

Community Archives Initiative
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Shainaz Landge · Oral History Transcript · Fall 2026

Speaker 1 0:08
Gracie, Sydney, Corman.

Speaker 2 0:11
My name is Dr. Shanazlangi. I'm from Department of Biochemistry, Chemistry, and Physics, and I'm here along with Carmen, Gracie, and Sydney to do the first interview.

Speaker 1 0:23
Okay, so first question is: Could you just tell us a little bit about yourself?

Speaker 2 0:28
Okay, as I already mentioned, my name. I grew up in India in a state called Maharashtra, and my upbringing is in different parts of Maharashtra state. My dad was a police inspector. He's a retired police inspector, and so we moved a lot in Maharashtra. So, at least five six places I've I have moved when I was a child. So, but I consider Pune, which is considered as Oxford of India, as my hometown and my village is in the south side of Maharashtra, which is the border of along with the borderline of Karnataka, and my upbringing is also from my village as well. Okay, moving to the United States. I had completed my master's in India and was working in India in a national chemical lab, and I got married. And my husband was accepted for a PhD student, and then I decided to move for my PhD in US. So higher education was the biggest force to come to United States.

Speaker 3 1:51
What do you think your first impression was when you moved to the United States?

Speaker 2 1:54
I have to be honest because, as they show it in movies, it is all very westernized style and westernized clothes. So people think people view United States very differently, America in general very differently from outside. They think very liberal, short clothes, and anybody can do anything kind of stuff. So that is how it is portrayed in movies. But I moved to Michigan, which was a cold, cold, cold cloudy, and people were wearing like four layers. So my view of United States changed the moment I landed, and then I realized like people all over the world are The same the

movies allow you to portray in a different way, but it was interesting, like how how you see and what you actually observe is two different cultural shock, and I have never seen somebody celebrating Christmas with so much lights and it was a big deal. I used to just go for a bribe to see the lights. We celebrate Christmas in India very, very, very well. But the way the Michigan state celebrates Christmas is amazing.

Speaker 3 3:21

So, like, what are your kind of traditions in order?

Speaker 2 3:27

So, India is known for their festivals. Like, what was surprising for me when I came here was like the this America has Saturday, Sunday as holiday. They say India can't afford Saturday as holiday because we have so many festivals that get holidays for every month. We get two or three holidays as festivals, you know. So India can't afford that. Recently, they have started because of the IT boom. But every month you pick up and we'll have a holiday. Like there is a Ramadani, there is Christmas is celebrated big, New Year is celebrated big, Diwali, Holy. We are like it for us. The new was Thanksgiving and Halloween, that was new for us. But Easter was new for us. But every month, if you pick up like the color festival, Holi is big. So equally, like how if you think the Hindu tradition festivals, Muslim tradition festivals, Christmas like Christian related festivals, Sikh related festivals, Jainism related festival, all are celebrated with equal enthusiasm, and all has holiday. It's kind of nice.

Speaker 1 4:43

That is nice. Um. So, are there like you still practice all of your traditions from?

Speaker 2 4:52

I try, but I, I religion wise, I I've never thought. Uh, but India is. Diverse and India is liberal. While I was going growing up, I was we grew up in a very diverse and liberal thought thought processing country. So, so consider for example, if I'm calling you for Ramadan for my home, you assume I'll call you for festival at my home. That when your festival is there, you don't even have to call it. Like it's assumed like people will come. Like so, we celebrate together. So some things we brought together here. But if you compare Atlanta versus Statesboro, the community is small. A community is not there. Like as as the celebration back home is there, so definitely we miss it. So we try to do it in as much as possible. I believe you guys are so familiar or senior. Okay, so you must have seen that color festival. They make it big here, right? So depending upon which part of community from India is big over here. That celebrations we see, like the festival of lights. But I have seen some Arabic coffee celebrations over here. But back home, that is like very common. Like very common. Anybody celebrates anybody's festival. You celebrate one festival, but we'll come to your room and celebrate. And I celebrate one festival, so you will come to my home and celebrate. So it's very common. So we try, but I don't think so. You can even imagine the impact of ourselves. I don't think so. Anybody can imagine the festival impact of India over here. We think we think July 4 is big here, but how coordinated

july 4 celebrations here. I I don't think so. There is any coordination kind of stuff because everybody is celebrating and everybody is celebrating in their own way, like from depending upon what is your status is in society. So you might bring 1000s and 1000s of rupees of crackers for this particular festival, but a poor person will also celebrate, but in their own way. So there is no coordination. So the chaos is huge, but everybody enjoys it.

