

Interview with A.K.

00:00:00 **SPEAKER_ms**

Okay, so this is manmit singh. Today is February 15, 2023. I am interviewing for the first time AK. This interview is taking place at my home in San Francisco. This interview is sponsored by Jakara and is a part of the Storytelling and Settlement through Sikh LGBTQIA+ Oral Histories Project. Thank you so much for being here A.K. and participating in this interview. The purpose of this research is to document the lived experiences of Sikhs in the United States who are from the LGBTQIA+ backgrounds. We want to provide a more complete history of Sikhs through interviews that ask LGBTQIA+ Sikhs about their different experiences, how LGBTQIA+ Sikhs understand themselves and their communities, and how LGBTQIA+ Sikhs make homes in the U.S. Unlike a job interview or a survey, oral history interviews are all about you and your life. So we can really talk about anything you want and in any order. So the first question that I really have, to kind of kickstart us, that is very broad, so feel free to really take it whenever it really comes to you and however it speaks to you, which is when you think back to your experiences of growing up, tell me a little bit about what comes to your mind. For you, are there any common stories, any smells or relationships that come to mind that help describe you growing up? And I'll also drop this question in the chat.

00:01:51 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Great. Yeah. Thanks, Manmit, for taking the time to interview me. I'm excited. Growing up, so I would say some of the images and scenes that kind of rise up immediately are, you know, my grandpa picking me up from school, and I'm sitting in his green car waiting for me and my brother. And yeah, a lot of comfort and safety and joy for most of, for a lot of the feelings that I experienced. Especially within our home. So I grew up with both of my paternal grandparents living in the home along with my parents and my brother. And I think it was, it brought like a lot of, I would say richness to my childhood. I think just having my grandparents nearby and from a very young age, they all were like parents as well to me. They helped raise me and my brother. And I think that led to a feeling of like comfort and safety. I would say a feeling of nourishment as well. Yeah, because they fed, like my grandma in particular, she basically fed us and would do a lot of the cooking and caretaking. And I'd say that's definitely kind of a thread across my childhood.

00:04:03 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

I would say another thing that, I would say my imagination was something else that I noticed about myself from a really young age and carried me through, or not carried me through, but it was a space I could live in because I feel like as a child. And even, I think, less now, but here and there, I tend to daydream a lot. And I was quite a shy and pretty introverted kid growing up. I hear stories of my parents being like, "oh yeah, since when you were--up until maybe you were four, you were pretty like loud and, you know, not afraid to be yourself." But after that, I started getting really shy. And I feel I would always just have one or two very close friends, but I would spend a lot of time just in my imagination, just, I don't know, dreaming up stories and things like that. And so, I think when I think back to my childhood, a lot of it feels like me feeling like that was like my secret space. I could just, when I was alone, I could just be in my own little place. And so, I feel that's also a thread.

00:05:50 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that. I'm just like sitting with kind of the power of living in an intergenerational household, with your grandparents there as well, and how fulfilling and rich that must have been. And I would love for you to like talk a little bit more about what stories I can imagine they may have been telling you. So, what are some like stories that you maybe grew up with that you still hold on to from your childhood?

00:06:27 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, yeah. Oh man. So, I would say my grandpa was definitely always like there, and I feel he wasn't super social. And I think I don't have too many memories of talking to him a whole lot in terms of stories, but my grandma, yeah, I think now I notice she's just full of stories and whether they're about Sikhi or whether it's about her own life growing up. But when I was little, I think I would always remember her telling me just random bedtime stories. It was one about a black crow going into the field. And I don't know if it was the crow

interacting with some sort of bug or mouse or something. But I think the moral was, not to act or try and be too smart, like how crows are somehow. They're pretty intelligent creatures. But I think in that story, it got the crow into trouble. That was one bedtime story that I remember.

00:07:59 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, I also guess in terms of stories, do you mean like my memories of maybe like an instance or experience that I hold close or stories they passed on to me?

00:08:15 **SPEAKER_ms**

Either or both-- stories with them as well as just stories that they passed on, whether it is stories pertaining to Sikhi or stories pertaining to history or even about their own lives. Any stories that are really memorable that continue to influence you today?

00:08:32 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah. Yeah, I think it's not really a story, but I think something that influences me to this day is, my grandma would wake up every morning and she still does. I mean, she used to wake up at like five or five thirty and she goes on a morning walk every day. And it was, I think why it also sticks out is she always wears Indian suits. And but when she goes on her walk, she puts on these big sweatshirts and gloves and sweat

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pants. And I think it's the one time I see her in a different style. And so, I don't know, I think I get a kick out of it. And she just looks adorable, like getting ready for a walk. And I remember those were walks that would happen before I was awake usually. And then when I came home, she was cooking breakfast or something. But I think just seeing her consistently do that every single day. I can't really describe it, but I think it kind of adds to that feeling of safety or something, like there is something that she committed to every day because she enjoyed it and it felt good for her. And I think as I've grown older, I'm trying to find things like that for myself.

00:10:27 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And yeah, she was a big walker. She would like walk me to my preschool every morning with my brother in the stroller, and then they would go to a nearby park. And that's definitely--I try and go on walks now when I go visit her. So walks are definitely big.

00:10:52 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that. I could absolutely see how it's such a grounding activities for her and also kind of translates over into your life and continues to serve as an anchor for you now. I think that's really cool. And I think that's really cool. I would love to also like hear a little bit more about location wise, where you were raised and what that experience was like, with all of the identities that you hold.

00:11:31 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

So I grew up in the Central Valley, California. A town kind of towards the southern part of the Central Valley. I don't know, I would say growing up for the majority of, up until elementary school, I feel like I was just developing as a kid. So I didn't really think too much of what was beyond my hometown. And you know, I, I feel really lucky in that--like we had backyard and stuff to play with and toys and whatnot. And I had the chance to go to a preschool that like taught you random skills and stuff like sign language or Spanish. I think like these different things. So I always felt good. It felt good to either be at school or be at home growing up.

