

Interview with Kina Kaur Part 2 of 2

00:00:02SPEAKER_MS

Welcome. This is manmit singh. Today is July 18th, 2023. I am interviewing for the second time, Kina. This interview is taking place in Toronto in my temporary residence here. And this interview is sponsored by Jakara and is a part of the Storytelling and Unsettling through Sikh LGBTQIA+ Oral Histories Project. Thank you so much again, Kina, for being willing to sit down for a second round of interviews. It was so great getting to know you during the first interview session that we had. And thank you again for creating space to continue that conversation. So the first question that I have— picking up from where we left off is, in your experience, how straightforward or linear is the process of being out? Is it something that everyone would have to do at some point in their life?

00:01:08SPEAKER_KK

Wow, that is a great question. Thank you so much for creating this space that I've only ever embodied. And so to share it with others is probably one of the greatest privileges of my life. So I'm really grateful to see and to be seen. As far as the question, would you mind putting it in the chat again?

00:01:36SPEAKER_MS

100%, I will drop it into the chat. So in your experience, how straightforward or linear is the experience of being out or coming out? Is it something that everyone you think would have to do at some point in their life?

00:01:54SPEAKER_KK

I appreciate the straightforward comment because it feels like a pun, but it is not straightforward. It's probably one of the most abstract things in my life, in lives, I feel. Being out and coming out I feel are a bit different. I've kind of learned— or my evolution around the term coming out has evolved to letting in, because coming out sounds like I'm revealing something that I've kept secretive and it has this power imbalance that gives too much power to the other party. Whereas letting in is something that is self empowerment, it is something that I choose to disclose. It's something that I'm letting you in on my life because I feel like I will let you get to know me in a certain way. When I was younger though, and I first quote-unquote came out, It was terrifying. I had put off coming out. And when I say coming out, I mean like telling my parents, actually telling my siblings, anyone in my family, anyone who had known me before sexuality was really a thing that I could express from childhood to adulthood. Growing up, I was always a tomboy. That's what everyone labeled me as. And, you know, I feel like the identities that I embody and reveal to others are completely personal, but they're also circumstantial. So if I'm with a partner, I will say I'm trans, non-binary, gender fluid, gender queer, Panjabi, and I express my sexuality as non-monosexual. But if I'm talking to someone I have kind of a rocky relationship with or someone that I don't really know, but we're kind of sharing stuff, I'll just be like, "Oh, I'm a lesbian." And it happens all the time. I have to reveal this stuff all the time. And I think I try and offset it by dressing a certain way and having my hair a certain way and speaking out for queer issues and basically any left leaning issues to let people know where I stand and what will not be allowed in my presence. I will not allow slander about certain— I won't allow slander, really, especially for marginalized, disenfranchised, oppressed communities in my presence. And I feel like that aligns a lot with queerness and that part of being-outness of myself that I also surround myself with. Yeah, it is not linear at all because people will assume so many things about my gender and I've come to learn that that really shows where they're coming from and their perception of things. And what other people think of me is not my problem. It's not for me to heed or really care about. I have to mind it and I have to respect it for my own safety because some people will still come at me with a deference when they find out that—non-binary, trans, anytime I open up about pronouns, revealing my pronouns to someone, which are they, them, automatically creates this "huh" in their eyes if they are not queer themselves. And it's really frustrating. And then I prefer if they just didn't ask questions about it and they just went with it. And then when I feel comfortable talking about it, then questions can ensue. But just sharing my pronouns is something that— it can feel like such a battle with new people and it can, I don't know, it can be a threat to myself as well. Like I understand the context of me being queer in certain spaces isn't necessarily allowed.

00:06:33SPEAKER_KK

And yeah, it's— what's another—? Another way though that I appreciate it is that it's not linear, is that whenever I do reveal my gender expansiveness to other people or my queerness to other people, they question gender. And

that is something that I appreciate being able to have that conversation. They don't need to have it with me. They don't need to come with me with some ignorance or bigotry. But if they just question it and it causes them to look inside themselves, and some people have never taken the time to actually look inside and be like, "Who am I? What do I value? What do I embody?" And if it gives that opportunity, I'm really, really grateful for it. And if they come at me with respect and they're like, "Hey, what does that mean?" I'll be like, "Okay, cool, let's figure this— we can figure this out together." I won't use myself as an example. We can talk about it in larger spaces as communities or systems. But yeah, I feel like I'm constantly letting people in or challenging people's personal biases just by existing. And that can be met with a lot of love and power and liberation and it can also be met with a lot of violence and judgment and excommunication. So it's a constant vigilance that I have to— or not have to— but I understand is part of my path to live this way in these societies, in these identities that I embody.

00:08:37**SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you so much. And also I do apologize. Housekeeping had just knocked on the door. So I was just like, "Please, I'm okay."

00:08:44**SPEAKER_KK**

Yeah, no. Oh, there's a second question. Is this something that everyone would have to do at some point in their life? I do believe that there is a metaphorical closet for everyone. Like, it can just be a secret that you are terrified that-- it could also be joy. It could also be joyful to have this secret and be like, when do I get to share this? But it can be something just big that you're letting the people in your life know about. Like, for example, my mom, she had the horrible experience of having to reveal to us when she had cancer. And so she like called a family meeting and my family isn't necessarily one that is together in that way. We question those type of things because it's rare when all five of us are together for a lot of different reasons. So when my mom is like, "hey, I want all of us around," we're like, "There's something up, there's something wrong." That's where our minds all go to. And she sat us down and she told all of us. She actually couldn't even say the words. We kind of sussed it out. And so for me, witnessing that, I was like--that was her coming out about something deeply personal about herself. She was also shifting an identity. She was now going to go on disability. She was now, you know, a person that had another identity upon her to reveal to us. And I feel like that happens a lot. Like it could be telling your spouse that you got fired. You know, it could be revealing that you have cancer. It could be letting a spouse know that you're trans, you know, that you've revealed this about yourself. So I feel like at some point, we all come out about something about ourselves to each other, but I would like to shift it to letting in, because coming out— that gives too much power to the other party. It's not— and I'm not sacrificing my power for anybody else. Like, I can let you in about this, kind of thing. So yeah.

00:11:16**SPEAKER_MS**

Yeah, no, thank you so much for parsing out and just sharing. It seems like you've just sat so deeply also with the different facets of coming out and parsing those out, not just for your own self, but also for others and what it means to let other folks in and what that offers in their own lives, whether it's prompting them to self-reflect and self-interrogate. So I thank you so much for sharing that for folks. And kind of shifting from that actually a little bit too. I would love to hear a little bit more about how you think of yourself, especially since that's something that you've kind of started to touch on as well. So to you, I would really love to hear about what your relationship with the Sikh community, the Sangat and the larger Sikh Qaum has been, and I can drop that in the chat as well.

