

Viji Satya-Murti

Transcript of Oral History Interview, January 10th, 2025

Interviewed by Sandra Sarrouf for: Our Roots/Our Routes: Living Histories of Belonging and Cultural Sustainability on California's Central Coast

Interviewee notes: Timestamps may be off by up to 10 seconds as you progress through transcript while listening to audio.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:00:05] Hi. Good. The tea is delicious. Okay. Thank you. I love it. Mm. Um, so just a reminder. I'm here. It's January 10th, 2025 with Viji Muri Satya. Satya.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:00:20] Satya Murti.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:00:24] Okay. Um, to just learn about your roots and your routes and just confirming you're giving me permission to record, um, the interview, this conversation with eventually to put up on the website.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:00:39] A little bit louder because I'm.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:00:42] So you're giving us permission to record the interview, and then with the goal of putting it on our website, knowing that you own the content, and at any point you can let us know if there's any edits you want, um, etc.. Okay. Yes. Okay. Awesome. And thank you for the muffins and the tea and for having us here in your home today. And I'm also with Ivy Murti. Cochran.

Ivy Cochran Murti: [00:01:08] Ivy Cochran Murti.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:01:10] Oh, Ivy Cochran Murti. Who will be. Who is your granddaughter. Who will be joining in on the conversation with us? So we'll just start with. Where were you born?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:01:22] I was do I have to say the name of the town, too?

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:01:25] Whatever you want to tell us about where you were born and when.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:01:29] Okay. I was born in a small town. Vellore. V e l l o r e in Tamil Nadu state. Tamil Nadu state. And you want the date of birth? Sure. If you.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:01:48] Want to share the year.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:01:50] 1948. And I was raised. And what is your next question?

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:01:58] So you were born in

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:02:03] In 1948.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:02:06] Um, both my side, maternal and paternal grandparents, they were in the same town. That's our native town in that state. Um, so 1948. I was raised mostly by my grandfather and grandfather's second wife, but she didn't have any children. So I was raised by them from 15 months to six years. I was with them. The reason is my parents were in another state for my dad's, my father's employment, and my mother had children too. Not too much apart. I have three siblings, so she couldn't manage. So they left me with my grandfather who didn't have a daughter. because my father is the only child too. So his daughter, my being the first child and first daughter in my father's family, for my parents, they left me there 15 months to six years. I was with them. They raised by them.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:03:17] And this is on your mother's side?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:03:20] No.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:03:20] Father's your father. Okay. Your father's.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:03:22] Father's.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:03:22] Grand. Your father's father.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:03:24] My father's father and his second wife.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:03:27] And were you with your siblings or it was just you?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:03:30] Just me. My. The rest. My parents took care of them. My older brother was three years older than me. Him and then myself. And then immediately my younger brother was born. My mother couldn't manage. That's the reason. After me, within 14 or 15 months, my younger brother was born.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:03:50] So she had you and your