00:12:43 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And then as we, as I got older into middle school and high school, I--I don't know--you just start reflecting a little bit more. And I don't think it's a very rare dream, but I suddenly was like, I want to move to New York City, or I want to move to a city and get out of this town when I can, once I'm 18 and able to. I think that was really my kind of dream in high school. And I think it was just the sense of disinterest and the sense of boredom that really was like instilled, like distilled, or came to be in my brain in terms of my hometown. I often question,

why the adults like my teachers, what led them to end up coming here, or never leaving? So I was always a little like, why would anybody end up here? Like, you know, why did my family end up here? blah, blah, blah. And yeah, I really didn't look beyond that. I think also, I was raised to be kind of an overachiever. So I really did not have a social life, probably until my senior year of high school, beyond school. And so I think that also--I was pretty preoccupied by the things I was doing. Did I feel like a massive nerd? Yes. Did I feel like I was missing out on maybe some things? Probably, but I was too busy to have the time to really think or complain about that, I guess. So that was kind of my feelings growing up.

00:14:51 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And then I guess in terms of considering all identities, queerness was not something I really thought about much. And I think it probably was because a lot of, I would say like the majority of my experiences were defined at school, in many ways. And I would say not many of my peers were queer or out. And I think towards the end of high school, a few people started coming out and I was like, "oh, that's cool". You know, like good for them.

00:15:45 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

I graduated in 2016. So I think in terms of my queerness, it wasn't something that I really reflected on that much. I also just never had been in a relationship at that point. My whole childhood, I was basically from preschool to elementary, I just remember being really scared that my dad-- my dad, I don't know, he was kind of a scary person growing up to me. And I just remember him being like, "you cannot have a boyfriend. It's not like what we do in our culture." And I just really remember internalizing that and being even scared to like. I would never talk about crushes or anything with my family, parents. And, you know, I feel like I had a few crushes here and there, but then in middle school and high school--middle school, I definitely had a big crush. But then high school, I feel I was just so busy. And when I looked around, I was like, I really don't find anybody attractive at this point. And I think that helps me stay focused. So it really wasn't on my mind--questioning my sexuality in any way.

00:17:14 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And then in terms of my Punjabi Sikh identity, I think I had lots of instances throughout elementary school and middle school where, you know, we had diversity in our schools, but there weren't that many Punjabis in any of the schools I went to. There were mostly folks from Latinx backgrounds or they were white and maybe quite a number of non-South Asian Asians. And I think the earliest memory I have of being ostracized for literally the color of my skin was in kindergarten where these girls I really wanted to hang out with, they started this Cheetah Girls Club and they were like, "you don't have the same skin tone as us. You can't be in our club". And I was like, "whoa there". So it wasn't something I was thinking about, but obviously it made a difference in that social arena. And I don't know if my shyness or introvertedness was--I feel it was mostly me contending with my Punjabi identity growing up. And I don't know if they fed off of each other. I was embarrassed about that and that fed into me being shy or I was just naturally shy. And so then I was scared to speak up about my Punjabi identity.

00:19:00 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

But I also was not allowed to cut my hair until like, I don't know, junior or senior year of high school. And I really struggled with that because my parents both cut their hair, my brother cut his hair. So it felt kind of like a double standard. I don't know. I feel like it was just this rule and I feel like my perspective was not really considered in that. And the excuse was always "long hair is beautiful." And I did not necessarily agree with that at the time. I would say those are some of the experiences I had growing up in a suburban predominantly white area.

00:20:05 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that. And maybe we could even shift-- you already started to touch on this a little bit--but I would love to hear more about in thinking about your gender and sexuality, how did you learn more about these topics, especially given what you've described in the Central Valley and growing up in that--in the high schools, middle schools out there, that's not really something that you talk about or there aren't as many spaces devoted to queerness. So I'm really kind of thinking about gender and sexuality. How did you learn more

about these topics? And I can drop the questions in the chat as well.

00:20:44 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Sure. So my dream of moving away from the Valley came true and my hard work paid off. I did not move to New York City, but I moved up to the Bay for college. I went to school in UC Berkeley and I would say overall, it was a big change, but I think a positive change in many ways. I feel like I just felt immediately steeped in the vibrance of queerness in all its forms. It doesn't have to relate to gender and sexuality. I think just being in a place where history is happening every single day was so cool. And not to sound--I am sounding cheesy and cringey--but being in such an intellectual space was so cool for me. And you know, any ideas you're promoted to question and reflect and share your ideas. And it was really cool. I met a lot of people from California, actually, that went to Cal too. And it was actually kind of shocking. I was hoping to see more people from different States or countries and stuff like that. So that was actually interesting. But I think just having kind of that influx of ideas and also just being in a space that's a little bit more urban and broken into than the clean cut new tract homes, miles and miles of that. It was just really stimulating. And I feel like a lot of people grow so much and I definitely grew so much in college. I think I still struggled with my first two years with opening up a little bit more. I was definitely still introverted.

00:23:10 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And I think, we were talking a little bit earlier before about how my study abroad experience after my sophomore year was really transformative in terms of me finally being able to talk to somebody about my queer identity and the thoughts I was thinking. So I was definitely beginning to question my sexuality at that point. At that point, I had never even really dated. But I was beginning to open up to the idea of dating and wanted to. And I was thinking it was, OK, most of my crushes so far have

00:24:00 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

been straight guys. But I don't know. I did see myself looking back on my childhood and I feel like it wasn't all like super straight like that. So I was opening myself up to the idea. I was also feeling pretty disinterested in guys in general and feeling like, nobody's going to understand me. Like a guy would never truly understand me. And maybe I would be interested in women or women identifying people.

00:24:50 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

So anyway, I go study abroad and that was really amazing. I met one of my closest friends while I was studying abroad and they were definitely more comfortable in their queer sexuality and gender identity. Obviously, they were definitely still working through some things. But I think just a lot through that friendship really just opened up the space for me to ask questions and just dump my thoughts and feelings. And really, it just felt really validating and I'm not making things up, this is genuinely how I feel and it's OK to be feeling this way and it's OK to be unsure and working through that. So that summer abroad was, I think, really where I was like, "OK, yeah, I'm definitely not straight. I'm queer." I think I lean towards identifying as bisexual, but that label never really felt quite right. So I think identifying as queer was how I went.

00:26:26 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that with me. This next question, you actually already started to touch on, but it would be really beautiful to have you reflect a little bit more on the progression. But the question is, how have your ideas of gender and sexuality changed in your life? Thinking about how you understand your gender and sexuality today, if you had to define some of your life so far in terms of phases, what would they be?

