot of focus on Catholic and Protestants that any other culture was sort of included. There were no issues growing up. Yes, I clearly looked different. Myself and my brother in primary school and secondary school were the only children of visible ethnicity and, although everybody looked and sort of stared, there was never any big issues. We never were involved in any hate or racism. I think people were just interested. They didn't really know what to do or what to say but I was always included. I've got fantastic friends [inaudible 50:55] particularly secondary school. They're still friends. When I go back to Northern Ireland we meet up. We're friends on Facebook and things like that. So, being in Northern Ireland is very family orientated also, so that connected quite well with how strong our family values were.

I: That's brilliant. So, you said you've had an amazing upbringing, school has been fine, you have a very big family on your mum's side especially. So, how ambitious were you now, as a child? What did you want to do? Your father obviously wanted to travel and move out of India and see the rest of the world. What were your ambitions as a child?

Sarika: Sort of similar. I'm very independent like my father. I'm a very strong person. I wanted to achieve quite a lot. You know, family ethics, values, respect, working hard just like my father did and his family. So, for me, nobody likes school but I didn't mind school and I knew that education was really important. I went to a grammar school. I did my A-levels and I knew I wanted to go to university but I knew I didn't want to go to university in Ireland, North or South. I wanted to go to England, albeit it's not wanting to go to Canada or move somewhere very far away. As much as I very much enjoyed Northern Ireland there wasn't a lot of industry. There weren't a lot of jobs because of the troubles in the 90s, late 9's, at that particular time. So, I worked really hard, did my A-levels and then applied to university and I went to university in '97 in England, North of England, University of Sunderland near Newcastle.

I: Okay. You've gone through a lot and it says it all, you're very ambitious. How was that move to England for you, your first initial take?

Sarika: For me, I was very excited to go. That was a real ambitious drive for me because my family supported me 100%. They were always there so, for me, going, this was something for me, knowing my family were fully supportive and wanted me to do well whatever that might be. It was scary though because none of my friends... we all went to different universities or did different things. [Over coughing 53:25]. I got a very small plane from Belfast to Newcastle. It was a sort of small airline. It was really scary for the first couple of days. It was really quite scary. Mum and Dad came with me to leave me at university and were there for a day or two and then I was on my own. But although it was scary it was really exciting because it was a whole new chapter of my life. I was 18 years old. I hadn't really lived outside of Northern Ireland but it was great. It was three years. An absolutely fantastic three years which made me into the person that I am. I've got my friends from university that I'm still friends with today and then seeing the difference between Northern Ireland and England was quite a difference.

I: Was it a big difference?

Sarika: Yes, because in Northern Ireland, as I mentioned, myself and my brother and our family, we would have been the only ethnicity and although we visited my father's sister in London a lot, we went every summer, having such a multi-cultural area in terms of England in comparison to a small place like Northern Ireland, it was very different. Yeah, absolutely.

I: So, like you said, this is what's made you the strong independent person you are. Obviously you've got a lot of your father in you. If we just rewind back just a little. Do you have any memories of your visits to India as a child?

Sarika: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, because of the temple in Belfast, that was always really strong. The language, the culture, celebrating Diwali, all of those types of things. When we were younger my brother and I went to India a few times. Sadly my memory's not great but I just remember because my mother's family and my father's family were so close in terms of distance. We were able to go between the two families. There were always strange things like there were [over coughing 55:27], those types of things. The food was a bit different. But it was really great and we enjoyed it. It didn't travel as much then in our school years because actually education was really important for us so we would stay, my brother and I, with my mum. My dad would try and go back as business allowed him time to go back. So, there was a period of 18 years where myself and my mum didn't go because of school and things like that, so it wasn't until much later that I went back to India. I was in my early 20's the next time I went.

I: Now, obviously being of Indian ethnicity but being Irish, or British if you now want to [inaudible 56:13] as you've moved to England, what was that like to go back as a 20 year old to India?