00:12:24**SPEAKER_KK**

What is my relationship? When I find others that also identify as Sikh or like part of the community of Sikhi, I feel joy, I do. Because I'm just like, oh there you are. Like our families, our familial histories intersect. And, you know, I grew up not knowing anybody past my daadaa-daadi, naanaa-naani's [*paternal and maternal grandparents*] family line. I don't know my ancestry. And that has a huge aspect, I mean, that is tied to partition and genocide and, you know, just colonization and imperialization that has just, which has torn apart our community so much. So when I see someone out here in the States, a part of that community, I'm like, there's something here. Like we have something together, you know? But when I was a kid, it used to be community, it used to be predominantly for me, my relationship with Seyva was understanding— with Sikhism, was understanding Seyva and participating within that ritual of being able to make food and provide Langar. That was kind of my understanding of Sikhi. And it was the one that I was the most familiar with and the one that made the most sense to me from what I value. Also because Hindi and Panjabi were not taught to me explicitly

so I can understand it, but speaking it is really difficult, so when you have that disconnect with the language, it's usually like, at least for me, behavior participation to kind of feel a part of the culture. So for me, it's cooking the food, and it's providing service to those who don't have the means to help themselves. And so I feel calm and peaceful when I hear, you know, prayers and Sangat and sitting there and I can listen to it and be reminded of like, look within, take deep breaths. It's very meditative. And so I'm extremely grateful for the introspection that Sikhism and being a part of the community has taught me, because it has also helped me reflect on where I stand in society and where others stand in society, and our positionality in terms of how can we be there for each other? How can we fill in these gaps? If I'm giving 20%, can you give 20% and we find other people to give 40%? Or the rest of the math on that— another 20%.

00:15:29**SPEAKER_KK**

But growing older though, I have learned that the ideal abolitionist, powerful warrior narratives that I was taught as a kid is not how it's practically applied. So as an anti-caste religion that tried to absolve those Brahminical power dynamics and understanding that it— it is such a powerful hierarchical system that it has seeped into something that was originally to abolish it, I'm skeptical and I'm a bit more vigilant, especially coming from a place of privilege. I want to ensure that it is an inclusive space for Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi, Valmiki folk. But also coming from a place of privilege, I don't wanna be like, "Well, what's your caste?" You know, like I don't wanna be asking these questions. I want it to be, and not in a colorblind racist way, I want to respect where we are all coming from. I want to approach it equitably. And so I'm a bit more vigilant now. So now when I meet someone who identifies as Sikh, Panjabi, following Sikhi, those type of things, I'm like, "Okay, that's great and I love it and I want to hear more about it, but are you about like hash-tag Jatt-Life?" Because if that's the case, I want to talk to you about that because I would like you to engage in the introspection that our Gurus did, the ones that were like, we are all equal. Like we need to not have caste denote the value of a human being. Like we're humans, we need to love. And you know, my parents raised me with the, "All people are equal" type thing, you know, but that's a much easier lesson to teach when you are of a privileged identity. And it wasn't until, you know, I reached my 30s that I began unlearning all these things. Yeah, so at first it was just like, "Oh my God, we're in community together." Like I have someone else that I can relate to. I'm not just surrounded by white people and Hindu people and Gujarati people and all these different identities. Like this is a very specific subset of community that is one of the largest religions in the world. And yet in California, I am starting to find it's all so much privilege in so many different ways. And I want to work in community to dissolve some of those historical differences so that we can get back to, or move forward with us being equal or equitable in the future. So I'm a bit more vigilant about it now. Before it was a bit naive and had the rose colored glasses on. But now— and then, you know, it's funny because when I visit family in India or in Panjab, I don't feel— I feel too American to be included. And then when I'm out here, I feel almost too queer to feel fully recognized in Sikhi. And so it's this balance where I really want to feel that kind of intimacy and connection with other people of my likeness and feel that joy, that ancestral joy that can course through all of us. But it's hard. It's like I'm too American for Panjab and I'm too Panjabi to be American and I'm too queer to be part of Sikhi fully. So it's, it has led to, like I said, a lot of introspection and understanding myself and knowing my value so that when I get challenged externally, I can be like, "No..I mean, while that has merit for you, I know me, and I embody this in the way that I live in my intersection. And whether it's enough or not is not up to you to define, it's up to me on a personal note." And that's why finding other people who live at these intersections is just something that I treasure and value so much because I don't have to explain that to people of my likeness in that way, for which I am eternally grateful.

00:20:44**SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you so much for sharing that and I really hear you on how— I guess if someone disclosing, for example, that they are a Sikh, like now, it's like, "What does that even mean?" And it's just been so complicated. There's just so many layers because of how different folks practice that and uphold that and weaponize that even in different ways which kind of guides us actually to the next question of how would you define a Sikh and what are your thoughts on people being able to self-identify as a Sikh? What does it mean to be a Sikh? And I can drop that into the chat.

00:21:22**SPEAKER_KK**

How would I define a Sikh? Wow. I feel like originally being Sikh or following Sikhi was just religious. Like I understood it as a religion. As I've grown up and listened to and participated fully in that religion, going to Gurdwara, going to the Gurdwara camps, going to anything— because my parents, they came from Delhi and Mumbai, and originally my family hails from north of the India-Pakistan border. They tried so hard to find

community out here because they were all alone and they didn't have technology to connect with their family back home the way that we do now, which I think makes a big difference. So for them it was like, get my kids involved in Gurdwara, in Sikhism, find that because we'll find each other. And as I've grown up I feel like it's also a culture that practices or tries to embody the philosophies of the teachings of the Gurus. So I believe that if you are aware of those tenets and lessons and you are like— I self identify as Sikh, I do, but I don't necessarily go to Gurdwara anymore, you know, but I do try and practice and embody the lessons taught by the Gurus and I wear my karha. And currently to me, being a part of Sikhi is working on caste abolition in California. I mean it has expanded to like Seattle and, you know, all those things that I've been trying to participate in. So for me, that's what being a Sikh is for my age, for me at this point in my life. For some people, I think self-identification is really important because we all have our own ways of expressing it. Like some people will grow out their Kesh, some people will go to Gurdwara every week, some people will do Seyva, some people will teach Panjabi courses, you know. People have their own way, some people go into teaching because they're like, this is the most noble thing I can do. Some people just go into nonprofit work and those types of things. So I think because we are so far from the origins of Sikhism— or not so far, but we are far enough that the modern world doesn't look like how it did when Sikhism came into origin, that there are ways to follow Sikhi that you can identify as that and it'd be true. It'd be authentic and be an identity of yourself, without it looking like how everybody else wants to define it. So I see it as cultural, also as religious, and I see it as spiritual too, but in terms of behavioral practice, there's so many ways that one can be Sikh, can practice Sikhi.

00:25:30SPEAKER_MS

Thank you so much for that very beautiful response. And I'm also kind of just sitting with what you named about the work to be Guru-like or follow in their steps, even politically, in terms of the work of, for example, caste abolition. Such a commitment, being one that is also the foundation of Sikhi. So how different even in the ways that Sikhi ends up showing up in our very politics in how we practice our politics. But kind of shifting to a tangent question, what does it mean to be part of the LGBTQIA+ community, and do you think that it's a single community or a set of communities?