00:27:09 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, let's start with the gender question. We're going back to childhood, going into the archives. I feel like as a child, I was raised by a mother who definitely imposed a lot of traditional feminine ideals and clothes and sentiments and stuff on me. And it was definitely from a place of-- I don't know--joy or celebration. You know, like sparkles are fun, dresses, they're fun, it's it was from a place of, "this is like really exciting." And I really struggle with that. I appreciated dresses and stuff. When I was little, I used to play the song "Soniye ne Soniye" by, I don't know who sang that song. But I would have it on loop, and my grandma and my mom tell me the story of, like I would every time it would change, I would repeat. I would have to run into my room, go to the

closet, pick out a new dress, put it on and then dance again. And I would keep doing that. And so, you know, at that point I was probably three or four, maybe. But as I grew in elementary school, I was definitely more-- it's not like super tomboyish, but I think personality wise, I was more tomboyish and goofy than a lot of my friends, and didn't resonate with the clothes my mom was buying for me, which are pink and purple and sparkly. And then I think that also conflicted with what I was saying about --it just left me.

00:29:36 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Oh, not being able to cut my hair because that was also a thing that my mom approached from a really feminine angle, like, oh, "long, luscious hair, that's beautiful." And I didn't really have, "Oh, I want to a pixie cut or I want a bob." I don't really have that, but I was just like, "I don't want super long, luscious hair," especially when it's very like framed like that. But then at the same time, I think there were a lot of contradictions. Because I remember not being able to shave my body hair gave me more of like a not masculine, but like more of a freakish kind of feeling among my peers, and that did not fit into the femininity that they were expressing. I remember one of my friends who's probably--I don't know--she's like one of my cool friends, so I don't think truly thought/consider herself my friend, but anyway, she was too cool for me. She would stuff her bras and talk about shaving her legs and her arms and everything and really. And this is like fourth or fifth grade, and I think she was way-- I don't know, I feel like she could have waited a few years to do some of those things, but you know, she was raised in different households. I didn't want that extent, but I just-- I was like, I just want to shave my legs or I just want to shave my armpits just so I can conform enough to not feel judged. But also, I didn't feel like I super really cared about makeup or super feminine, traditionally feminine stuff. And then middle school to high school, I was just like a nerd, so I just wore sweatshirts and had zero sense of style or my hair in a bun every day because I was embarrassed to wear it down because I didn't know how to style it. Yeah, it was just-- I really just redirected my attention a lot of times, so I don't really question--not question, but I don't really-- I felt scared to question and go the step of finding my style or finding. Like actively asking my mom, "can you teach me about makeup" or I just chose to kind of ignore it and was like, I'll slide by and it'll be OK because I know I value having straight A's more than a boy liking me at this point. So that was just kind of, I think, how it kind of went and then.

00:32:38 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, I would say. I think now, as how I view my gender is definitely more feminine, but in my own ways, I don't think I have a defined style still. But I tend to like wear things that I like now and try and--. When I'm wearing something like, I don't know, a fun color or it feels like a dress or something a little bit fancy I I feel what that does to me and it feels good. And so I think I've come to appreciate having style or makeup as a way to express myself instead of feeling like it's painting myself into some version of myself that feels really weird.

00:33:51 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And then, in terms of sexuality, I would say around junior, senior year of college, I was pretty much like, "yeah, I'm like bisexual" or I would identify as queer. I was in a relationship from junior year for the next three years, basically. And my partner was not queer, and so I think that it was a beautiful relationship and I'm definitely so grateful and really enjoyed exploring love and stuff in that relationship. But yeah, that was one thing where it was hard to fully connect on my queerness, and I think I struggled with that. Yeah, but we shared a lot of love and that was cool, Now I think I identify more as--I also feel weird about labels still-- but I think pansexual is kind of how I feel right now and I'm open for that to evolve.

00:35:32 **SPEAKER_ms**

Absolutely, thank you so much for sharing all those different parts of your life with me. Another, I guess--touching a little bit more on Sikhi as well, I wanted to kind of shift the question to kind of touch a little bit more about your relationship to Sikhi. And so when thinking about your relationship to Sikhi, how did you learn more about Sikhs and Sikhi? How has that relationship changed and evolved over phases in your life? And if you had to, in thinking through Sikhi, if you had to define parts of your life in terms of phases, what would those be?

00:36:19 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, again, I feel like I'm going--I'm like working my way each time through childhood and then back to the present. But yeah, Sikhi was definitely a big part of my childhood, just day to day life. I don't think it was--it's

interesting, because I feel like sometimes, it was like sometimes people impose certain things on you and it's very obvious. And then, you know, oftentimes you want to resist that. But I think Sikhi was never-- I guess in that, I don't know what you would call them--the rituals. Or like the expressions of Sikhi, such as not cutting your hair or, you know, certain cornerstones like that, I think I wanted to resist. But the actual experience of going to the Gurdwara on Sundays or listening to my mom do kirtan or play kirtan and we would like sing along. Or learning Japji Sahib with my grandma. And she also taught me how to write Punjabi. And we would, my brother and I, during summer vacations, we were assigned homework because we were home all day. So part of our daily homework was it was a math problem set from this math book we went together with my dad to buy every summer. It's horrible. But then it was and then I think we would have to read books. And then the third thing was we would practice Punjabi. And so we would have to write down the alphabet, write the 10 gurus names, write our names, and then read Japji Sahib with our grandma. Or we had the little iPod minis and listen to it. So anyway, you know, in that way, Sikhi was how I learned to write Punjabi or practice Punjabi. And so I think it's really interesting. The ways in which Sikhi was just part of our household and how intertwined it is with our Punjabi culture, or just my household culture in that way. And I think I did not enjoy reading Japji Sahib every day, but I could appreciate it. And I did not enjoy having to--I never went to Punjabi school, but my parents did try. I think, I can't remember what time of year it was, but we went for--it's probably summer--they had some sort of camp for two or three weeks. Did not like that. But overall, like going to the Gurdwara, it was chill, didn't mind it. So I feel like we were not a super, super religious household, but we definitely upheld, you know, Sikhi in our day to day life. And now looking back, I think it's especially kirtan, specifically, I think, I listened to kirtan and put on different paths, just to ground and soothe myself. And, you know, that's definitely something I carry to this day. And I want to learn to truly understand like the path that I'm reading. I understand a bit of it, but yeah, that's a goal of mine. But I think just listening to it itself is just very soothing and comforting to me. And so I carry that forward. But anyways, I took that kind of for granted.