Sarika: I'd wanted to go for a long time but because of education and then I got my degree and [over coughing 56:26] I'd actually gone back to get married. I'd gone to get married. So, I was at university for three years and I ended up coming back to Northern Ireland, although I [had a plan 56:38] because of jobs and things like that. I'd said to my dad 'I'm applying for lots of jobs. There aren't enough... I am ambitious. I've just got my degree. I think I might go back to somewhere different in England'. But I happened to meet my husband when I was out with my friends and we swapped numbers and we started dating and then we had our wedding in Northern Ireland.

I: Okay. Just for the audience, what ethnicity was your husband?

Sarika: My husband's not Indian. As I said, there weren't very many Indian families or Indian people in Northern Ireland and although my father and my family and I had talked about a similar thing to my mum and dad, have an arranged marriage, that wasn't something that I wanted. It might have been that I would have met somebody of my own heritage when I was in university, which I didn't, it just didn't happen that way, and coming back to Northern Ireland, just happened to meet my husband. But, yes, he's an Irishman and he's a Roman Catholic so he's not of the same ethnicity.

I: Okay. If I can just bring Shiv into this. How did you feel that your daughter is getting married, which is exciting for any parent but that he wasn't of an Indian or Hindu heritage.

R: Being very much stronger Indian, that was a bit of a shock, but we had a talk, talks, and I understood that my daughter's life is her life. If she is happy I'll be happy, but the only one thing I said was 'you can get married but we have to have an Indian wedding'.

I: Okay. So, you still wanted to hold onto your tradition?

R: Yes. So, because most of my family is India they all couldn't come so we agreed on that we would have a Court wedding here where all the people from his family and our friends and family were invited here. After that we went to India, had a traditional Indian wedding. Even my son-in-law went on the horse and everything. So, it was totally a traditional Indian wedding.

I: So, it was very happily received?

Sarika: Oh, absolutely. Yes. Of course. Of course.

I: What was it like for your husband's family now, to have a daughter from an Indian heritage? How did they receive that news?

Sarika: They were great. I think in Northern Ireland they had come through so much by this stage, this was early 2000, there was no issue. [Ph. Kieron's 59:43] family are fantastic. They didn't have an issue that (a) he wasn't marrying somebody of his own faith and (b) somebody very, very different. You know, it's a completely different faith and different ethnicity, but they received it really well. We had a fantastic wedding. My husband was only too happy for us to have an Indian wedding. He was completely... I mean, my dad, we talked about an elephant at one point coming to the wedding but he came on the horse. He had a traditional turban, he had a sword, he was very excited about that, and did all of that and it was great because I, as I mentioned, hadn't been to India for a long time. I wasn't sure how my cousins, in particular, would receive my husband, so most of my dad's brothers and sisters their children are of a similar age, particularly my dad's brother's, welcomed him in like he was another brother. It was fabulous. Absolutely, you know, they were getting him into trouble, taking him to different places that they enjoyed around them. They were showing him lots of different things so it was brilliant, yeah.

I: So, you were very blessed that it all came together really, really well?

Sarika: Absolutely. Absolutely.

I: So, now you're married, you visited India and your husband's there, you're family's there. What was next? Did you come back then to Ireland after you got married?

Sarika: Yeah, so we had got married in May 2003 in Ireland and had our Court marriage, but it wasn't until February the next year that we went to India for a variety of different logistical reasons. So, when we came back from India we – my husband's an engineer – I had actually gone back to do my Master's degree at night while I worked full-time and again that ambitious... I wanted a really good career and although Northern Ireland was in a better place after the troubles companies weren't investing there. There wasn't as many opportunities for both myself and my husband so, yeah, we had a big talk about our future.

I: So, how did you move to Bristol? What happened?

Sarika: I had said to my husband [over coughing 61:58] even when I was going to university, 'our family are always our family, they're behind us no matter what. No matter where we live, our family is there, they support us'. I lived in North of England which was great while I was at university but similarly the [s.l. academy 62:14] wasn't very good, particularly in North England. I thought London was a little bit too much, too competitive, maybe not as friendly as it could be, even though I had relatives in London. We looked at Bristol. Don't ask me why but I think there were flights from Bristol to Belfast so it would be easier to get home. Like I said, London felt too much. North of England wasn't dissimilar to Northern Ireland in terms of the economy and also the weather. Bristol was much better weather at that time.