00:26:13SPEAKER_KK

Interesting. I feel like the LGBTQIA+ community-- to identify as one of the alphabet letters in terms of queerness—. Is it one community or multiple set of communities? I think that identifying as, when I say queer, what I am referring to is an umbrella term of that includes the LGBTQIA+ communities. So when I say that, as I'm speaking, that's what I'm referring to. I think that that is the thread that holds multiple communities together. I believe that it is probably the most diverse community of people. But I do believe that it is a set of communities. I believe that because we all live at different intersections of our identities, that subset of community is still under the long thread of— *if* you identify as queer within it. I believe that the queer and trans Sikhi community is a community that falls in both queer and Sikhi. And it is different than someone who is in the queer and Black community and the queer and Latine community. But we all— like the Venn diagram of it all is the thread of queerness. So it's kind of hard to say, is it a single community or a set of communities? I kind of see it as like this giant web where we get to celebrate our differences and stand in those differences, but we can honor where we are all located while still being in community with one another, because we have very similar battles. We have very similar joys. We have our own culture as queer people, but it is very, very important to understand the intersection of religion, race, caste position, disability or ability, class, just so many different locations. But I do believe that there is a common thread between all of them if you are part of the queer community, you identify that way. To be a part of it— I actually feel liberated when I talk about my queerness. I feel like before I was living in such a limited existence and now because I have this curiosity, I have this questioning in myself. Like I question the status quo of things. Like queerness describes those who exist outside of what society mandates. Like it's a fitting term. Like it defies all restrictions of love, of self that the world has placed on ourselves. And it's so beautiful and it's so powerful. And yes, it comes with a lot of sadness and a lot of heartbreak, but that's because of the systems that the world has tried to impose on us, that colonization has tried to kill out of our communities. And yet here we are, it's resilience, you know, to be a part of it. And, you know, I know that queer used to be a pejorative term and it still is for a lot of people, but I also think that there's a lot of power in reclaiming things that used to be slurs if you're a part of that community and ascribing it to yourself, if you feel so inclined. But what I love about queerness is that there is a lot of choice in terms of how you express yourself. And it's expression that is aligned with your values, with your love. And it comes from a place of love, hopefully, with my best intentions. So I guess that's how I would embody it, like a beautiful web where we get to celebrate and honor our differences, but still be in community with the another and see each other and celebrate what we see and experience.

00:31:26SPEAKER_MS

Thank you so much for that very beautiful analogy as well, that kind of makes space for both the sharedness, but also the difference as well and holding space for that— which kind of actually resonated a lot with what earlier when you were even thinking about, or sharing about Sikhi and understandings of Sikhi and the Sikh community and the differences that also exist in the heterogeneous community that is a Sikh community. So I would love to hear about what influences your relationship to Sikhi slash like being a Sikh. And do you think there are factors that influence your relationship to Sikhi and being a Sikh? How would you describe your experiences with maintaining a relationship with Sikhi as somebody who is queer, trans. So kind of thinking about, I guess, how you've been able to sit with both the queerness and the Sikhi together and how that process has been for you.

00:32:35SPEAKER_KK

I feel like I have such a different— not different— I have such a privileged perspective on this, in certain ways, because I grew up in California. So for me, my queerness, it has come with a lot. It has come with a lot. And within my family, it's been quite a journey in terms of it, we've finally gotten to a point where I'm able to bring my partner around and our relationship is respected. Sometimes we're still referred to as friends by family and stuff, but I know they know and they're doing their best. So I'm really, really grateful for that. And my heart hurts so much for queer people that are— and this is coming from a sympathetic perspective and maybe empathetic but not pity in any way— I just know that in South Asia, in India, in Panjab, in Pakistan, like homosexuality, queerness, transness is still very much— I know it was decriminalized in India in 2018, but the social sanctions and judgments and pain and lack of love that so many of my queer family out there is experiences, my heart aches for that. So I feel like my answer to this is very much informed by my ability to know that, I live in the Bay Area. Like I can be with my partner. We can live together here, just us, without fear of, at least for now, knock on wood, but without fear of the police showing up at my door and taking me away, being fired from work, those type of things. That's not something that I face. So yeah, I just kind of want to put that out there as like, that is definitely informing the way that I experience this, which, because my experience of queerness and Sikhi is very different from someone who grew up in Panjab or in India or Pakistan or Bengal or Bangladesh, just all those places. Would you mind putting the rest of the question or like the question in the chat? It helps me to break it down.

00:35:26SPEAKER_MS

No worries at all. I ended up modifying it as I was speaking. So feel free to adapt it in the way that feels best for you. In thinking really about how queerness has shaped your relationship to Sikhi and how Sikhi has shaped your relationship to queerness and how the process has been of holding them both together.

00:36:00SPEAKER_KK

So I think that growing up and just knowing I was different from most of the people around me, first and foremost, I understood my difference as race and my race is very much tied to practicing Sikhi. It's very much tied to being a Sikh. Like telling people what I was, no one had any idea. I had to over-explain and I was a child. So I was just like, "It's like in India. It's over there. That's my people. Like we go to Gurdwaara" and eventually being like, "it's temple. We go on Sunday." Hearing my friends complain about going to church for an hour, and I was like, "Oh, well, Gurdwaara, I'm there for like six hours, like from the start of it. Like that is what we do on Sundays. That's what me and my community do on Sundays." So I understood difference in that way. And then as I grew older and I started feeling differently that now I, retrospectively, I understand to be Hansel and Gretel-ing queerness. Like there's little breadcrumbs in my life of— that's a flag, That's something there that, if you felt safe, you would have explored. But you didn't feel safe, so you didn't explore it until well into your adulthood.

00:37:46SPEAKER_KK

And then, you know, when I was 11 was when 9/11 happened. That was when the towers went down in New York. And it was after that that I became, I was only 11, right? So I'm very much young, like a child. That was when I learned so much about the real dangers that people in my community face because of the racism and bigotry that my family experienced in response to that. Like being publicly people saying slurs and just calling me dirty, I was called a monkey, like just all these different things that I faced once people found out that I was part of the community that wore turbans because for some reason, any community that wears a head wrap was now ascribed to Islamophobic terrorism rhetoric. Which is just so ignorant in so many ways and it makes me so