Speaker 1 7:15

Yeah. And then, like moving back to to America, what would you say? Like your biggest suggestion?

Speaker 2 7:24

Would because Michigan Tech the first year actually first year because when you are new you miss everything and I tell that to my freshman student as well. I taught freshman FYE class about seven eight years straight, and I know people here are very you guys are very matured enough to know that in freshman I have to stay alone. Like you guys are aware, you guys are ready, mature to look over the how you are going to handle freshmen, right? For us, it's not like that. For us, until you study here with your parents, and that's a norm. That's you going out at 18 might be like what is wrong because so for us that's not a knock. So for me, I feel I feel like super short. My adjustment was full a lot because I'm vegetarian at Michigan with that cold, like I did not understand how people survive on sugar only. What is it like? You guys don't understand the flavor, sir. But then when you stay in a place, and when you see around, and when you realize you don't have only vegetables, like in Michigan there is no like because there are six months of coal there. We were in Upper Peninsula. How are they going to manage that? And then there is no indicability. How are you bringing that lentils? Or how are you going to? So you adjust and you adjust and you realize what vegetables they and then you realize the vegetables can't be same at all because how can you cook lettuce? Like you know it is you can't. It's it's so such a huge adjustment because you want that and you did not do not get that. So anybody coming from India, we are like just waiting, like what did you bring? What did you bring? And just to get that flavor, but you move from like Michigan to Boston, so you realize there are Indian stores. Okay, the cost is very very high for food because it is imported most of the things. You come to Georgia, you get mangoes, but the mangoes are not the same at all. You'll get the mangoes, but you're like, how do you eat these mangoes? Because there is so much variety of mangoes in back home, and every state has a special variety with so much flavor, and this is the mango you eat. Like, like I, but I feel the after staying here for so long, even you will feel the same when you go back to like any country. You know, you'll be like, who eats this fries? Like, are you kidding me? Like, what have you done for the body? So I feel how you are in which part of the country. And so when I went to Portugal, the way they eat cheese there, and because I'm in America, who eats cheese like this? Like you know, because we are all about diet, we're all about health conscious, but they genuinely enjoy cheese, and their cheese is very healthy. Like you don't feel you have done kind of crime or something like you do that. And back home now when I go, they are like, oh, you have become traumatized because I know I can't handle sugar like the

ways to handle sugar, or I can't handle cheese. I can't. So I think so. People change accordingly depending upon where you spend your more time. And now I I think I used to judge people in my brain. I'm like these people don't do like like you know you you you judge automatically you judge. I feel I'm like how come you are not aware? But when you spend time with students, especially not adults students, you realize that how are these people going to know? They are not exposed only, or even if the exposure is there, 18 years of your life, you are eating a certain way of food. Instantly, you are not going to change. So slow addition, or we get go to a Mexican restaurant, Indian restaurant. You will enjoy it, but I don't think so. Bringing that into your normalcy will be like even possible instantly. You might say I loved your flavor. I might say, but still I can't handle that. I'm staying in Georgia for 16 years, but I still wonder how can you eat grits? I eat grits. How? There's nothing in there.

Speaker 2 11:35

I don't really like that that much. But you know how people genuinely like grits is our thing, all that. And I just sit there and I'm like, there is nothing in these grapes, but people enjoy it, and people go out and they put butter and they put this and they try to give you every possible excuse that how delicious this is, and every single time I try, but I try, but it doesn't. It's not similar, like, and then, but but when you see student or student like every year I meet like three semesters different kind of students right when you look around you're like no it is possible like you know like these people are grown like that and these people know this is their normal until you explore until you go to other places, going from Georgia to Michigan only, you'll see the difference within United States. They Boston doesn't. I was my in my PhD for in Boston, and they do not like Starbucks. Really, and you come here and Starbucks, and I I felt myself so busted in when I was there, drinks coffee like this, like bitterness. What do you do? You add sugar, milk. Nothing changes. It's so awful feeling. So, but you go to you talk to people who are here. Almost everybody is in Starbucks. How? So I think some people change, and then you try to find your community. You're like, okay, Mexican is little bit here to us. We can eat this, and then you try Thai. Then you Thai like Jamaican food, and then you're like okay, American is this is good, and then you try to create. So food was a huge adjustment. Clothes were a huge adjustment because we have that thin kind of stuff. So people told us to wear that inside. What is that the cold thing is thermals. So we brought our own thermals, but then you realize that thermals are also not enough because that particular county is known for like 6677, inches of snow is normal for them, normal. And I loved it because I've never seen snow. I love that area. I loved it, but then what you have brought, nothing works, right? And then everything orients on electricity. If the light goes, you just stop here. Like you don't know what to do when the light is gone. But back home, like everything is like on the gastro, and we don't rely on only one resource. You're like, seriously, these people have no alternative. Like you just got