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:03:51] Younger brother and us. But my father's income. He started in a lower level in a federal government job in India. So financially too. So they were okay. But to raise all the three. My mother was only when I was born. She was maybe 17 and she know she was married when she was 17. And so my I forgot I was born in 1948. She was married in 42. So she was only 23 when I was born. And she had lost a lot of. She had miscarriages, too. That's why she couldn't manage. My brother was so active. My older brother. Anyhow, so then I had my younger brother. That's the reason they left me. My grandfather was happy and willing to raise a baby from He didn't have a daughter. So granddaughter. They raised me very well. Spoiled. And. And then my sister was born after my within another 15 months to my younger brother. So she is the baby of her. They are all living in India. All the three siblings. I don't have my parents. They are not. And they passed away. My mother passed away in 1992 when Lara was 16 years old, and my father passed away in 1994.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:05:23] So. And when your younger sister was born, did she come and live with you, too, or she.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:05:28] No, no. I was the only one raised by my grandparents. Then when I was six years old, my mother could manage. And my father's financial, uh, he was well off. Not well off, but at least he could manage. And the children were grown up by then. When I was six, my older brother was nine, and the little one was my younger brother was, what, almost four years? Four and three. Four. Then Important. My sister must have been. She's two and a half years younger than me. So? So anyhow, so they were capable. My mom missed me, but because of she couldn't manage and the income. So.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:06:06] I mean, I was six years. I joined my parents. From then on I was not separated. I was with my other siblings, sisters and brothers.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:06:15] And do you have any what are some when you think about that time living with your grandfather, what are some memories that come to mind or first memories?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:06:24] Memory? Um. I got a typhoid at that time. Have you heard of the typhoid? Yes. And, um, I remember my grandfather he had as a family doctor. He used to, I was a chubby baby, but, um, he was in his maybe 50s. He used to carry me on his shoulder to take me to the doctor and always took great care of me. And also I had a little, it was swollen like infected bump here. But the family doctor, um, those times they said they didn't have surge and even family doctor could do anything as if they knew. And they he did use a, I think, good surgical knife. But you see the scar here when I was three years old? Um, actually it was thyroid glands. It seems my in my family there is no doctor to for a second opinion. So he used he I think it was infected. My grandfather took great care of me. Then another memory is my grandfather had land in the close village. They had peanut farming, so every time when the peanut is harvested, it used to come in jute bags, gunny bags with, with the um.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:08:02] Um, the shell.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:08:04] With a raw peanuts. Not raw means not the dry ones. No, the wet ones when it is raw. So it used to come. My grandfather had so much patience and I. That's the reason I love peanuts. Because of him. So he, uh, the. It used to come in a bag all tie, you know, tied up. He used to open patiently. Maybe 3 to 4 hours. He'll be sitting on his lounge chair and I'll be sitting next to him on the floor. I was maybe 3 or 3 and a half. Um, I used to peel patiently because he. He used to do it because I was he was a big role model for me, even when I was three and a half. So I used to do peanuts, And he used to say, it's raw, don't eat it. He'll get stomach ache, but I won't listen when he's not looking or turning, talking to my grandma, I used to put a few in my mouth. Sometimes he would have what you are eating, I know.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:09:03] So did you get a stomach ache?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:09:05] Yeah, because it's raw. Yes. Yeah. And it's. And they say I need a Kleenex. My eyes. I'm not crying. Um, the the raw. If you eat too much for a three and a half year old, you know, I will get a diarrhea, you know, stomach ache. But

he used to control me. I still remember I used to tell them I love peanut because of my grandpa. So my grandmother raised me very, very well because she didn't have any children. The second this was his second wife.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:09:37]

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:09:37] No children. She raised my father because my father lost his real mother when he was six months old to another plague disease. Because the mother, his mother, my grandmother, real grandmother, natural grandmother. She she was mistreated by my grandfather's sister. Anyhow, she died when she was 21 years old and had my father, who was six months old. So? So that's why my grandfather remarried soon, and she raised my father very well as his own son, because she didn't have any children, not because she didn't want to, but she didn't bear children. So and then from six years I been with my parents, my father was used to be being a guard, working for the central government. He used to be transferred for his job for improvement, promotion. I've lived different part of India.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:10:37] So you left the village where you were with your grandfather and grandma.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:10:41] And then I moved to Delhi, which is the capital of India. That's where my father and my rest of the family. My mother. So they took me there.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:10:51] Is that a memorable experience for you? Do you remember that?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:10:54] Actually? Actually, it was because I think I was craving for my own parent's love. Even though my grandparents gave me all the love they should at that age, between 50. But every time when my mom, mom, my mom missed me because of all the children she couldn't manage. And um, so every time when she came for vacation to see me with the rest of the children, she she used to stitch beautiful dresses. Frock, they call it, like in England, they pretty dresses and bring it and give it to me. I still remember when she leaves I used to cry to go with them. My desperately. My mom used to leave even though she didn't want to. So, um, after six years, The only thing is that close bond, love. I didn't get it at the age I was supposed to from my