I: Was there a story [over coughing 62:49] you just chose Bristol off a map? Could you share this story with us because it's really interesting?

Sarika: Yeah. Like I said, North of England wasn't quite... I've been there and I've done that and it was fabulous but, again, from a career point of view I think we'd looked at [over coughing 63:07] down south but I think because Bristol was quite a big – you know, on the map – it was a big area. I done a little bit of research. There was going to be plenty of jobs for my engineer husband. At that particular time my Masters was in guidance and counselling. I was a counsellor and there seemed like plenty of opportunities in Bristol and, like I said, it wasn't going to be too hard to get back to Northern Ireland if that was the case.

I: Brilliant. Okay, so you've now moved to Bristol for work, for career. Which part of Bristol did you move to?

Sarika: I remember I'd said to my husband – we had bought a house in Northern Ireland – so, 'we'll put our house on the market. While we're waiting for that to sell I'll go over to Bristol for a couple of days and just find out what that looks like, where we could stay'. That was really scary. I remember coming over, flying over. I'd booked a B&B in Henleaze. I had taken my suit to go and look for jobs and look for somewhere to live and I remember walking down Whiteladies Road and I was really scared because I thought 'what am I... this is huge. This is huge'. We've left our jobs, really decent jobs, we've put our house up on the market, I'm here on my own, my husband didn't come with me because he was handling things in Northern Ireland, and it was really quite scary. But, by the end of the day, the estate agent on Whiteladies Road had showed us a house in Bradley Stoke, I'd applied for some jobs, because in Northern Ireland when I was applying for jobs they only saw the Northern Ireland address and I think they were thinking 'well, you're applying for jobs here in Bristol but you're address on your CV is Northern Ireland. That just doesn't feel right'. So, yeah, we found a place to rent, while our house was being sold, in Bradley Stoke and within a few weeks my husband and I had left our job, our house was sold, we put everything in the back of our car and a van was coming with some of our bigger items, and that was in May of 2004. It was the week of our first wedding anniversary. The end of that week was our first wedding anniversary.

I: As a young couple it really shows how strong and ambitious you are. After this move did you ever think 'oh my god, I need to move back or were you really happy with this joint decision that you had made for your future?

Sarika: My husband and I say all the time it was the best decision we ever made. Northern Ireland is still where we were born. My husband was born in Northern Ireland 10 minutes away from where we lived. It's always our home. My husband's family is there, we go back often, but this just felt right because we wanted to have a better life for our jobs, we wanted to have a better [s.l. community 66:08] and we've never looked back. Absolutely never looked back.

Interview: Shiv Sama, Sarika and Devin Morrison Full interview Audio (19.11.2021)

I: How was that for you, for your dad and your mum to come and move with you?

Sarika: For the first couple of years when Kieron and I were here we'd probably go back to Northern Ireland at least four or five times a year at least because both sets of our parents and family were there and, as my father mentioned, his health was getting worse, my brother was in Canada, so I flew back quite often to see him and I just kept saying to him 'your health isn't as good as it could be, your businesses have wound down now, you need to retire, you need to look after yourself, it's me or my brother'. I was fortunate because I had the grandchild. I had the only grandchild so I had an extra card. I wanted him to come over, be with us, have my mum and my dad close by in this great new life that we had and spend time with our grandson because family is really important to us. So, luckily it didn't take very much persuading and they moved over and that for me was the best thing ever. I could finally have the great life I'd started to build with my husband here in Bristol and my son and have my mum and dad close by. I couldn't have wished for anything more.

I: Which is important, especially now you have children.

Sarika: Yeah.

I: So, your life now and your husband's life, how culturally was it for you? Were you still including your Hindu traditions in your everyday life and obviously now you have a child, so how important was this for you now?