Speaker 3 14:04

stuck,

Speaker 2 14:04

and then you, and then also we don't try to find alternatives. We try to try to go to a restaurant, but you don't think the restaurant is also electricity. Then you don't afford. So it is. But I feel like now staying here, it is more understanding because I see my son and I'm like, how do you eat chicken every day? How? But then he clearly says, so, but but then you understand the mindset and you adjust and adapt and grow.

Speaker 3 14:37

But as when you said,

Speaker 2 14:40

people, hearing steps were also. like all these new folks who are coming, it's so funny because where are you from? Agasta. Agasta, you, you, you are Aragasta, right? What do you think? So is the difference between Statesboro and Agasta? One thing, what you felt different about Statesboro. And we are not even one and a half hour away. You, um, I

Speaker 3 15:07

feel like everyone knows everyone

Speaker 2 15:09

here, right? Yes. Okay, you. Yeah, sometimes smaller, like smaller than other stuff. Okay, I come from Boston, and I came from New Hampshire. I come from Dartmouth College, you know, and you come here, and you're like, where did you put me? Where did you put me? Why? And I came from South Carolina, and my husband got a job first, and then I got within seven days later. These people called me, so I came from South Carolina, and that that place is there where there is nothing on that road, nothing like that city is like I don't know what city is that or place is that dilapidated. Like I'm like we are in the wrong place. If the car breaks down, we're gone. Somebody's going to like we are students. Like we are not rich. We are students. We are like really really poor and not really really. We had a car, so we are coming down right. And then he realized that I don't think so can stay here because we come from Boston, and you have to happen. I don't think someone can stay here. 16 years later, I'm still here, but I feel it's because of that close community, because of the interactions, what people give you, the love the people give you, the students. I love my students. How every semester, I think so. Every semester, the students only teach me more because they're like, "Ha, this is what is new. Okay, okay, makes sense. But and you laugh in your brain, like you're like really, and but you also think like, how are they going to know if they are not exposed? They're young, you know. And so like it's interesting. I feel because the students are new, tend to be younger because of the students, but because of the people, you tend to be closer.

Speaker 4 16:44

How was community? Was community similar like that? Yes. No.