00:40:45 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And I think there were some ways actually my mom tried. My mom grew up in the US from a young age, probably like around seven or eight. She was in the US. My dad grew up mostly in Punjab and went to college there and came here for his master's program. And so I think my dad was definitely more traditional in some ways, whereas my mom would try and she understood the realities of growing up in America, you know, I think she understood like school dances and things like that, which I think really helped because I know a lot of my cousins, you know, it's, it's normal for them to lie to their parents and sneak out and do things because their parents, because of that cultural--not divide--but cultural distance. They're not able to, or find it very hard to explain some of those things to them. And so I am grateful that I had at least one parent I could go to, to that would understand for the most part. So anyway, my mom really tried to incorporate Sikhi with American traditions. So we celebrated Christmas, but instead of getting presents from Santa, my mom would give it, write on the card, "From Guru Nanak Devji." And it was pretty obvious it was her, because she has very distinct handwriting. But, and it's interesting because I could go to school and be like, "yeah, I got this and this for Christmas," but I don't remember if I would tell like my friends if it was from Santa or Guru Nanak Devji, but probably not. But, you know, so in that way, like, damn mom, you were cool for doing that. Or like, I didn't have to feel super weirded out, or super different from, you know, my classmates, but I still carried elements of Sikhi in that way. So it's interesting how she adapted Sikhi to raise us.

00:43:17 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

But anyway, so all that to say, I felt pretty good about it up until middle school, where I feel like I was, in all areas of my life, I was definitely reflecting a little bit more, thinking more critically about, does this actually align with me? What do I actually think, you know, versus what you've always known? And I think at that point, I was just questioning things. And I think it was like a healthy questioning. It wasn't like, I hate the institution or anything. Because I never truly felt that way. Yeah, definitely have critiques of how Sikhi is kind of enacted and Gurdwaras and stuff like that. But overall, it was fine. And then I think in high school, I started meditating, got a bit more spiritual. My parents were also trying to meditate and stuff like that. And so I thought I'd give it a shot. And I don't align with--there's many spiritual organizations out there and stuff, and I don't really align with the organization that, I don't even know how they heard about it. But they went to India. And like, I would go to India quite often growing up, it's up until probably middle school. And so I remember, so I went up until middle school, and then I didn't go until after my junior year of high school. And so it was the summer of 2015. It was my first time going in the summertime. It was interesting. But we went to that organization's kind of spiritual office or headquarter, I don't know what you would call it, but just they have a building and then they have workshops and things like that. And so my brother hated it. But me and my dad, we like kind of learned the basics of their kind of philosophy of meditating and stuff. And I thought it was really cool. And I definitely

aligned with spirituality, just as a whole--like I believe we have souls, I believe we come from some higher source or being. And I think meditating with those kind of principles really resonated with me, but the organization itself, I don't really align with. But anyway, so I feel like through that was my introduction to meditation and spirituality. And from there, I was able to explore a little bit more on my own. And then later in college, I was like, I want to be a meditator. And then later in college, honestly, I was going through a really rough health kind of situation. And both physically and mentally felt weak. And I was having a lot of anxiety to the point where I, I did not know what to do. And so I was like, I haven't meditated, because, you know--that was kind of the event that prompted me, let me try and meditate every day. Let me connect to that higher power, or, that spirit, and see what comes from it. And so I, that was where I reconnected to listening to Kirtan on a daily basis and meditating. And I, I discovered a few other resources here and there, just through like YouTube or Google, to learn different meditating practices and things like that. And that is when I really started to merge my the elements of Sikhi that I really resonate with, with like my personal practice of spirituality. And so yeah, and from then on, I was meditating pretty consistently for probably two, maybe three years. And then say over the last year and a half, I kind of got out of that practice. But recently have been realizing I don't need to meditate every day. But if I do meditation a few times a week in tandem with other self care kind of things, I feel good. And so yeah, I think that was a really important time in my life for Sikhi and spirituality to come together for me.

00:48:26 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that. And there's so much I'm like going to take away such as, for example, having Baba Nanak be the one to give gifts during Christmas. I'm so glad that you were also able to find solace and meditation when you really needed it at that part of your life, which actually takes us like very smoothly into the next question of who were, who are the friends that you found solace with or communities you found support in?

00:49:02 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah. I would say, as I was coming to terms with my sexuality and just gender identity and also my spirituality, I would say a lot of my communities, it was more like one on one relationships. I really just thrive in on one on one, deep one on one conversations. And so yeah, I probably had, I don't know, my main friend that I made, that I became friends with while studying abroad was most of like, for the first few years, at least was the only person I really talked to about my queerness. I was able to come out to my parents, which, luckily, went pretty well. And we don't really talk about it anymore, though. So it was just kind of like, okay, here it is. I feel like at the time, my mom and my dad had questions. But I think because I am straight passing and I don't appear to be like, super queer, I think they don't feel a reason to bring it up ever. So, which is, I guess fine. But at the same time, it does kind of feel like we've brushed it under a rug or brushed it away. I don't know if I would ever come out to my grandparents. I have no idea how they would react. And yeah, and I think recently, I have come out. So anyway, for a long time, my only safe space in terms of opening up about my queerness was really one or two really close friendships. And especially friendships that I had had for a long time since childhood, or middle or high school. Coming out to them, I felt safe at the end of the day, which felt good. But it was scary because I was like, "you've known me for so long. And I hope, you don't think I've changed or become somebody else" or something like that. There's always that fear. But generally, yeah, I felt supported. And then in terms of safe spaces, and then in terms of Sikhi, I feel like my family has just been my main area where I feel supported. But in terms of exploring Sikhi, and just Punjabi culture, there were quite a number of Punjabis at Cal and a number of clubs. And so I feel like through that, I met folks and was able to see what going to the Gurdwara felt like without my family. You know, like little things like that. Sometimes I unconsciously felt like I had to depend on my family to do with, I was finally able to do it more independently or do it with friends and bring it outside of that familial circle. Yeah, because I think, it has to do with growing up in a community where there weren't a lot of Punjabis around me outside of the home that were like, I think I found expressions of Sikhi just like within the home, it kind of made me feel like, this is just a part of me that I don't really need to talk about or let exist outside of the home. And so I think having the space where I can like publicly outside of families with friends, like go to the Gurdwara and stuff, or just even just hang out with Punjabi friends, I think it just created. it extended that sense of comfort that I felt in my home growing up. So yeah, I definitely find solace in those communities. And I think lately, I have not that many first cousins, and not quite a number of second cousins. And lately, I've only come out to one of my second cousins, but it happened quite recently. And it was a positive experience. And I felt really just accepted and loved. And loved. And I think that has given me the--and actually it was about, well, yeah, it just kind of gave me-- both of these kind of identities merging in a space that hadn't merged in that space in a full way. Like I had come out to my parents, but then we didn't talk about it. I feel like with this cousin, we got we had we had a deep conversation and it felt good. And I think it gives me the courage

to be my queer self when I'm around my family, when I do feel like I honestly slip into these heterosexual norms, because I'm scared that I will be judged or retaliated against or whatever. I just don't know how folks will respond. So yeah, so I think lately, my experiences, I am really just trying to expand that sense of solace in all areas. But that's always a process.