uncomfortable and it's so absurd to me because I'm just like, if you just took a minute to just think and learn a little, your fear might become love. It wouldn't be anger, it wouldn't be sadness, it would be understanding and compassion, but we don't live in that world and it's heartbreaking. And I grew up really focusing on how being a part of Sikhism and being a part of queerness means that my life is going to be difficult. My life is going to be made harder. It was very rare for people to point out the joys of it, the love of it, the beauty in it. And so it's been really hard for me to see those things, but I do a lot of work to try and hold space for that more than the fear that can come from it. So the world and the societies that— and the institutions that determine how I perform in this world, things that are out of my control, definitely influence my relationship to Sikhi. It factors into my relationship to Sikhi because for a lot of it, it became fear. I was very fearful of practicing it in certain ways because I was mocked for it, you know? And then when I would try and fully participate in Sikhi or in the Panjabi communities, it seemed all like competition. It was all like, "Well, my kids are going to Harvard and Yale and they're only 15." And, "My kids make six figures". "My kid is a doctor". "My kid is a lawyer". "Why can't you be more like these well-behaved kids that are also part of your community?" And it's like, "I don't know. I'm doing my best with what has been given to me." So for me, it was also— it also became jealousy. It became competition. It became this, "Oh, well I better perform the way that my parents say that I can perform in front of these other people in my community so that insecurity and jealousy doesn't reign." In fact, we want to be the— I don't know— the winners, the best, you know, held to these impossible expectations in a world that has denoted that difference means unequal. And so because you're unequal, you have opportunities taken away or you don't have opportunities given rather. And now that I have finally finished school and I am, you know, I'm working a minimum wage job right now and I've gone through so much pain trying to meet the expectations put on me from this very high-performing, high-earning community, I'm really just about making it my own and being like, I can be of a different class than others, even if they went to Wharton and I don't know, whatever other bougie school that probably has eugenicist history tied to it. But it's now in my own life, like after growing up with so much fear and jealousy and questioning, I really see it as now we see each other. Like what influences my relationship to Sikhi now is mainly community and also just integrity and vulnerability, being able to be vulnerable with people. And you know, describing my experience as maintaining a relationship with Sikh and queer communities, I've probably done that more since the pandemic than I ever had prior. Because before the pandemic, it was predominantly just queer people that I connected with. Queer people of all different backgrounds, but never Sikhi, never Panjabi, never Indian, never South Asian. Like it was so hard to find those people. And I never really sought that out because I was like, "that doesn't exist", which is such an ironic, horrible thing because I live it and I embody it. So it's like, of course that intersection exists because I am here and I am real. And so just to be in— now it's curiosity. Now it's like, I want to seek these people out. I want to go forward in my life and see what we can build together. What can we do with the land around us? What can we do for the farmers back in Panjab? Like what can we do, especially with the floods? How can we allocate funds to do the most good for as many people as possible and then hopefully dance along the way and be in community with each other. It really has evolved. I understand now that it's not all fear, you know, it's not all jealousy. It can be so much more in that. And I see that in my interpersonal relationships with people who fall at this intersection because I feel so seen, I feel so heard in a way that I have been told that I have made people feel before and provided spaces for them. And it's so beautiful to be able to take a deep breath and rest and know that I'm not being scrutinized. I can just be. And I will probably spend the rest of my life trying to— or trying to just be, and to be in community with others for me is the surest way and fastest way for me to feel that kind of peace. It is when I am at, when my soul is at its quietest, when it's at its most peaceful. And that is what I want for myself. That is inner child work. That is 12 year old me looking for someone to be like, "Hey, I see you, you're okay. We're gonna get through this together. Like you're not alone in this". And I'm experiencing that more now in my adulthood, now that I've been seeking it out. And the internet helps a lot with that, finding that community and figuring out where do you lie on certain experiences of your life? How do you participate in it? What actions do you take? So I think that's my relationship with Sikhi and queerness and the intersection of it has really evolved. It went from really, really big— it went from small and just like my personal experience of it to really, really big in terms of how the world made me feel about it and my classmates and stuff. And then now it's getting back to small, but informed and intentional.

00:47:30SPEAKER_MS

Thank you so much. Yeah, I was just kind of sitting with how, like that part of returning back to, after being out and then part of that process of like finding grounding again. So thank you for sharing that. And kind of alongside that actually, the second question, the next question I have is, what type of resources or support have you had to support that journey? And to help you navigate your experience? Do you think that being Sikh, for example, influence your decisions. For instance, those resources could include professional resources like seeking therapy or even spiritual resources like engaging in Gurbaani. And I'll drop that in the chat as well.

00:48:14SPEAKER_KK

Sure. What kind of resources? Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. So I actually didn't feel safe to explore anything outside of the norm until the internet. So when I was a kid, there wasn't the— I mean, there was the internet, but it was like dial up. I was born in the time of floppy disks and pre-internet computers and that kind of thing. And so before Facebook and all that kind of stuff. So I— what resources did I use or support did I use? When I was younger, I first really started becoming aware of— the way I felt was not what I would want kids to feel, what I think kids need to be feeling or even want to be feeling. And when I became aware of that kind of thing, I was like, I need help. And I told my parents when I was like 15 or 16— that's when I started therapy. And I was the only one in my family. I still— well, actually, actually—. Now in my 30s, some other people that I grew up with are finally going to it and I am eternally grateful for that. I know, I feel like I've said that I was eternally grateful so many times during this. But I was the only one who went to therapy And it was because I felt that terribly. Like I was like, "I need something to help me and I'm not getting it from the people around me." And I was raised in a bubble that was like, "No matter what you need, we are here for you". And then all of a sudden you tell them what you need them for, and they're like, "That's wrong and that's bad. Don't think those things, don't be those things. Change yourself to make me more comfortable". That has been like the mantra of the lessons being taught to me, but that was because that was what was taught to them. And I can understand it, but still know that it's not okay. And I can still be upset about that. And I am, it hurts, you know, just being taught to make yourself adjust to yourself to make others comfortable. And it's like, "No, you just need to get used to being uncomfortable because I'm going to be me". But I do think that being Sikh influenced my decisions to go to therapy because in the Sikhi community, at least the one I grew up in, it was very much like the, you don't need to tell your secrets to someone else, we don't need it, we can endure, you just have a day off, just push through it, just push through it. And I think it's such an intergenerational trauma of avoidance that I'm now not doing. But my parents, chaachaas, chaachees, bhoos [uncles and aunts], all had to endure because they had to survive. So it was this trauma-responsive avoidance. "I can't deal with that pain. I have to keep going. I have a family. We got to keep doing this." And now I'm in a position where those factors aren't my factors. And so where is all this pain and hurt coming from? It's from me not trying to avoid anymore. So trying to heal that— like the cycle breaker aspect of my existence. And it's hard. It's really hard. I have always been the disobedient, loudmouthed kid. And I have faced social sanctions my whole life because of it. And yet I continue to do it. So it's, I mean, I'm mindful of my own safety and things like that, but I am the person who brings up those things. And it's because, you know, I realized now that it's because I'm wanting more for myself. And I'm not accepting less. And they all had to accept less, and they're just confused. And so it's friction. It's friction. And so we're trying to work through it together. One thing that I am grateful for towards Sikhi is that meditation has always been, since I can remember, a part of my life. It has always been something that has been practiced. It's been something that was taught to me, trying to slow things down, take deep breaths. They say it's because of God, right? And godliness within us and connecting, you know? And for me, it's been a bit more about spirituality and energy and trying to quiet the chaos and find that calm that I want for myself and my people, my communities to have, so I can really focus on the things that are important to me. And I want it to come from a place of peace. I don't want it to come from urgency or fear. And so it's very interesting to be a part of community that's so about meditation and introspection and listening to paath [prayers] and being like— And I'm just like, well, what do you think's happening when you're listening to paath? You're meditating, you're listening, and it's very repetitive. So it's a mantra for you to just Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru in your head, and it's helping you center yourself and become calm. And also I believe it's synergistic. So it's also about connecting to all the spirits in the room and all the energy in the room and trying to collectively connect. At least that's my perception of it. But the way I have felt for a lot of my life, I've known, that's not enough for me. I do need more. So I tend to seek professional resources like therapy. But I also know that therapy centers whiteness and it centers the goal of ability to perform in this capitalistic world that I get so frustrated with. And I understand that a lot of the things that I have, that have been pathologized in terms of my experiences or whatever diagnoses that I have received in my life are appropriate responses to the way I exist in this world. So it's not enough just to have the white, the therapy that Western medicine prescribes. The spirituality of meditation and prayer and those types of things also have incalculable effects on me. And it's kind of finding a balance between both because I do believe that it's almost as if Western medicine, like that type of therapy has given me language to describe my experiences so that if I say, "Oh, this is what I am, this is what I have, this is how I experience things", people are like, "Oh, me too". And then we can be in community with each other, right? And then meditation and paath and godliness that I witness in Sikhi is like feeling. It's like energy. It's being able to just feel my way through the world. And I have a lot of air in my chart, so I need both. I need both, or I appreciate both. And I have found ways to remind myself, "Hey, if this isn't working for a while, let's go ahead and go another way". Like it's provided me with a lot of options that I'm grateful. And I'm kind of always a person who's willing to try. And so if Western medicine is like, "try this out", I'll be like, "Okay". And if meditation is like, "Try this out, try a little bit of yoga, try like these types of things", I will. Like, because so