parents. 15 months to six years. But that does not mean when I joined them from six years old, I was with my own family, with my parents and my siblings. So that I miss now because they were good, because I'm on their own child, because of some financial reason they had to do it for me. And I went to Delhi, educated and and then moved to in Delhi. We were there for a few years and then we moved to Bangalore, which is the Silicon Valley of India now.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:12:35] But back then.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:12:36] Back then it was um, excuse me.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:12:40] Like back then was Bangalore. It was a big city.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:12:42] Yeah, because I was only nine or from six years, I went to Delhi where my parents were. With them I moved to Bangalore, India, which is a neighboring state of where I was born. Bangalore, India is in Karnataka where I went to middle school.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:13:00] And I forgot to ask, what language did you speak with your grandparents at home?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:13:05] Our native language, Tamil. And at home with my parents in Delhi too. But when you go to school, you have to learn that regional language. That's Hindi. With whom i was with the language I was speaking with Lata. So I had to learn to read schools as like Spanish as a second language at home. Tamil. Tamil that is and my mom and dad are right from my grandpa who taught me all the scripts so I know how to read and write my native language. But because of necessity, wherever you are, because each state has different languages. So I had to learn. I had to go to school.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:13:44] So you learned Hindi in school?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:13:46] Hindi? Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:13:47] No. Tamil. So you learned.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:13:48] Tamil at.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:13:48] Home? At home.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:13:49] Tamil. Writing to read and write. And then when my parents met Tamil friends in Delhi, you know, we socialize, we speak that language. But school. I had to learn Hindi or with a vegetable vendors, everything. They will be all Hindi speaking people. So we had to converse and commercially everything. So it comes automatically. When you are young, it's easy to learn language. So because next door neighbor there will be a Hindi young kids like us in there speaking. They don't know how to speak my language. So we learn automatically because you need to socialize. And the what do you say presence of peer and you want to socialize and be with people. Make friends. So that's how you learn language, converse, especially children. My mom couldn't learn because she knew the language. When the maid comes, she had problems. Through us she used to speak in Hindi, the maid used to be in Hindi, and my mom learned whatever basic to communicate with the maid so that. But we we were fluent, fast, easy. And we had to learn in school too. And then we moved to Bangalore. It's another language. Kannada. Kannada. Karnataka. They speak Kannada.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:15:13] How do you spell that?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:15:14] K a n n a d a It's not Kannada like or not. Okay. Yeah. So that's the language of. I was um, I was what, ten years old when we moved from Delhi to Bangalore. So next door neighbor or all that language, not Hindi. So in.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:15:39] School you had to learn.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:15:41] Next door neighbors within a week before school started. During summer vacation, we moved from Delhi to Bangalore. I was nine years old so I had to. The next door neighbours I had to communicate, go and play outside. So just talking with them. Within a week we learnt to speak. Just just the kids, the siblings and me and then school. When you go to school you have to learn that state language. It's a compulsory. So if you want you can take Hindi. So I at home Tamil and then I because to survive in that state a locally I learnt Kannada in school and Hindi another language which I learned in Delhi. So you can have three languages and English is a medium of instruction.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:16:33] Yes, because English is one of the national languages in India.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:16:37] No, because they won't accept because British people were there. That's how many Indians we speak English. Because it's no problem. Even if you go to India now, I mean everybody now, at present, everybody is fluent and everything.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:16:53] So in school you were also learning English.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:16:55] English is this medium of instruction.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:16:58] And then so classes in Kannada were separate and.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:17:02] Kannada and at home speak only Tamil because family togetherness.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:17:07] And was it was English the medium of instruction in Delhi as well.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:17:11] Yes, yes.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:17:12] So all over.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:17:13] Yeah. Because it's all over, especially for my family. It's better to be in medium. My dad was moved every all over the country every 4 to 5 years. So.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:17:24] And did your grandparents speak English as well?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:17:27] Yes. Yes. My not grandmother, because at those times they were not educated. You know, ladies just marry marry bear children barefoot, like they say here? So I mean, run the family and be affectionate and take care of children or grandchildren. My grandfather was a registrar and one of the university in that town. It's a small university college. He was a registrar in the administration, so he knew English.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:17:58] And so then how long were you in?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:18:00] My dad knew English. My mom went to a convent, too, because her father was a British time still. He was a railroad guard for the train. The guard, they say he was. And he sent his children to a convent, a Catholic school. So my mom knows fluent English. Even when she only high school, she studied. By then she was 16 or 17. The family said you should get married. My mom was a very good student. She wanted to be a doctor. But you know, those times in 1942, they said, no, you finished high school. That's enough. Marry him. You have to get married. So that's.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:18:44] And was she Catholic or is she?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:18:46] No, she's not a Catholic. Hindu. But you can go to school because you can afford to send them. It wasn't expensive those times because sending to a private Catholic school. So.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:18:58] But your family practiced Hindu, your family.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:19:00] Hinduism and at home, Tamil. But as we moved, we had to we were we had to necessity Hindi just for survival. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:19:09] And after Bangalore.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:19:11] Bangalore, in Bangalore. And there is another place. Mysore. They speak the same language and the same state. So there was no problem. Bangalore three years, Mysore three years. That's Bangalore. My younger brother lives now at present. And my sister, the youngest and the baby. She lives in Mysore. So 100 100 mil. M y s o r e. Bangalore and Mysore. Then we went to Bombay, which is the business capital of India. Like New York. Bombay. Now they call it Mumbai. That my father was transferred there by then. No, no. I'm sorry. Went back to Delhi. Not from Bangalore. Mysore. We went back to Delhi again. By then I was in high school. So I completed high school and went to. Got my bachelor's in mathematics in there. My father, thank God he was there for six years for the first time in one place. Long time. So I finished my high school of three years and for undergraduate it's only three years. So I did my bachelor's in mathematics, and then by then my father was transferred to