00:55:44 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for for sharing that. And something that you touched on, as you were sharing, was coming out. So I wanted to kind of ask a few follow up questions, which are, what does being out mean to you? What does coming out mean to you? And in your experience, how straightforward or linear is the process of being out or coming out? And is this something that everyone would have to do at some point in their life, in your opinion? Hmm. I'll also drop those in the chat as well.

00:56:20 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

How straight is the experience of coming out? No, I'm just kidding. But anyway, I think I think we're always coming out. So I think we do it in phases. I work with farmers here in the Central Valley, I moved back after college, and a lot of my work is outside, which I love. And because of that, I've been able to experience the seasons and a true way that I have before the fruits and, you know, vegetables that are growing around the season, just seeing how the sun shifts in the sky. And this past winter actually was my very first time truly enjoying winter. I've never been diagnosed with depression, but I definitely have experienced like symptoms of like seasonal depression and stuff in the past. And I think school contributed to that as like finals lead towards December. So this past year, I really just kind of surrendered to the sun setting at like 3pm and it getting dark and my body just feeling sleepy. Like I let myself sleep more. I let my body just hibernate. I let things kind of slow down. I definitely hibernated and also the social sense too. And lately, it's February now, we're starting to see, hello, wildflower blooms already, which is kind of weird, but not too surprising. And things are picking up more and I feel like I'm able to hang out with my friends more. And so in, as like seasons change like that, I think it's so valuable to--you're not always going to be coming out, right? Like you're not going to, but I think it comes in like seasons like that. Like when you feel that it's right, whether it's like, you feel you're in the right place with the relationship with a certain person, you'll come out. Whether that's just you like choosing to wear certain things, like you have this outfit that's hanging in your closet for months and you finally are like, huh, I think I'm doing something this weekend. Why not? Like, I think that's a form of coming out too, right? To yourself. And I think, yeah, coming out is both like this thing that you do with other people, but also for yourself. You have to come out to yourself first before you can step outside and talk to other people about it too. Or it happens in conversation with somebody. I think a lot is discovered about yourself or each other as you're in conversation. And so I try and think of it like that. And I also don't, to the question of is this something that everybody would have to do at some point in their life, I think, yes, it is. Whether you call it coming out or not, I think coming out is just another way of saying that you are looking yourself in the mirror and truly seeing yourself. And it doesn't have to be about gender or sexuality. I think, for example, me choosing not to be pre-med, which may seem like a little deal to folks, but I think I really emphasized, I really wanted what I did in my career to be meaningful. And so it really was scary for me to be like, actually this pre-med dream that was kind of planted in my head from a young age that I also spoon fed to myself because I thought I was being a responsible older daughter, it wasn't actually like what I wanted. And so I think in many ways coming to terms with, no, I care about environmental science, environmental justice. I care about writing. I am an artist. That was such a big coming out for me. And it happened multiple times with my-- that conversation happened multiple times with myself and I had to go through that multiple times with myself for finally today to be in where I am. And then in addition to that, I had to explain and come out in that way to my parents and my friends, like it happened in multiple ways, but it had nothing or maybe it had everything to do with my queerness. So yeah, so it's definitely, I think a cyclical, seasonal kind of experience.

01:01:53 **SPEAKER_ms**

Oh my God, that's really beautiful. That coming out is like a cyclical, a seasonal experience. And I think a question that I was going to ask you later, but I feel like it just feels really appropriate right now from kind of hearing you speak about your experience and how you understand queerness, like it definitely is so much more expansive than just gender and sexuality. So I would love to hear more about like how you understand queerness, how you define queerness and what it means for you to be a part of the LGBTQIA+ community?

01:02:36 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

When I think of--obviously rainbows are our thing, but I think truly, when I used to meditate, I used to imagine picturing white, pure light, coming from a third eye or whatever. But recently I've been trying to imagine more of like a rainbow light. And I've never had to really articulate this, but again, I work with a lot of plants and stuff. And so I think the concept I'm really bringing, I'm really thinking of, when I think of queerness is biodiversity or just diversity. And I hate the word diversity. I feel like it's so overused, but rainbows and just like biodiversity in its fullest, truest forms. There are many farms in the valley. A lot of the larger acreage farms are like monocrops, like almonds. There are a lot of small 40 to 50 acre farms here, and they are really biodiverse. So a lot of them have anywhere from 40 to 60 different types of vegetables. So just stepping onto that after you've been either driving down the 99 for like two hours or just staring at track tomes while you're driving through the city or the town, it is so refreshing and invigorating to see. And so, and we can bring, I think that's like what queerness is. Like it's really just, and what the LGBTQ+ community represents, it's really just this flourishing in its most vibrant form, no matter what space you are in. And I think I've struggled to be in LGBTQ+ communities in the past, and maybe that's why I had more one-on-one relationships with folks I was comfortable talking about.

01:05:19 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

But as I'm thinking more about like Sikhi and queerness, I feel more excited to enter these communities because I think I'm bringing, because I guess maybe I didn't want to be part of the community just because I was like bi or like, I wanted the fact that I was brown to be part of why I was there. And I think now that I'm exploring these two identities of myself, in addition to my other passions and things that define me, I feel like I'm able to like bring, I don't know, like my little garden to this larger garden or something. So yeah, I think I'm definitely still finding my place in the queer community, but that's kind of the vision that I want to bring. And I think the vision that I think is so powerful that the queer community really just hopefully will spread.

01:06:31 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that. And that was so beautiful to hear about how your journey with queerness, like you've come into it, like also through coming into a relationship with the land and how much the land has also taught you. It's so beautiful to hear that. And I know in our pre-interview, we also talked about how transformative your experience was when you went to go study abroad. So I would love to like hear a little bit more about that, especially in terms of like where you went, like how that experience was, especially as it pertains to you coming out and coming into both like your queerness and your relationship with Sikhi. And I think, I would love to also hear your relationship with the land, which it seems that also like there was a shift there from like the pre-med route to kind of where you're at right now. So maybe how that experience, studying abroad and kind of leaving the US, entirely shaped your relationship to each of those identities.