Sarika: Yeah, very much. Kieron and I always spoke about when we would have children and how we would bring them up and actually for us it's important that they have both faiths because my son, Devin, is half Irish from his father's side and from me and a great reason when my dad did come over was he could help support me with some of the language, celebrating Diwali and some of the other traditions that we had and as my dad started to get better and because of his faith and his heritage it's important he made a lot of connections in Bristol with the temples and things like that so it meant that my son could keep that richness, to keep involved in that as much as possible. So, yeah, it was really important that we kept that element because I'm really proud to be Indian and Hindu and I wanted my son to have that element as well.

I: That's fantastic. Back to you Mr Shiv. Was it quite daunting for you now to make a very big move, even though you knew England, but you spent a lot of your life in Ireland and obviously it's nice, you've got a daughter and a son-in-law and a grandson but was the move still quite daunting, especially for your wife who was leaving a lot of her family?

R: It was. We never ever thought that we would leave Northern Ireland, but my wife she doesn't keep that well, I wasn't well at all, so we both needed help so we decided to move here. My wife, she moved half-heartedly. Sarika used to live one street up from me, where I live, before she moved here.

I: Okay, in Ireland, yeah.

R: No, no. Here.

Sarika: When my parents first came to Bristol they literally lived around the corner from us so we could walk, within walking distance, and then a few years later, because of better schooling, we moved.

R: Yeah. We looked around everywhere. We got a flat near my daughter so it was walking distance, so I would pick up my grandson from school every day. Actually that made my health better.

I: Brilliant.

R: That's what I looked forward to every day, that I'm going to pick him up from school and bring him to my house. He would always have his meal with us before I would leave him back and even to all the primary schools, all the... yeah, primary school. Even when he moved to secondary school I used to pick him up from the bus station every day from school and would make sure that he went to my house every evening, had a dinner there and me leaving him here. He wouldn't have wanted anybody else to leave him here. So, it was a kind of booster for me. My wife it took her a couple of years. Then she got again very attached to the grandson so whenever he was coming from school she would have everything ready for him and the life became great. My health got a little bit better. I started doing a bit of community work. I do a lot of community work from South Glos, as well as Bristol. That was part of it, that we came to... we had a talk with Bristol's head of the library. No, sorry, South Glos, and he said 'sure, why don't we do a project'. I thought it was a great idea but it hasn't been done before so we initiated this project and here we are. I'm here myself and gathering up our history is very important for the future generations [I: of course] to know how people came here and how they manage. I'm one of the very lucky ones. I loved India. When I came here I was able to stay at my sister's house so everything was done for me. It was easier to set up a business. I didn't really have to work for anybody. Things were pretty normal for me, but the stories I heard of people that came before me, they had such a hard time and I consider myself very lucky to have a family and friends' circle. Now I'm actually official spokesperson for the Hindu community for Bristol and South Glos, which I'm very proud of and I try my best to help the Indian community. Before we used to come to visit my daughter, she had told me there was a temple so I was very interested, so we went to the temple and when I came here I was very lonely, my health wasn't that great so, being Indian and religious, I wanted to go to the temple and pray. There I met Mr Mehta. He was the chairperson for Avon Indian Community Association and I talked to him and I told him how involved I was back in Northern Ireland. He said 'why don't you join AICA, which I did and a few years later I became a chairman. I'm a chairman for about six years. It's the same in the temple because I used to go there. I had restaurant, so they wanted me to help with their kitchen so get a new kitchen sorted out because I had the knowledge, so that's why I got involved with the Bristol Hindu temple. I'm a board member for that, and that's how I got to know a lot of Indian community and local community. Then, a few years after that, I was doing the community posters for the Avon Indian community. I met Batook. He was the chairperson for SARI and he said to me 'Shiv, there is a lot of Indian community moving into South Glos, Bradley Stoke, the Council are looking for somebody who could do the race equality and you're the right kind of person, you have the knowledge. Would you be interested?' So, I thought 'why not?' Then I started South Glos Race Equality Network in 2013. I was elected the first chairperson for that, which I still am, and with the help of Council and everything we are doing a lot of good stuff in South Gloucestershire. That actually passes my time, gave me a life. I still have a lot of health issues. I can't do what I should be doing but I'm trying my best to help the community.