Mumbai from there. Mumbai is Bombay at that time it was called Bombay. By then, since I had graduated, I got a teaching job as a teacher and high school teacher, even though I didn't have teacher certification those times because of my high, uh, top A grade. So I got a job while I was working as a teacher with my family. I didn't live separately. Those times when unmarried girls live only with the parents, it's their responsibility. So I was with them and working as a teacher. While I was working, I got my teacher certification and got my, there it is called Bachelor's in education. That is teacher certification. So I got my degree and worked for three more years. When I was in Bombay. Um, my marriage was arranged in 1972 with Saty. And we didn't know each other.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:21:36] When did you. What year did you move to Bombay?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:21:38] Uh, Bombay. Let me tell you. Oh. From Delhi. 1967. So 68 to 72. I was in Bombay while I was teaching. The marriage was arranged. My husband's family.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:21:55] Your parents? Your mom and dad.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:21:56] Both. Both sides.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:21:57] Yeah. And his mom and dad?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:21:59] Yes. I didn't know him.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:22:00] Did you know your parents were doing this at the time?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:22:02] No. My parents, even right after I graduated from college, they were looking for a suitable match because I'm 19, so. So until then, it didn't click. Yeah. Right.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:22:15] Mhm. Okay. So they were you knew they were looking.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:22:18] Yes they were looking. And when I was 24 the marriage was arranged if you would like, if you want to know how it was arranged. I can tell you. Do you want to know?