01:07:43 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

My relationship to the land was not changed much when I studied abroad. So I'll get to that in kind of the second part. But in terms of really like opening up my career identity, when I studied abroad in the UK, I stayed in a town called Brighton, which is in the southern, kind of the southern part of the UK. And I didn't know it, I was there to fulfill like my physics requirement. And I thought it was a cool opportunity to study abroad over the summer and explore a new spot. So I was there for about two months, so not super long, like some people go for a whole semester. And I didn't know this until I got there, but Brighton's like the LGBTQ+ capital of the UK. And so, you know, I was there in the summer, like three or four weeks in was pride. And I feel like, yeah, it was mostly through some of the close friendships I made there that I was able to go to my first gay bar, go clubbing for the very first time. And it was a gay club. And I still have to this day, never been in a straight club and never intend to go to a straight club. So yeah, we had some great memories there. I think I just like let loose a bit in a way that felt safe for me, because I feel like I'm a very cautious person in a lot of ways. And so it's sometimes hard for me to just like let loose and have fun. And so I think having some close friends there was--yeah, really meant a lot for me to be able to do that. And just being by the beach and the water, I grew up just loving going to the beach. And I think we would, it was an abnormally warm, well now it's not abnormal, but at that point, it was like a normally warm summer. So it only rained like twice the time I was there. And so it was quite sunny. So we went swimming quite a number of times in the ocean. But apart from the nightlife, I would say just the experience of being in Brighton, it was the first time I truly felt on my own. So going to university within the same state that I grew up felt like a healthy distance between me and my family. But I still took the train back almost every month, which is looking back, quite often. And I still felt tethered to my family. And so I feel like when I went to the UK, I felt fully on my own and I had never traveled on my own before. So in many ways, it was first, a lot of new first experiences. And the atmosphere of the university I was studying in was probably 15,

20 minutes away from the main boardwalk, the Brighton boardwalk. And so it was a very quiet atmosphere. There wasn't a lot of bustling around like you hear in Berkeley. And because of that, I really just had to sit with myself and there were some really difficult moments during that study abroad, but really, it was just like a space and time for self-exploration, I think. So I feel like it was the start of many things that happened there that I had the space to do. So I really appreciate that time. So yeah, that was kind of my study abroad experience.

01:12:00 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

But in terms of my relationship to the land and really carving my path away from things that I was pursuing that didn't feel right to me, I think I was doing that from the moment I started at Berkeley. I knew I wanted to pursue English as soon as I took my first English class in high school. I love reading. I have always loved reading from a young age. And I think from middle school on, I had decided I was like, I'm going to be a writer. And then in high school, I got really into the legendary pop singer, Lorde, mainly just because of her songwriting. And that actually inspired me to start writing poetry. So I knew deep down what I really wanted, but it was a matter of coming out to my family and to myself that like, yes, this is what you want. So I did that indirectly by taking a bunch of English classes alongside all my annoying pre-med requirements. And then eventually, I'm glad I stuck with biology as a degree just because I got interested in environmental science and food systems. And I think there is such value in learning both STEM and the humanities. And to this day, I can't really see myself untangling and like choosing one or the other, like they are both a part of me. But yeah, so towards the end of college, I was applying to jobs. I knew I wanted to work in food systems. And this opportunity opened up in the Valley, and it was a really cool opportunity. But I was very nervous about potentially having to move back to the Central Valley, this place where I just wanted to run away from for as long as I could remember. And now I feel lots of feelings of sorrow for that person that wanted to run away. Not because she was--I guess I have a lot of sorrow for the circumstances or the environment that she was in. But I guess I have a lot of sorrow for the circumstances or like the environment that led to myself thinking that way. Like, what would have happened if I had learned about the history of the Central Valley growing up? What would have happened if I had gone to local art shows in the area and saw local artists growing up? How would my perspective have changed on my hometown if I had access to more of those things? Because returning to the Central Valley has been one of the most-- again, it's going to be super cheesy-- but one of the most transformative experiences in my life. A lot of people look down on the Valley and it is a shame because often people think it's a place people drive through or it's a place where people move to because they can't afford to live in a big city. And it's a place with bad air quality. There are a lot of negative connotations that come with the Central Valley that I think do a disservice to people visiting this place, from people wanting to visit this place and do a disservice to people who live and have lived here in this place. And I think those notions of the Central Valley really don't serve this place now because, for example, Fresno is, I think, the fourth largest city in the entire California. It looks very different landscape wise in San Francisco or to an extent Los Angeles. So it looks very different. And when you're in Fresno, you don't really feel like you're part of a very urban space. But if you zoom out, it's urban. Like there's over two million people who live here and we got hella traffic. It's it's definitely urban. And so I think the Valley has changed a lot from what it used to be. It used to be when indigenous communities lived here, it was a riparian ecosystem with rivers streaming down from the Sierras and trees running along rivers. And annually, this area would flood and so indigenous communities would move up into the mountains. So it's a place of a lot of natural beauty, which now if you visit, you're like, wait, what? You can see the Sierras on a clear day, which are gorgeous, because they're full of snow right now. But what it's become is so different from what it used to be. And I think what it's going to become is so different from what it is now in some ways. But anyway, I think moving back here, going back to that was that was, looking at it, a coming out. I think now that I'm thinking of it, it was looking at this place that I grew up in, but wanted nothing to do with because I didn't see myself reflected in it. But now that I'm learning the history, and I'm learning the history of the land, I'm engaging with farmers who tend to the land and just engaging with interacting with all the plants that grow here, that are native to here, plantings. Yeah, I haven't really done much fieldwork earlier in my life for like, you know, I did maybe gardening here and there. But we planted like all these native plants last fall-- last fall, not this past fall, but the fall before. And this fall of 2022. It was just so heartwarming to see those plants grow up and then we planted another row. And so it's a place that's really--I found community and a lot of friends here. And that I have come to, as it exists right now, it is, there are pockets that I really love. But as the grand area, I still struggle with a lot of the aspects of the valley. They are monoculture and the strongest sense of the word from agriculture to homes to transportation, like all of those ways. But also there is such incredible biodiversity, not just from the plants, but also there's so many immigrant communities here. You've got like Armenian immigrants, Southeast Asian, like Hmong, Lao, Thai communities. You've got the Punjabi communities, Latinx communities, African American. There is just such vibrance here. And it is really a landing spot for so many communities. Yet, I think we have so much work to do to like really make it feel like we can see each other, because I think all our communities are in like different corners, just by the way the landscape exists. So anyway, I think I'm so glad I

came back and so glad this is a place where my journey and planting started. Because I think this place is gonna carry carry itself with me wherever I go.