much of the disquiet in my mind can be a bit channeled, organized, quieted by things like getting into my body. So like exercise, yoga even, sitting in a certain way and meditating, you know, those type of things. It encompasses a lot of what makes me feel whole. Yeah.

00:58:48SPEAKER_MS

Yeah. No, no. Thank you so much for sharing that and for sharing the resources that you found refuge in. And the next set of questions, actually, I think you've kind of already touched a lot on, but I can still kind of pose the question to see if there's anything that you would want to add. But this is particularly thinking about geography and settlement and where you've grown up, which if you were to think about the area that you live in now or have grown up in, to you, how did the place that you lived in affect how you think of yourself? Could you share how living in one place or many places has influenced your relationship to Sikhi and your relationship to your own queerness?

00:59:35SPEAKER_KK

Oh yeah, that's a good one. That's a good question. And yeah, I think I had said being in California, it's very different from growing up in Panjab, especially in regards to queerness. California is, if I travel internationally, I tell people I'm from California. I do not say the United States. And it's because California, although it has produced Reagan and Nixon, it actually has understanding of being more liberal, being more left leaning, even though there's so much conservatism in California. For the most part, we're known as like Harvey Milk and San Francisco and Castro and the gayest place, like all these different things. And so, you know, even if I can't— or even if in certain places like Central California, I would absolutely not hold my partner's hand in public, there are places like the Bay Area and Los Angeles and parts of San Jose that are metropolitan enough that I know being queer loudly is not necessarily going to be met with the police or— oh my god as I'm saying this, I'm just thinking about so many of the anti-trans and anti-drag laws right now. And I'm like, wait, can I actually say that right now? But that is part of the process of being queer. I'm just being like, well, where's the state at now in terms in regards to how they define my humanity and worthiness. Because I know I have a lot of value and worthiness, but how would they meet me? Which is just kind of part of the process of scoping out, going to new areas, trying to figure out where to live, where you can live safely, and also how much gender informs that. Like when I say queerness I'm actually already looping in gender when I talk about that because I identify as trans and non-binary, but also being socialized as a woman. And honestly, I feel I understand what it means to be a woman in this world. I was raised that way. I am still often socialized and treated that way. And so that informs where I can travel and where I can go and how I can live just as much as queerness does. But in terms of where I live, I grew up in LA County in the suburbs off of downtown Los Angeles. And I went to a school that was predominantly Asian. It was quite diverse. And I'm really, really grateful for that. It wasn't until I went to college that I realized how white academia is, which is kind of astounding now that I think about it. Because I remember going to college and being like, "Oh my gosh, there are so many white students here". I expected far more Asian, and I mean, like, the continent of Asia, when I say we had— there were all different kinds of Asian denominations and SWANA identities at the school that I went to, the district that I grew up in. And so, you know, even then I grew up knowing that Christianity was the norm and Catholicism was the norm and anything else was different and kind of weird and there weren't really spaces for it within the schooling systems. There were Christian clubs and things like that, but you have to really look for South Asian ones. I remember at my high school, there were basically two groups of South Asians. There was the ones I was related to and the ones I wasn't related to. And they often— we often spent time together but even then, I didn't. And I didn't really understand why until now that I'm grown up, quite a few of the friends that I had in high school are now identified as queer. So that kind of fed it without me understanding why I was— I don't want to say sequestered, but just different. I don't know, it was just atypical, I guess. I didn't necessarily feel like I fully belonged with the South Asian kids. And then how I think about myself, my identity was very much tied to academic performance growing up, which I think is really common for a lot of South Asian kids. So I was the high achieving, great grades, well-rounded kid growing up. And anytime I was doing badly, like it meant I was bad in my head. And it had a lot of my self-worth and my schools were very competitive. I remember my high school, there were so many kids that got into Ivy Leagues, I think, like 70 something percent of the kids that got into a college got into like a UC or a Cal State. So they were going— and then the rest went to like community college. So it was a very competitive and I appreciated some of the competition because most of my classmates and stuff that I would work with and things like that, it kept us a bit motivated. Like it was like, "Oh you're gonna do your homework, I'll do my homework" kind of thing. And so I did appreciate that. And it affected how I saw myself because I was like, well, I'm a person who takes all the honors in AP classes. You know, I'm a person who plays sports. I'm a person—you know? But as far as extracurriculars and those types of behaviors, I didn't necessarily. Or clubs, I didn't necessarily participate in that or explore that because so much of it was just like, I was taught

school, school, school, education, education, education. That's all that matters. Do it, do it, do it.