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:22:31] Sure. Yeah. I mean, that sounds like it. It sounds from my perspective. It's an important part here. It's an important part of your life.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:22:39] It's interesting.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:22:40] Yeah, right. Yes, yes. You're feeling it was. It was what was done in the time, right? Where a lot of your friends also getting married through arranged marriages at the time, I imagine.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:22:52] So my future life partner, he was already here for five years in this country doing his internship and residency.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:23:00] And you knew that?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:23:01] I know.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:23:02] No, I.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:23:03] Know. Stranger.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:23:04] No, you you didn't know him, but you knew he was. You knew. No no no no no.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:23:09] Until a month before my marriage. That was quick because, um, he he just got a job fellowship in Johns Hopkins with a well known neurologist because my husband was craving to get trained under him. So with a low salary, he didn't mind salary, but he wanted that research. Myasthenia gravis with him because he was well known at Johns Hopkins. Doctor Drachman. So he got the job. He was in Canada for a year in Montreal. University of Montreal. He finished his residency and he applied for this fellowship under Johns Hopkins, this doctor, and he got it under him. He was impressed by my husband's credentials before that. So in 1972, June, he got the job. And that time he told his parents, the parents were telling him, you are already 27. You are far away alone. Get married, get married. He said, I want I will let you know when I'm ready. So now, at that time and he just got the job fellowship at Johns Hopkins, he decided and told the new boss he didn't even start the job. New boss was a

nice man. He said. My parents are really troubling me to come home and get married. Can I take three weeks off. So after getting the permission from the doctor, he told his parents, I'm ready.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:24:35] I'm coming on a three weeks vacation, not even a day longer, because this is a new job I need to impress and I am interested to learn some myasthenia gravis research. So the parents put it in a matrimonial. There is a newspaper like New York Times in there in our town. I mean same we we are Hindus, same caste, Brahmin, everything. Their parents are really orthodox Hindu. So these parents, they compared horoscope. My parents had made a horoscope. When you are born for each child, they go to the priest or the scholar who is an astrologer. Astrologer. They make the horoscope, not horoscope or horoscope. You know, according to the day you're born. And the time and the star. They make the horoscope for life in that little. With all the tables and everything with the stars. this to they compared first they advertised. We didn't advertise. Mom. Mom and dad. They were looking by word of mouth. Like matchmakers in my town where I was in Bombay. But nothing clicked. But this happened. So that's what it is. Say marriages are made in heaven. It's really no love marriage. But in our country at that time, marriages are made in heaven. Arranged so.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:26:00] So your parents saw the ad?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:26:01] No. What happened was the town where we lived. My grandfather's home. My grandfather had passed away. That house is my father's, right? My. That beautiful house where I grew up. And that house we had rented it in, in the same state. That renter saw the ad his parents had put in that like New York Times. It's a well-known newspaper for the whole state. It's called Matrimonial Section. In each day it comes, many people they do. There is a section for boys and then for girls. Whoever is ready suitable. The parents they advertise. In that they had said um, his parents that, my son is coming from abroad. He's a doctor. All the reasons and what he is expecting in a girl. So they put everything in small print just like put for sale things, you know. Okay, so this tenant of ours saw the ad and my dad had told him I am looking for a suitable match for my daughter. He saw that ad he thought he should inform my dad.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:27:10] Wow. So did you know all this? Yeah. Okay.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:27:14] Yes. So I told them a few times. So how we were married. And then in the meanwhile, I'm not the only fish in the pond.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:27:25] And meanwhile you're teaching. You have your your teaching. You have your career. Yeah.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:27:30] Because I can't sit idle. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:27:33] Yes. And so you don't know all this that's happening, and you're on with your life.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:27:37] In the town where his parents live and where he grew up. They were already lined up. They saw the ad because it's like a public, you know, report on the they they had already lined up 6 or 7 girls because he was coming for only three weeks, not even a day longer because he wanted to get back. So after he landed there, from next day, he saw all the local girls. Nothing clicked because the girls side have the he. They said, oh, we don't want to send our daughter away abroad. And he is a stranger. And you know, they hear a lot of stories. And so they didn't want it. And my husband didn't want a doctor, he wanted something. Teacher or some other profession.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:28:23]

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:28:24]

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:28:25]