01:20:49 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that. And I guess I was tearing up because it made me think about Guru Nanak Sahib's Udasis, their journeys. And I was just like, you know, you had to leave and then you coming back in, and how important that entire journey has been. Like it's all you've been on your own Udasis. And that was in order to come back to Central Valley with a newfound relationship after having gone through all those Udasis and then coming back home. So it was just like very beautiful. Thank you for sharing that and sharing your own Udasi. I'm also like curious, in terms of, it's so beautiful to witness your very deep relationship with the land. And I really wonder how much has Sikhi been a part of that? And has Sikhi informed your relationship with the land?

01:21:53 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, firstly, what you just said was very beautiful. I have never thought of my journeys as an Udasi. And I love the idea that we are all on our own journeys of wandering, whether it's physically moving across space, or just in your own brains, or, you know, emotions, like working through your emotions. Sorry, what was the question?

01:22:30 **SPEAKER_ms**

The question was, it's so beautiful to hear about your deep relationship with the land. And I'm really curious, if especially in terms of we understand--prabh talks about how Sikhi is an indigenous tradition, even if Sikhs themselves are not indigenous. The practioners of Sikhi are not all indigenous, but Sikhi itself is an indigenous faith. So I'm really curious if Sikhi has informed your relationship to the land or shaped your relationship to the land.

01:23:01 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah. I really like this question, because, like you said, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, like a lot of--he was a farmer at one stage in his life. And we all, I think, as Sikhs, and especially like Punjabi Sikhs probably know somebody who either is a farmer or has a garden. And we, I think it's just a matter of reconnecting with that. But yeah, Sikhi is so deeply intertwined with the land and what we can learn from the land. I really want to study parts of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji and understand a bit more of the poetry, but I know there is so much reference to nature and the cycles of whether it's seasonality, or even just the sun or the natural cycles that we experience on earth. There's a lot of reference to that, even just like celestial bodies and things like that. And so I think, I wasn't thinking super intentionally about the practice of Sikhi as I go about my day, like being outside or, you know, engaging with land, but I think upon reflection, I think the lessons I learn from the land are the same types, if not same lessons you learn from engaging with Guru Granth Sahib Ji. You can learn by reading, listening, you can also learn by planting, being outside. I think they are all similar lessons. And so in that way, you don't have to be like, oh, this is like a Sikh practice. Just being outside, I think, is a form of Sikhi, if you believe it to be so or not. And so I think there is a queerness to Sikhi in that way. And there is a Sikhi to queerness.

01:26:10 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

And I think the other thing I wanted to mention that I didn't mention before was my grandparents I mentioned earlier in the interview, those are my paternal grandparents. And they mostly just garden now, just in the backyard. But they used to farm back when they were in Punjab. And our relatives still farm out there. Unfortunately, it's a lot of monocrop farming, so a lot of wheat and rice. And then on my mom's side, both of my grandparents also farmed. They came to the US a little bit earlier, they came in the 70s and spent many years doing a lot of hard laborious work to establish themselves in the US, especially in food factories and meatpacking plants. And they have a lot of challenging stories that they've shared over the years. But eventually they were able to purchase a parcel of land in Delano, California. Which is, yeah--actually never asked them if they remember or heard like new people who marched with Cesar Chavez. I think they came a little bit after that. But--oh, they definitely came a little bit after that to Delano. But they came to the US a little bit after that time. But yeah, Delano, small little town. And they had a raisin farm for many years. My grandpa, he was definitely more just like a businessman. And so but my grandma, and my great grandma, my grandpa's mom, they loved until my great grandma passed, but she used to love just growing things like next to the vineyards and stuff. And she had these rose bushes. And my mom actually took little cuttings of them and now has those

rose bushes growing in front of her house. But anyway, I think there is like this sense of intergenerational tending to the land that I have, I feel so lucky to have experienced in my life. And so growing up, I would go to Delano to visit my nana and I don't really think much of it. I was like, Oh, cool. We're gonna like go eat some grapes. And there was this one road that led to their trailer home. And it was this road had so many potholes, like we would be in the minivan, holding on for dear life. Just like, when will this end? And like, finally, we would reach their trailer house. So I have a lot of good memories of that farm. But it was never like, "Oh, yeah, I'm gonna --you should go into ag." It was never like that. It was more just like, they really cared about it and wanted to do it and had worked so hard to be able to farm here. And we just, you know, loved visiting and I'm so glad that I had those experiences now that I've somehow come to a similar spot in a similar, very close space to where they farmed. Because I think we're able to look back and learn a lot of those lessons. And so I guess maybe I'm trying to connect the sort of deep intergenerational knowledge or just experiences that I've had. I think that is also similar to Sikhi in that like, Sikhi has been passed down for many generations. And each of our relationship to Sikhi has so much to do with the household we were raised in and the relationships that we have formed to come to have learned Sikhi as we know it. So in that way, I think for me, Sikhi is very like indirectly, but also directly related to the land.

01:30:42 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing that. And I really loved like what you said about Sikhi and queerness being so close to each other. And the next question I have for you is kind of actually along that because often Sikhi and queerness are seen as contradictory to each other. So what has been your journey of reconciling those "contradictions" if you see any or at least the way that the world puts them as being in contradiction and being against each?

01:31:22 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah. This is something I'm still definitely working around and with. I don't think I really put Sikhi in conversation with my queerness until probably this past year. So it's definitely something I'm still working on and stuff. But I think it kind of comes down to, I think you could even just look at any religion itself. It comes down to the perception of that religion versus the actual experience of practicing that religion. And so I think in many ways, institutionalized religion has a long history of being homophobic and actively harmful against queer folks. And so in that way, I think it's really easy for any institution, institutionalized religion to uphold those sort of status quos because they are operating a religion. I don't know, like they're trying to, even though Sikhi doesn't actively try and spread, whereas like sometimes Christians, you see them spreading the word, and blah, blah, blah. But even though that's not really the case, and one of the tenants is like, "yeah, believe what you want to believe," you see I think a lot of spaces, and Gurdwara spaces, upholding these really mainstream identities. And I don't really know what to do with that. But I think it's important. I think Sikhi and any religion can mean something very different for somebody on a personal level than it does at a large community level. And so I think recently I've been leaning and for a few years now, I've been leaning into that sort of personal relationship with Sikhi. And now I feel like I'm stepping out and starting to question the space, like the community space that Sikhi takes up. And how can we be more intentional about like truly upholding the tenants of equality and inclusivity and social justice within our community at large. So I don't really have a clear answer. I'm definitely still working through that. And I think with a lot of cool folks too.