Speaker 2 16:50

Your home only. You have so many people that you don't even need outside people. Like my family, I was telling somebody, like this is just my family, my cousins along with me, first cousins, my my dad's side's cousins, like dad's brothers, kids, and us. We are 20 people, my my age, within a house. Then that uncle, so and my grandpa, and his brother, we are together as a family. That family together. That six people. So within our house only we are 6070, house. Wow! In religion. So everybody. This is just our house. So we don't need outside people, right? So this is just our house. So neighbors. So I also feel we were very mean because we were so many that if somebody wants to come and play with us, you learn earlier. But you know, like, but we were big cop. So this is our normal. Like this is our normal, and people talk. I heard about therapy only after coming here. So if something is going on, if she's not feeling well or something, and some something personal is going on, we immediately the first thing we'll say is like, "Hey, can you go for therapy or something? Right? This is normal here. Right? Awareness is normal. Back home, we're like, "What's the big deal? Go, go with this cousin. Go stay with them. Like, you know, it's very casual. And I think so. The nuclear family is a big deal here and there. It's all about community. Now, community is such a big thing. Every fes even festivals. Imagine one person is Christian, two people are Muslims, three people are Hindus, one is Jain, one is Sikh. Even the festival itself is so much, you know, and the awareness is so much, the community building is so much that your growth is different. You don't have to be taught. You are consistently exposed. Then you don't have to. You don't learn that if some elder comes, you have to stand up, or some cultures will take the like, please bless me kind of stuff. You don't have to go to some religious place to understand this thing, and it also, also like it's interesting. Like nobody can tell me which religious place I should go. Like my parents never told me you cannot go here. You cannot go here. Anybody can go to anybody's place, and so I feel that freedom. That so when I come here, I I was very surprised on one single road there were like six seven churches in Dartmouth. Like one single road has six seven churches, and I'm like, I don't understand. Like how do you choose? How do you choose? So stuff like that. When people explain me, I'm like, oh, that's interesting because we have only one church in a city. Everybody goes to the same church, so it was interesting for me. That's how also community India is known for community. India is known for diversity. India is known for their like people being together. So that was a big big surprise for us. Like here, people try to come together, but. Call, they call. Can I come to your home? Or I was alone. Like it's it's it's a different kind of culture. So there there is a population. There is a chaos. There is a different kind of how to say. If you take students, you have to be extra careful because of the, there will be dirt around and stuff, and my fear is like if I take my students, and if they feel sick, then what? So I try not to take my American students there, like you know, because my feeling is like rather than understanding or loving the culture, people judge, then I feel why to take the students so far and try to do that. So community from beginning is a big deal. Tell us a little bit about the physical. So my students, when they are little bit stressed out, especially in officers, and when they don't know answers, so when they're sitting for me, I ask them to play this because it calms your mind. Then

they're able to. They they don't just ask me. I don't understand. They don't do that. They are because I keep on telling them. I'm not answering the question where I don't understand anything. You should understand enough to form a question.

Speaker 2 21:19

So they take time to form a question. So when they sit, they don't know what to do. So they do this, which is actually very common because you try to form some kind of pattern. You know, that's the thing. When I was doing my post job in Dartmouth College, it was in a real garden. This kind of piece was in a real garden where people used to sit down and make their circles, just to feel calmer, which was near the stream, and it was really good. This is very known, by the way, and it's simple: some stones, sand, probably yeah, sand, but sand, and and there are some things reverberations, but I did not put it. I just put this one.

Speaker 4 22:11

You have a question? No, I'm just trying to take notes to make sure. Okay. So for this, would you say that this time doesn't matter?

Speaker 2 22:26

More than the culture, na. This is somebody gifted me this. It was in my office for a very very long time in a box, but after Corona, I saw a very different change in students. The study habits went down drastically. Simple, simple things which were very common for students before Corona. I like I'm teaching basic concepts a lot. Not ready, and I think so. This is my first year where people ask me legit, good. dimensional analysis question. I think so. Since last four five years, we are struggling only after Corona. So this is the first batch. I feel people are a little bit ready. Students, when they ask question, the questions make sense, and the difficulty level is a little bit higher, and so most of the people, this generation is very vocal about their mental health. And most of the students I'm meeting along, they are struggling with something, and surprisingly enough, they think my office is a safe space. So when they are about to cry or something, all I can do is like ready to water. I'll give them some fruits or something, and what I'm going to do other than that, like an napkin or something, and they console themselves. They discuss, and I'm like, here are the resources, but this helps them to think calm. So I was also not in meditation a lot, but I really start. I start like people might think yoga and meditation-they are all from India. Think it is, but I was not practicing it. But now, like even five minutes, I get it. I like quickly off, you know. Then I don't want to like just five minutes before the class or something, I take my time to myself and then I go to the class.

Speaker 3 24:30

So, what advice would you give someone that's moving to America

Speaker 2 24:35

who is going to move to America?

Speaker 3 24:36

Yeah, just like advice that you have.