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:28:26] He told his parents in the end. Don't look for a doctor. I don't want any doctor educated in India. So? So they. They had chosen a few, and he saw 6 or 7 alliances went to their house. Girl seeing ceremony. Nothing clicked. Then his. I had sent a photo. My parents had sent the photo with the horoscope. Horoscope matched well. They see that too, because their traditional family and they believe in that. My parents, they. Even though they made the horoscope, they were not particular. We are a little bit ultra modern in India even at that time. But the the parents said, oh, your daughter and my son's horoscopes match so much. So you bring your daughter. And my father had a cousin in that town because we were not far away. So we flew and

took off from my teaching job. 3 or 4 days we flew and stayed with my father's cousin who was living there, and in there in her house, they came to see my parents, his parents, him.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:29:36] And what were you feeling like, if you remember back to that time, knowing you were going to meet possibly your future husband.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:29:44] But.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:29:45] What was going through your mind? Well, or.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:29:47] A little bit scared. Nervous because so many other alliances, my parents are independently then click. So I was happy working and being with my parents. Whenever it happens, it will. So I didn't go and look for and fall in love because they may not like it. It brings shame to the family. So if you do on your own find somebody. So and I was doing okay with it because I wanted my parents to be happy, to not to hurt them. So I became and the girl seeing ceremony was went well. And um, they said, it's okay, I'm a teacher and everything. He liked it. And the marriage was fixed within 3 or 4 days.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:30:38] So did you meet Saty that time or just the.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:30:41] No girl thinks of me. And we can talk to if at that time, if the girl didn't like the boy or the boy didn't like. We can refuse.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:30:49] You met Saty and his family.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:30:51] His family? They came to my father's cousin's place, where I was because I was from a different place.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:30:56] So do you remember that moment you. You walked into the room and you saw Saty?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:31:01] Yes, yes. And they were all sitting. And my family too. They don't leave them. And then the parents, at that time, they didn't say whether they liked.

And then in the another room my husband was concerned at that time he, you know, being a doctor, he wanted to know what this was.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:31:21] How interesting.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:31:22] That is.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:31:23] And you're pointing to your scar.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:31:24] Because the scar was a little more visible than it was 52 years ago. So. So. And I had to explain, because when I was with my grandparents who raised me, the family doctor did a surgery. And then then after marriage, only he told me that big bump, but not to get septic. It was your thyroid gland. It would have given you trouble. It's good they did it. So?

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:31:51] So you met in that moment and after you thought I could marry this guy?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:31:55] No, no. For my. They left. Yeah. And then my. They answered. The next day the parents called. And parents, not parents. His uncle, father's brother called and said he is interested to get married. But only you have to arrange the marriage in ten days. And thank God we were in another.. We do not know anything. Marriage. You know it is different. Marriage, flowers, band. Everything. It was arranged within a week.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:32:24] You were interested as well?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:32:25] Yes, I was interested in. Well. But my parents asked. You are going away. Gave me a choice. Overnight, both the families they discuss independently. Sure. Right.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:32:36] And you were okay with the idea of going to the United States?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:32:40] Yes. My parents asked. Um, well do you want to? At that time, my parents were tired of looking for a suitable marriage. So, um, he looked like

he's okay. And he also said if you have anything to say, if you refuse, it's okay. The next morning, his uncle called and said. Said he is interested to go ahead with the marriage and. And then my parents asked me, they are saying, okay, what do you think? Because I can refuse or he can refuse to. So I said, that's fine. And I give good thoughts. You will be away. He's already come from there. He has lived there for five years. You are ready for it all the commitment, I said. Okay. And then while the marriage date and everything was arranging, one day we went to a restaurant. He wanted to talk independently. Of course. Not alone. My parents and his parents were there in the restaurant, so we spoke a few things. He wanted us, I don't remember. And then the marriage was fixed. The three days after wedding, he came back here.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:33:53] And you stayed or you came?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:33:54] Yeah, because I don't. I have to get my green card.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:33:57] Ah, yes.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:33:58] He was also a green card holder already. So the new boss, he got it for him because he thought he was a good candidate for this research. So that The gentleman. He was a nice man. He got a green card that after getting green card only, he told his parents that I am ready. Now I am in a position to get married.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:34:24] So you were married? You were still working as a teacher?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:34:27] Yeah, for two months until I got my green card. So I joined my September 4th. We were married in 1972 and I joined him December 11th, 1972. Those times. Spouse of a green card holder. It was easy to get the green.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:34:46] What were what were your thoughts as you were traveling and coming to a.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:34:51] New place and new partner? Life when I never knew who he was, just just clicked and from different place. And when he came to Baltimore, it was depressing. He lived in an upstairs apartment with his income because he didn't care about his income. Real low fellowship, that research you can see, right? Right.