01:34:39 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for that. And I was just pulling up like the last questions that I have for you. But before we move to that last question that I really want to close with, is there anything else that you really want to archive as a part of this oral history? Any moments in your life? Anything that you haven't gotten a chance to say? Anything that I haven't asked that you would really want to include as a part of this oral history archive? If not, I can also move to the next question. And then if anything comes to your mind.

01:35:41 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, yeah. Okay. That, that sounds great. Nothing is really coming to mind. I think I'm just interested in, I feel like there's so much history that my grandparents, especially my paternal grandparents engage--Sikh history that my paternal grandparents engage with kind of on a daily basis. For example, like they listen to some Granthi from Amritsar, just on the TV at like three o'clock every afternoon. And he is actually narrating the life story of Guru Nanak Devji. And my grandma loves it. And she tries to recount them to me as well. And I think I'm really just thinking about how, and honestly, some of it just doesn't really resonate sometimes. Like, I am more

interested in the principles of Sikhi and how powerful they are. I think we should definitely honor the Gurus that carried that legacy down. And I think that history is important. So I guess I sometimes struggle idealizing or what do you call it? Like putting these Gurus up on a pedestal versus at the same time trying to learn the history. I sometimes struggle with that because we do sometimes in our community put these Gurus on a pedestal. And what is, how does that maybe stop us from practicing queerness within our Sikh community? How can we teach our history in a more queer way, how can we apply a lens of queerness or equality to how we share the stories and remember the stories of Sikhi as it was passed down? So I've been thinking about that a lot. And at the same time, I'm thinking, what about queer Sikh history? queer Sikh history? Where is that? I really hope this project highlights voices from older generations. But I'm really--I have no image or conception of what that looks like. Or I have a very small image or conception of what it looks like. But my hope is that it's a very expansive vision of queer Sikh history. So that's what I'll add.

01:38:55 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for adding that. And that actually is a very beautiful segue into the last questions that I have for you, which are to shift into thinking about umeedans and hopes that you kind of started to touch on. And I would love to hear, what are some hopes and aspirations some umeedan that you have for yourself, or for the different communities that you identify with? And I'll drop those questions also in the chat.

01:39:18 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Lately, I've been thinking a lot about climate change on my mind. No, it's um, just a lot of--I've seen up front, the impacts of a lot of these climate disasters recently. And I think we are all going through a lot these days, whether it's like you're--like everybody I feel is being impacted--most everybody unless you are somewhere way at the top-- is being impacted by some sort of catastrophe. And I have really been thinking about how we can promote these values of Sikhi and queerness, that when we paint them on a wall, or speak them out loud, feel very beautiful and easy--as they should to say or see. But then when it comes to, and often when we imagine these futures or possibilities of queer Sikhi, or queerness and Sikhi, I feel like people have yet to fully vision queer Sikhi. But when we think of queerness and Sikhi, and we are have the space to imagine, we are often in a safe space, and we're often in a mindset that enables us to imagine. And when we are being bombarded with and trying to grapple with and process catastrophe, it leaves very little space for the imagination, and to even see that picture that maybe we have painted for ourselves and each other, and to actually practice that. But my hope is we create networks and communities for queer Sikhs, for queer folks, for queer brown and black folks, like just all of the communities and identities that have been repeatedly, repeatedly, repeatedly oppressed and harmed in the past, for us to coexist in all of our identities, and not just be in that space when we're feeling good, but really create communities that like allow us to process these catastrophes, allows us to lean on each other, allows us to cry through sadness, and from laughing a lot. I think as the world moves forward, we are going to have to carry this pain with hopefully a lot of happiness and hope and lightness. And that's just a reality. And so I want queerness and Sikhi to give us the strength and the hold that vision that we can actually use both of these things. It's like a duality, right? You have to be able to carry both. And being able to carry both is our strength. So that's not super specific, but that's the type of, I think, mindset that we're gonna, a lot of us are gonna be in, and I want us to have the capacity to be there for each other, through thick and thin.

01:44:04 **SPEAKER_ms**

Thank you so much for sharing those very beautiful umeedan with me and for all the listeners who will be listening to this actually as well. And actually, I lied earlier when I said that was the last questions because I have one last one, which is what hopes, what do you hope comes out of sharing your life history with us?

01:44:28 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Well, firstly, this was a really awesome experience for myself to reflect and share with another human. Thank you for listening and asking questions. It was a great experience just for myself to reflect. And so I am really curious how these sort of--this conversation we've had today and reflections, what kind of emotions and memories arise later, whether it's as we end today, later today, or just even two weeks from now. And I think upon this conversation, what will arise? I think that's really powerful. And I really hope the final form of this archive and many forms that it'll continue to have in the future, is part of creating that space of honoring and making space for resilience, but also creating that rainbow light of, "yeah, we're here, we're a safe space. Queer Sikhs exists, and we are alive and living so many like different vibrant lives." And hopefully it's just comforting and creative to engage with. So I really hope that. And I hope it brings more Queer Sikhs out of the woodwork

because I know we out there.

01:46:14 **SPEAKER_ms**

Absolutely. Thank you so, so much for sitting down and for all your time. And it was truly such an honor to just share space and witness your Udasis, both your journeys as well as the sorrows, because the word udasi also sounds like the word udasi in the other context. And it really felt, at least for me-- made me think about Naam Simran, which oftentimes is interpreted in a very brahminical context where it's just chanting, but Guru Sahib was against chanting mindlessly, right. Like, but instead, Guru Sahib talked about Naam Simran as remembrance of Vaheguru all the time. And I really felt as if us sitting down, and me hearing your story, like we were remembering Vaheguru. We were like crying our pains, for Vaheguru. And it was truly for me, like a meditation to just sit down and witness your story. So I'm really thankful that I got to truly sit in Sangat with you and do Naam Simran for the last two hours. So thank you so much for this time. I know I should be editing the recording, but would love to hear how you feel after these two hours too.

01:47:35 **SPEAKER_A.K.**

Yeah, we can maybe end the recording, but I don't know do you want to stay on for a little bit?

01:47:54 **SPEAKER_ms**

Oh, yeah. Okay, let me stop the recording now.