01:07:11 **SPEAKER_KK**

And then I went to college in Northern Cal, so I grew up in Southern California, and then I went to college in Northern California. I moved away when I was 17 to start school and I spent my entire adult life in Northern California now. I didn't go back. I had to really get— we're better when we love each other at a distance. And you know, now that I'm— and my cousins, loves of my life, like my best friends. If I could have brought them with me, I would have brought them with me. But for the most part, I lose myself so much when I visit home because I become the person that they need as opposed to being— and honestly, that is who I am with them. So actually I am myself with them, but that's the me that's with them, as opposed to the me that I am when I'm alone and fully seen by my communities when I'm up here, when I'm in Northern California. And I've moved to three different places in Northern California. Now that I've graduated college, I am looking for work in Central California and I see more South Asian people now than I've ever seen before when I walk out in the world. And I see them and I'm like, "Ah, look, there's an auntie", like, "Oh, there's an uncle". "Look at those kids," like so cute. But they don't necessarily see me. And that makes me really sad. Like a lot of the times they like can't— they look at me and I get a lot of stares. People stare at me. And then eventually someone will be like, "Are you Indian?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm Panjabi—," I say yes, when I actually identify as Panjabi. But I say, "Yes, I'm Panjabi." And they're like, "Oh, okay." And it makes me sad, to a certain degree. But at the same time, it is what it is. I look a certain way that they're not used to, that the history books have talked about, I guess. And, but now that I'm here, I really wanna explore like all the different Gurdwaaras that are around me. I'm a bit hesitant because I know a lot of them are engaging in Modi-forward politic. And so that makes me hesitant to want to go there. So if I could find some that aren't necessarily aligning with Modi and that kind of politic and casteism and stuff like that, I feel more safe and secure to go to the other ones, but even then, which side do I sit on when I go in? It's always gonna be wrong because there are sides. The whole thing about having sides to sit on based on gender means that I will never be sitting on the right side. And it will always be judged. And I never want to make anyone feel unsafe, you know, and a lot of people confuse discomfort with a lack of safety. And sometimes discomfort is a lack of safety. I'm not trying to say it isn't, but me sitting on a certain side in the Gurdwara, how is that unsafe for anybody except me? You know? And so, I don't know, it's a lot of inner monologue. It's a lot of inner thinking. It's a lot of trying to figure out, well, where am I safest? And if I play the good little child, I wear a salwaar-kameez [*cultural two-piece outfit*] and I sit on the girl's side and I stay very quiet and I mind myself— you know. And then I sometimes go in the kitchen and then I do Langar. Like, I always appreciate serving Langar, but sometimes they don't need that. So it's a lot of confusion and hesitation. And I would appreciate, now that I'm here, I just want to be free. I just want to be able to exist in all of me out there. But I know that that's not necessarily accessible, which is a great sadness. It really is. And I feel it, I do. But for me, when I find the ones that I feel myself with, that keeps me going. Because I know there are some people who don't even have that— you know— and I do and I hold on to that and I try and practice that I try to feed my energies towards that. And that has been often in my life coming from a place more from within the queer community than it has from the Sikh Panjabi Asian community. However, when I am with in community with both and they are aware of casteism and they tend to practice anti-casteism, when I'm with that community, I can just be myself. And it's just— it blows my mind that people just get to go out and do that and be that and exist that— in all the spaces that they inhabit. And for people like me and probably other people within this project, this oral histories project, it's lonely. It's hard. And then to have to plan it, to create those spaces and find each other. And then to find out that it's casteist, it's maddening. It's maddening— or it's transphobic, you know what I'm saying? Or it's racist or it's anti-Black. Like how? We need to work on our anti-Blackness. Like we absolutely— the world needs to work on its anti-Blackness, but you know, in South Asian communities, absolutely. Because Black Sikhs exists, Black people exist, they matter— you know. And people who are, who face the consequences of casteism the most, their lives matter. Like, I don't know. I just— I want my people and not just my people, I want people to feel safe and secure and okay. And we need to work on our biases and we need to shed them. And it just blows my mind that even within all these subsects of identity that I can embody, that even within that, when I'm in community with others, I find out that their politic is actually racist or transphobic or like just harmful in another way and it's upsetting. But you know I'm gonna keep going because people are what matters, and I find people who believe that all lives have value and will— you know— work for it and fight for it are beautiful. And that gives me so much hope. And I want to keep going with them. And people surprise you. I do still have that hope. Like people can still surprise you in ways that inspire. And I want to keep finding them and I want to know them and I want them to know me and I want that kind of connection as far as this plane of existence will allow.

01:15:49 **SPEAKER_MS**

Thank you so much for those very, very beautiful and heartfelt words. And those visions too, that you're also sharing those dreams. And that actually is a very great transition into the last set of questions that I have which are focused on desire, intimacy, and dreaming. So I think this maybe is a great time to touch a little bit more to hear more about what hopes and dreams drive you. So I would love to hear what— tell me what you think desire is. To you, how is this different from intimacy or even dreaming?

01:16:37SPEAKER_KK

Interesting. Okay. I also realized that in the last question, I don't know if I answered it specifically.

01:16:43SPEAKER_MS

Oh, that's okay. Each of these questions are more also just springboards for you to take wherever your heart, wherever feels right. So even if any of those questions, you never actually directly answer those by the textbook, just the fact that they allowed for self-reflection is what matters.

01:17:02SPEAKER_KK

Sure. Yeah. Okay, for sure....These are so philosophical.

01:17:18SPEAKER_MS

I can also add more context if that would be helpful. I guess the question about what is desire, the reason we're asking is just because people often understand themselves in relation to thinking about what desires they do have. So these can be the types of relationships people build or wish to build or who they're close with and the types of futures they see for themselves. So much of who we are, how we understand ourselves is driven by what we desire. So that's why I wanted to sit with the place of desire in your life.

01:17:50SPEAKER_KK

Yeah. I feel like that I do appreciate the context. Thank you. I feel like desire is personal. I feel like desire comes from within me, going out. It's what I desire— coming from me. Whereas intimacy, I see intimacy as, well, there's intimacy with yourself, of course, but I'm gonna refer more to— I feel like intimacy is something that is shared and it is a connection. I think intimacy is another word for connection. And what I mean by that is— seeing and be seen. And then dreaming, my goodness, dreaming. These are also like Pisces leaning. Yeah, I do see how my like last answer kind of ties into this and in an effort to not be too redundant [pause]. I think desire can tie into intimacy, as in it can be a way in which you can connect with others. Like if my desires align with someone else's desires and we're able to share them and connect, then that would be intimacy between me and this other person or other people. It could even be— you can experience intimacy with a room full of people if you're giving like a TED Talk, right? Like if you're able to share and you're able to see the people in the room that you're talking to and they're able to see your point and understand it and believe it. I believe that that can be quite intimate. And then, of course, there's intimacy with yourself, which I believe is like connection with yourself. And for me, that means understanding your values and acting in alignment with that. That can be quite a deep intimacy with yourself, to know yourself in that way. For me, that understanding intimacy with the self comes from Buddhism predominantly, in terms of the self and the other and actually shedding your desires, right? And not wanting anything and just being content with what you already have and what you already are. And I think I have also spoken to how, when I get to that place of quiet, when I get to that place of calm, when I get to that place where I am just satisfied, sated, I am so grateful and I feel really alive and I want to be that and I want to experience that with my other people. That is a dream of mine, I would say. So it ties into, I feel like dreams could be like goals without a plan. So if you, whatever you kind of wish, wishes almost can be dreams. And I don't need a plan for that. I can just want it and hopefully maybe orient my life towards it. And if I can be intimate with others and connect with others along that path, so we can get to that place and lift as we climb, that would be everything. I think that would feed my desire. Like, it's almost like tiers for this question, how they feed each other. Yeah, I feel like, that one might be the one.