I: You're really pushing yourself and you've obviously really integrated into this community and you're a very big part of it [R: yeah], of all the community networking and that's beautiful. If we can bring your son in?

R: Yeah.

I: Today we're sat here with Devin Morrison. Could you please introduce yourself and spell your name for us?

Devin: I'm Devin Morrison. It's spelt D-e-v-i-n, not o-n. Normally it gets confused. Some people get confused.

I: Brilliant. Thank you. Could you please tell us what your relationship is to Sarika and to Shiv?

Devin: Well, Sarika's my mum and Shiv's my grandad, which I call nana.

I: Which you call nana?

Devin: Yeah.

I: Could you explain for the viewers what does nana mean?

Devin: I don't really know. I just call them nana.

R: An Indian tradition. The maternal grandfathers are called nana and nani and paternal parents are called dada and dadi.

I: Okay, so that's how you differentiate which parent. Okay, Devin, so you obviously come from an inter-racial family. Can you summarise how does that feel? I mean, it must be very natural to you but for us who's watching how is that to have an English Irish family but also a very strong Hindu traditional family?

Devin: It's pretty normal, except that I got to Hindu events and I go to the temple. That's really the difference.

I: Okay, and how is that for you? How does that feel to go to Hindu traditional days and temples? How does it... because obviously you must stand out in your school around your peers and friends, but it also must really enrich you as a person because you know so much about two different traditions, so how is that?

Devin: Well, I know many people from different places. Everybody's from everywhere so it doesn't really matter.

I: Yeah. Okay.

Sarika: But do you remember when... a really good story I can share actually about Devin's name.

I: Please, yeah.

Sarika: He talked about [inaudible 78:51]. When I was pregnant my husband and I had picked a girl's name but we couldn't agree on a boy's name and we wanted sometime that was meaningful so my husband and I were reading through baby books and we wanted something that meant for both cultures so my husband found the name Devin then, but it's spelt differently, but Devin is the Irish word for poet but it's the Indian word for god and that's why we picked D-e-v-i-n because a lot of people think it's the county Devon in the UK but it's not. My husband and I had actually never visited Devon before Devin was born. So, the i-n is that his name means both Irish and Indian and that was really important for us. Yeah.

I: Wow. Yeah, which is really beautiful to keep that connection.

Sarika: Absolutely.

I: Your grandad mentioned how as a child he picked you up from school and he went to nani's house and had traditional food, and for your grandad, for your nana, which is very important, especially moving from his time to Ireland how important is that for you to have this very strong connection with your grandparents in your life? Like every day you see them and you [inaudible 80:09]?

Devin: Well, it's good because I get to learn about my culture and everything and it just's fun to have them. I enjoy it.

I: Which is the best part? The food? Your nani's food?

Devin: Yeah, the food's really good.

I: What's your favourite Indian food?

Devin: [S.l. Farturas 80:30], they're nice.

R: Fartura. You know fartura? Fartura and [ph. trolley 80:35].

I: I know trolley.

R: Yeah, trolley and fartura is a traditional Punjabi bread which is fried.

I: Like [ph. bully 80:44]?

R: Yeah.

Interview: Shiv Sama, Sarika and Devin Morrison Full interview Audio (19.11.2021)

Sarika: Yes, yes.

R: Bully is made with the chapatti flour whereas fartura is made with self-raising flour.

I: Okay.

R: You never had one?

I: No.

R: Oh my, you don't know what you're missing.

I: [Inaudible 80:57]! So, it's like a sort of fried pancake [inaudible 81:03]?

R: Yeah.

I: So, if you had to choose right now, fartura and trolley and fish and chips, which one would it be?

Devin: Don't know.

I: [Laughter]. You don't know?