Speaker 2 24:39

Be open, like like you know, like when you are new, and I give this to all the students. Like people, especially from Georgia, has a very Indian kind of mindset. They don't want to leave the state. They're like, oh my God, we are close to family, but they are not even visiting the family. Like it's very weird. Like if like they want to be near family. But don't want to be at home. They want their freedom. It's very weird, but they don't want to leave the state, right? My first suggestion is: if you don't see and explore and imbibe in other parts of even states in United States, I don't see UFC life. It's the same sort of people you meet, you're young. The same gossip, the same aunt will be a problem. Same father side, somebody is doing something. Like you don't come out of the shell. You don't explore. You don't think outside the box when you are just in the box the whole time. But if you go even to a smaller, you go to Mexico and you realize that wow. Or if you go to Canada, like literally Canada, that is like I I don't think so. We need even no fees or anything. Just an entry, right? You will see how people's behavior, food, culture, weather, environment, how their decision making capabilities changes, and that is what. So many people in Roger go for hiking. Even that hiking changes you so much. So rather than staying in one stage, if you get an internship, take it. If you are able to go and spend some time in other than the family members, other than the family members at some other state like Washington D.C. or something, see the change. Go to Boston. You will see the cultural diversity. Georgia doesn't have that kind of cultural difference. Go to Boston. Shocking! Like how people are. People just go on the street. My my PhD is from there. We'll just go on the street and sit there, and some random person will bring the physical instrument and just play. Some random people will come and just dance. Like how they show it in movies? Like it's really like that. Like really like that. And you just sit there, and you're like okay. And that's the calmness, right? That's the calmness. That's the. But at the end of the day, you're so tired. You're not running. So people say, "Why? Why did we stay in Statesboro? I cannot handle Atlanta. I cannot. And people want to go to Atlanta. I'm like, "How? How do you manage this traffic? Well, it's a lot. It's a chaos, right? And so some people can't handle streets whatsoever because for them that's their normal. So we have to adjust. I feel we have to more

Speaker 3 27:29

inclusive

Speaker 2 27:29

and more aware, like what people are going through, rather than judging them. You have to be open. You have to. You have to understand. You are the one new to that place, their culture was already there. So immediately don't judge people. However, they are like, oh my God, these people cooking spices-they are going to smell. No, they were always like this. So, as an Indian, I should be a little bit more aware where I am going as an American, you should be aware that they are normal. Like they are

trying to change. They are they are one trying to fit in this big crowd, right? So there are small things, but I think so that comes with age and experience. But when I was new, I was like, "Hey, these people wear four four shirts. My mother's first question was, "You wear complete clothes? I'm like, yes, mama. It's not the beach. But see, when you go to the beach, you see that, and you're like, okay, this is all the show, right? You you understand what I'm saying? It's so different, and you just sit there and like, how confident these people are. But you try to do that in India, they will just be like, "Are you kidding me? This person has gone mad. Like you know, but it's a very different kind of awareness. And when you go to village, also like when now I go to village, and people try to be smart, and you know the answer, but you don't talk. You just like let it, let it, let it be. Like you don't try to oversmart people anymore. You don't try to showcase yourself. It's very interesting as you grow in a certain country. You know more than half of the things a person is saying is a lie, but you don't even want to cross them. Like because this person is showing off, right? Let them have that moment, and you are you just giggle, and you are like, okay, okay, or or the the like one of my cousin has. So in India, gun law, gun law is well strict. We cannot have a gun. So this guy got the license, and he has a gun. Okay, so every single time I go, he keeps it on the table. Okay, just because that's like a prized possession or something, right? And I'm like, really? This is what you have earned for your whole life, like, like. But for him, it's like, see what I've earned, right? And I'm like, do you know? Like, my brain is like. So much. I mean, do you understand the implications of this? Like, if some wrong person picks this up, and you think so, this is great, and it is funny. Like, how people trying to impress because I'm from America. Like now, going from America to India, right? Our villager be so intelligent, just try to sit with you and listen to you, and when you listen to them, you're like, man, why are you still there? Like, how come you're you're like you can grow so much, but they're so content. The peace makes you jealous. They're so content of how good they're like. They're so content. They get up at 630. By 830, everything is done. They work, and by 8o'clock they are in the bed and they are genuinely happy. So anybody whom you meet, despite that happiness, try to get that here. You are consistently on the move, right? And when you look, people are like, innocence is bliss. That's the phrase that they they're like okay that war is going on. Nothing bothers them. Nothing like a yeah. War is bad, and they continue to like they don't get affected only. I think so. We know so much that the effect is very strong on us. And some people are so in their own world and happy. I can't do that. Nothing bothers them. It's funny. Okay. Um. Thank you so much for letting us do this. Um. I think we have a paper. Should we just email it to? Yeah. It's just a paper. Um. Okay.

Speaker 3 31:40

Okay. What? I'll pay. two. Okay, okay. Are we still recording? Yes. Thank you, Doc. Okay.