01:22:09SPEAKER_MS

Thank you so much for thinking so deeply about and parsing out the distinctions and also how they're so interconnected as well for you. And kind of following up on that question, I would love to hear about what are your hopes? and I guess in Panjabi, umeedan, we call them. What are your hopes and umeedaan for yourself?

And what are your hopes and umeedaan for the different communities that you identify with? I can drop these in the chat as well, but any dreams, any hopes, any umeedan both for yourself as well as for various communities that you would like to share?

01:22:49SPEAKER_KK

You know, it's interesting because I am a person whose background is in law, society, sociology, human rights, and English literature. So I am quite aware of the way that, at least in the US predominantly, in terms of those histories, I am painfully aware of how atrocious and violent these cis, hetero, white, patriarchal institutions have enacted genocidal violence and erasure and epistemic erasure, and just these horrible things against all different types of communities. And here I am in all the shades that I stand in and I still have hopes and aspirations for the different communities that I identify with— and also that any community really, any person that is a part of a community that knows what it's like to be on the fringe of anything. What I want, probably more than anything, is for us to feel safe. I think for me, I try and embody that with everything that I do with whomever I meet, is to let people know you are safe. You're safe with me. You are safe with the people that we are with, if that's understood at the time, but at the very least that you are safe with me. And not only that, I hope and aspire for us to feel safe, but not only that, but brave. So if you're— it's like the— I had a friend who wrote on feminist spaces and she spoke of how when spaces are safe, people are brave enough to be themselves. And so if who you are in all of yourself is someone who does not infringe on the rights of others, does not harm or enact violence on others based on your opinions, I want you to feel brave enough to be yourself. I aspire, I hope that if you feel safe and at peace, you can be yourself in all that you are. Because there's so much beauty in the diversity of our experiences. You can learn so much from people that you know nothing about. Everyone has their own genius. Everyone has their own contributions to the society, and to write people off just based on what some abstract identity that is tied to whatever power structure that society has deemed upon you, is bullshit. Like we need to get down to the nitty gritty and we need to talk to each other and we need to respect each other's differences and hear each other and believe each other. And I think I said it already, like lift as we climb. After I heard Angela Davis say that, I was like, "That's it. That's my tenet. That's what I want to practice in my life." And that's what I hope. Yeah. So if I had to narrow it down to one main thing that I want my different communities to experience and other different communities to experience is safety. No fear. Like Nina Simone said, right? No fear. That would be... that's when we're free. That's when we can focus on the things that matter, like love and compassion and community. I feel like after the pandemic, or even since 2015, when the Black Lives Matter movement really started, that there's been this orientation towards burning it all down. Because participating in these systems of oppression will only turn you into a cog of the machine as opposed to you changing the system. And while I believe that that does have merit, and I do understand we just need to rebuild it. We just need to burn it all down. I try and listen to scholars, activists, teachers, grassroots organizations, people on the ground doing the work who are like, we can't necessarily— or burning it all down, yes, ACAB, those types of things— but at the same time, we need to orient ourselves towards building. So I kind of want to be on the side of building community strengths and ties. So if we're able to feel safe with each other, in community with each other, I believe that there is more strength and resilience between coming together than tearing apart. So that's kind of also a hope and aspiration that I have, that we're able to come together, respect our differences, honor our similarities and work together. 'Cause there's so many more of us than there are of the 1% of the people who are hoarding everything. There's so much more of us. If we could just focus on that, I would be so grateful. And I understand that it is a bit naive. But when you look at the history of revolutions, when you look at the history of protests and what they've accomplished and unionizing and labor movements and things like that, it gives me hope. And I feel like we are there. We are at a point of reckoning with the ways in which hierarchical powers have been one way for way too long. And so I would like a reallocation of power, aka redistribution of wealth, and more diversity being shown and appreciated and celebrated in our communities because that is so much more of what life is about than trying to get us to all fit into this charm circle of the hegemony behind whiteness and nuclear family and heterosexuality and cisgender and all these things. It's the spice of life and I want us to build together and feed that resilience and feed that love with one another. And it starts with us feeling safe with each other and also safe to make mistakes. Like, I have made so many mistakes in my life. I have learned so much from them and that's okay. That's part of how I've gotten to this space. A lot of forgiveness and I'm trying to be compassionate with myself for it, you know? And every time I spend time in community with others, I heal. I do, I absolutely heal a little bit. And so that's why we need more of that, in my opinion.

01:31:49SPEAKER_MS

Thank you for sharing those very beautiful visions. And I wanted to, I was just also sitting with how a lot of the visions that you shared were for us, right? For the we, for us, and I would love to hear if you would, if you feel

comfortable or if anything comes up, what are some like hopes, visions, dreams, umeedan that you have for yourself as well? Of course, a lot of our own visions are absolutely interconnected with community, other folks, our families, as we're building them, our communities that we're also building, and navigating different, both painful, heartbreaking, as well as different aspects of the relationship with, but anyways, also wanted to kind of create space on a second round, if you did want to share any hopes, dreams, umeedan, for yourself.