Devin: No.

I: They're both about the same in balance? Okay. Your grandad mentioned before that you spend a lot of time going with him to events?

Devin: Yeah.

I: How is that for you, first of all, Shiva, as a nana, a very proud nana, to be able to take your grandson?

R: Very proud that he's leaning about Indian culture. If we were doing a Havan, which is a very traditional Indian thing. We used to have one every month.

I: What is that?

R: Havan is lighting a fire and reciting the mantras and putting the [inaudible 82:02] in it for the benefit of the earth and the community. He will sit beside me. You have to put ghee, which is purified butter, and the samagri. He would put the ghee and I would put the samagri and chant the mantras and, when you go to the function, he'll greet the people the way I do, just does the same thing. He's a great help in the temple at trying to serve people.

- I:** Ah, beautiful. So, you're very much connected in the community. Does he stand out in the community?
- R:** A little bit. A little bit, yes.
- Sarika:** For me, you know, my dad's just talked about helping in the temple. My favourite things are when there is a Havan my dad will help with the food in the kitchen. This is the sous chef [I: laughs] so he will go and help make the chapattis and help make the food. They all know him in the temple as Shiv's son and then I will come along to help as well and I can stand very proudly and have our generations there. I think it probably doesn't sound it because I'm quite light and, as I mentioned, my husband's a very white Irishman. But Devin, tell about the story... my son is, or was, a scout, because he's a little bit older now, so a few years ago his investiture from going from a cub to a scout, tell the story about when you did your investiture?
- Devin:** Okay. So, what you do there's like different countries of different languages, so they had different languages, like you had a say when you were getting invested by hugging the scout flag pole. I wanted to do the Indian one and he was like 'are you sure you're Indian?' and I was like 'yes'. But they had to ask my dad.
- Sarika:** Yeah. My husband normally takes him to Scouts and I'm doing something around the house so they hadn't seen me and didn't realise that Dev had a Hindu connection so when he asked 'can I do the Hindu investiture? Can I wait and say the language?' they kind of went 'oh, okay, yeah, if that's what you want to do', so he did that, and afterwards the scout master spoke to my husband and said 'oh, really interesting, Devin wanted to do the investiture in Hindi' and my husband said 'he is half Indian, his mother is Indian, it's very important to him'. So, that was lovely for me that he chose to say 'actually could I say it in Hindi'. So, yeah, that's one of my favourite stories I think.
- I:** Do all your friends and peers, do you proudly talk about this Indian heritage side of yours?
- Devin:** They know I'm Indian but don't really go onto it much.
- I:** Do you have any Indian language?
- Devin:** No.
- R:** Just a little bit.
- Sarika:** Yeah. When Devin was younger – not so much now obviously with COVID – the temple had an Indian school on a Saturday because again there were lots of people who...
- R:** [Inaudible 85:28].

Sarika: Yeah, so where they may or may not be mixed culture or just have come here and maybe finding it difficult to keep that connection, so my dad would take Devin on a Saturday so he learned the prayers, some of the language, get to meet other children. He would have done that particularly when he was eight, nine, ten. Yeah, so that was good.

I: Yeah. Cool. So, you've visited India?

Devin: Yes.

I: How many times?

Devin: Once.

Sarika: Once.

I: Do you have a memory of when you actually got into India? Your first memory, maybe coming off the plane? Have you seen any Indian toilets 86:09?

Devin: No, I don't really remember. All I really remember was when we went to the Taj Mahal and that's it.

I: How was that?

Devin: It was good. It was massive and beautiful.

I: How was the heat? What time of the year did you go?

R: We went in March.

Sarika: Yeah, we went in March. Kieron and I wanted to... we'd gone and got married in 2004 and then because of our children, my dad's health and things we hadn't gone out, so about three years ago I said to my dad 'we'll all go'. So, my mum, dad, Kieron and myself, Devin, and we went out for a few weeks. My dad was able to show the house he talked about, although it's not there anymore after many years, got to meet relatives. We did some of the touristy things like the Taj Mahal. We went to Jaipur. But he got to meet a lot of his relatives and just see all his nana's stories about the shops and schools and rickshaws and all of those types of things so [over speaking 87:12].