01:32:49SPEAKER_KK

Wow, I don't think I realized that I did that. So thank you for pointing that out, because I also tend to have that orientation of my thinking. Oh, my gosh, this is a much harder question just for myself. I think the safety thing still rings true. I want and hope for myself to feel safe in the spaces that I occupy and empowered. I see myself as a child of the universe. I always want to learn. I want to continue learning. I want to learn from others. I know so little of this world and I am a student. I am first and foremost always learning and so I hope to love and protect myself and I hope to continue learning as much as I can in this world. And I want to learn new skills. I want to learn Panjabi. I want to travel and learn from people all over the world. I want to eat amazing food. I hope to learn to appreciate art in ways that I haven't before. I want to see so much art in this world and experience it. I want my nearest and dearest to know that they are so loved and cherished. I want to look after the Earth. I wanna find a way to reduce my carbon footprint and I wanna do what I can to promote Black, Dalit, Indigenous liberation. I wanna do my part in those, and what that means is, I don't even know— like finding communities or programs that are already doing the work and just providing support for it. We don't need more of them. I mean, we do need more of those, but if we can kind of uplift the ones that already exist and give them some more spending power, that would be great. Yeah, I wanna learn how to garden. I wanna learn how to play a few instruments, or a few more instruments. I wanna mix music. I want to... So many of my goals are not capitalistically oriented, so I don't necessarily have a job in mind. But if I— if I did, I would want jobs that taught me a lot of skills. Like if I could work— like building houses and learn how to build houses, that would be great. Or I remember my partner mentioned that she wanted to be a person who works at a museum just because she gets to walk around the museum all she wants even though she's just a docent— or I forget what the term is. And I was like, that's amazing because you can just go do that job at different parts of the world and work at different museums. I find that I'm the most creative, I think, when I'm mixing music or making food. So if I could take a lot of cooking classes and learn how to make food from cuisines from all over the world. Yeah, those are some hopes and aspirations for myself. In an ideal world, I think I would love to like go get my master's or my PhD in queer feminist literature. I've even looked into programs of Masters of Science to find new therapies out there for people that work better than SSRIs. And the way that Western medicine has kind of purported this is the way to fix your brain and it's fucked--it's messed up because it says "fix your brain" and it's-- I don't know why you're pathologizing yourself in that way. So that's also something. I'm fascinated by human behavior. So even if I could learn from where I am about human behavior in a way that allows me to provide that kind of knowledge and maybe practices to people who don't necessarily have the means to learn those things, that would be beautiful because I am fascinated by human behavior and the brain. And so if I could— I don't know— maybe like therapy in some way and then provide cheap, or not as expensive, therapy for people so that they can also heal and feel safe with themselves. That's something that I would want for myself. I see so much potential and so much time that I can do these things in. When I was younger though, I was so wrapped up in capitalism and the pressures that come from being Panjabi or like Panjabi culture, which is very much tied up in Western capitalism— which is as fast as possible, get through it as fast as possible, the sense of urgency. And now that I'm in my thirties and doing things at this pace, I'm just like— there's so much time. If I want to do it, I can. I just have to find the time and the energy to do it. So there are a lot of different things that I want to do, but it's not— almost all of them are in the hopes of being able to make life a little bit easier for the next generation. Trying to work on the planet so that the planet isn't inhabitable for the younger generations and making it a safer place if I can. I know that I'm just one person, but I like to think that one person can do a lot, especially in community with others.

01:40:49SPEAKER_MS

Thank you so much for sharing those very intimate dreams and for also taking the time to even sit with and reflect on and share those dreams as well. 'Cause I also— as somebody who similarly forgets to think about those dreams for myself, I really do appreciate you sharing the amount of love and the care that is in each of those dreams that you shared and Waheguru wills, I hope that they all come true. And so from my end, that does conclude the questions that I had, but I did want to create space to see if there's anything that I have not asked or if there's anything that you did want to share or mention or add on to before we do end the recording.

01:41:47SPEAKER_KK

Honestly, these questions have been eye opening, I feel it's kind of and very vulnerable. I don't know what other questions I could possibly answer or highlight or emphasize. I think so much of the way that I have expressed how I want to make others feel is very much how I want to feel. And I think it really speaks to how much I have not felt that in my life, which is profoundly, profoundly sad and disheartening. And I wouldn't be surprised if other people who live at these intersections, at this praxis, also have similar sentiments and feelings. And I just want all of us to get some of the love that we've put out in this world and have it come back to us. And I mean it's beautiful if it can come from us, but also if it could be witnessed outside of yourself and for you to receive it, not just from yourself. That would be incredible. And my heart softens at the thought of it. And I just want the kids to be okay. I mean, I was not okay as a kid. There were so many terrible things that have happened to me in my life. And some of it is directly connected to the identities, the personal identities that I have. And I just hope that other kids don't have to be survivors in the way that I have become. And yeah, I just hope all the love that I have put out in the world comes back. And that's not why I do it, not in the slightest. I never think transactionally in that way. I think just at the end of such a vulnerable conversation that we have had— or not conversation, but me talking a lot, a lot, a lot, that I'm just reflecting a bit and that I want the kids to be okay, if I can end on different things.

01:45:04SPEAKER_MS

No, thank you. That is just so sacred. That very desire to use that term from earlier, to reach out in many ways, our own younger selves as well, ourselves that are here or are to come as well, in hopes that they don't have to walk the roads that we've walked. And as a wrap up question, I know this question was already— I did ask in the pre-interview, before we recorded, but especially since you've gone through the interview as well, in case that has changed, I wanted to ask if there are any hopes that you have with— what do you hope comes out of sharing your life story with us? Any hopes from this interview particularly and in sharing your life story to us?

01:46:08SPEAKER_KK

My hopes for sharing the story [pause] I think that creating this space, like prabhdeep and you, and other people that are a part of this, is so, so important for the sake of representation. I think people really underestimate the power of representation, and usually the people who underestimate it are the ones who have a lot of representation. I am 32, almost 33 years old, and I cannot think of a single time in my life that this has existed for me. So I hope that by sharing my story and others sharing their stories, this is just the tip of the iceberg. I hope that this creates proliferation in terms of standing in our truths and taking up space. I hope that we all take up some real space in this world, that we take up space in all of the community meetups. I hope that we take up space when we go to the Gurdwara. I hope that, and I know that this is such a far— it's such a far aspiration for what's something so small like this, but I really believe that progress is incremental. And that by standing in it and actually engaging in the day-to-day behaviors of it, something like this can be monumental. I'm just grateful to be able to take up this space. And I hope others are able to take up space when they see these words put together. And I think that's really, really powerful. I hope that this is just the spark to a very big flame. And I hope that we can do it with our whole chest. I hope that we can step forward and just be like, "We are here, we've always been here". Respect it, just respect it, you know, accept it and respect it. Please don't meet it with violence. I understand that you feel like this challenge is a lot of thing, but I don't know, I am coming at this with love and hope. I'm coming at this with generosity of spirit. I'm coming at this with just love. And I don't know, it's not meant to be disrespectful. It does not challenge what you assume to be correct. We exist and that has value and we deserve to be heard. We really do. And I, for one, am not going anywhere and none of us are. So just add to the menu and welcome us. Us existing does not take away from you. It's not finite. And accept it. Just do it. It's gonna be so much easier. And it really is all love for me. Like it is, and it's love for myself and my communities that is leading me to be able to speak this way. And it's not intended to be disrespectful. It's just a slight fight to take up space instead of being completely dismissed, because that leads to so much pain for an entire part of your community that why would you want to? You've experienced it. Why would you want to exclude people and deny people just because it's different? And I know this is just— this is just an interview, But I really feel like this is real, and this is a great way to take steps in a direction that I want for myself and my communities.

01:51:15SPEAKER_MS

Thank you so, so much. And thank you for being part of that direction as well, in terms of for supporting us and for just so much time and generosity and care that you've shown and being willing to share such intimate, such vulnerable details and aspects of your life. So I really, and I know a lot of it can also be sometimes triggering to

revisit, so all the work and all the care that you put into sharing that with us in hopes that it does move us in the particular direction, it's just so, so much love and so much gratitude to you for that. And with that, that concludes our interview. So I will press stop recording.