I: So these things came alive?

Sarika: Yeah.

I: Did they come alive, because obviously you'd seen it and heard it, maybe seen a few pictures, but obviously now going to India and seeing these faces?

Devin: Yeah.

I: So, would you visit India again?

Devin: Maybe, yeah.

I: Yeah? Brilliant. Okay. We're just going to round off slightly soon. Sarika, Irish or Indian? What do you connect more with?

Sarika: I would say Indian actually, very much so, I think, because of the strong cultural connection we had. I always say I'm proud to be Indian and proud to be a Hindu. I can't get away from the Northern Irish because clearly my accent is very strong but actually that brings a lot of conversations up because my accent doesn't match. It's very, very different to how I look, and there's always interesting conversations. People ask me. I'm really happy for them to ask about why do I sound like this but look so different. But I would say Indian.

I: Okay. One more question. Ireland or Bristol?

Sarika: Bristol, for sure. I love that I was born in Northern Ireland, I was brought up there, but for me Bristol has become our home and, like I said, having my mum and dad here, this is our home.

I: Okay. Devin, what are you?! What are you is so funny! It's a silly question. What does your heart relate more to, your mum's culture or your dad's culture or both?

Devin: Both.

I: That's really nice.

Devin: Because I've visited both of the countries. I've seen my relatives on both sides so I don't think I'd pick either one. I'd pick both.

I: Okay. Do you have more of a strong connection with your mum's side of the family just because they live near you and you spend a lot more time with them, or it works both ways?

Devin: I think it works both ways because I still love my other grandparents and I love my grandparents here.

I: That's beautiful. So, he's very well [over speaking 89:29]?

Sarika: Yeah, family is very, very important to us. As I said, even though my husband and I moved to Bristol our family is always our family, so we do go... I'm very lucky my parents live so close. It's amazing. But Northern Ireland isn't far away so we do visit often. He sees his grandparents and his cousins a lot.

I: Yeah, that's very important.

Sarika: Absolutely.

I: Thank you. Okay, Mr Shiv, Indian or Irish?

R: Oh, Indian.

I: Indian?!

R: Indian. Until my last breath. I love here. I lived here 40 odd years but still Indian.

I: Even though you lived more in Ireland and England than India?

R: Yeah. I loved my life in Northern Ireland. I had a brilliant time, lot of friends, the business was good, but still my connection to India was very strong. I went to India every year apart from special circumstances, like COVID or the year I was very ill.

I: But your heart is still in India?

R: Yeah. Yeah.

I: Like the song, '[inaudible 90:47] India'?

R: Yeah.

I: Okay. Ireland or Bristol?

R: It's very different for me. I left India, came to London, left London, went to Northern Ireland, left Northern Ireland, here. No big difference to me. My home is where my family is.

I: That's beautiful.

R: If my family is here I'm just as good as anywhere.

I: Yeah. Sure. Okay. What's next in Shiv Sama's life? You've done so much. You've moved and travelled and you are also the push behind this project. What's next?

- R:** I want to see that my community which is very much growing, especially in South Gloucestershire. My biggest dream or my legacy which I would like it to be, to have a community centre for Indian people in South Gloucestershire. I am in talk with the authorities. We are working on it. If that happened while I'm living, that would be me.
- I:** So, no plans to return? No?
- R:** My life is around my children, you know, and my family and apart from that the community has given me a lot, I want to give something back to the community.
- I:** And I am sure that you will, the ambitious man that you are and to have such an ambitious and beautiful supporting family.
- R:** Yeah.
- I:** I wish you all the luck and thank you too, Sarika and Devin, and most of all thank you Mr Shiv.
- R:** Thank you.
- Sarika:** Thank you.

Transcript ends 92:59



Interview: Shiv Sama, Sarika and Devin Morrison Full interview Audio (19.11.2021)