People like you from that time. He wanted his name in print, journal writing, publishing. He wrote about my senior gravis. It's a popular paper. Still, he's coded in neurology.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:35:28] And so I want to know about your experience. So you arrive, you go to Baltimore.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:35:32] Baltimore.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:35:33] It was.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:35:34] Yes. Right. And it was cold snow all the time. I've never seen snow in India. So everything was depressing. And he used to work long hours. He used to bring white mice with pink eyes. Beautiful. The research. He used to work long hours because he needed to time for whatever research he was doing. And I was desperate for company and didn't know any neighbors. And because my Indian accent, heavy accent, I was so depressed. So. And I became an Avon lady after 3 or 4 Four months so that I can meet next door people because it was cold and winter. Can't get out.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:36:16] Of. How did you get introduced to Avon?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:36:19] Um, I saw it. Oh. Avon lady used to leave those books. Brochures. I didn't know what it was. I used to look at those. I had a lot of time alone. No children and husband working long hours. And so I told my husband I can't stay inside this little apartment being 24 year old woman. So I worked all my life. I've been busy. So school and teaching and all. And he said, why don't you become an Avon lady? So the lady, you know, they write their name and the campaign. So I called that lady and said, I want to become an Avon lady to get out of the house. So I was an Avon lady and my next door neighbor, there was an elderly lady still, I remember her name is Hughes. Her? I didn't know how to pronounce Hughes. I used to say Hughes. Just like in India. G, where G and H are silent. My husband used to teases me. Oh, you mean you guys not Hughes? So she was a wonderful lady. So I used to go and deliver some things, you know, lipstick or whatever. They used to have that sachet in that pot. She used to love lilac flavor. So I used to go, and she she needed company, and I needed company if I go and deliver. I used to sit and talk with for hours and she she didn't mind, even though

with my accent she understood. Slowly I picked up American accent. I had heavy, you know, just coming from so. And then I found a job in the bank in First National Bank of Maryland.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:38:06] So how was that? You were an Avon lady. Did you go door to door?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:38:10] Door to door.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:38:10] And how did people respond knowing you were Indian?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:38:14] Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:38:15] With an accent.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:38:17] Yeah, yeah. You know, those times people accepted they were tolerant. You know, only this lady. I used to sit and talk when I delivered because she was alone and elderly lady, she she needed company. And both were desperate for company, I guess so. And then I told my husband. I'm tired, Avon, I want to get out of the house and do something. Regular 9 to 5 job. So I found a teller job. First National Bank of Maryland. It's not a facing the customers teller public. It's a bulk teller. I was a bulk teller. Bulk teller means downstairs in the bank. I was in the main Maine bank head and downstairs. There are a lot of tellers. They are given their own cabin from departmental stores. Bulk of money in deposited in this bank account. We have to count that all day. It will come in bundles. And we. There were about more than a dozen tellers like me. We have given an own desk and own space to count because it will come in a bags, you know. And the. What is it? Garda bank. What is it? The you know, the bank bus comes the man.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:39:40] The armoured car.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:39:41] Armed car. Right? I couldn't get the name. Yes. Armored car. They'll bring it and he'll go downstairs because it downstairs in the basement of the bank. The bulk teller. Because so much money is coming. So it won't come through the main entrance.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:39:57] And with your math degree, this was somewhat. Did you feel like this was purposeful for you?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:40:03] And excuse me.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:40:04] With your math, you had a degree in math?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:40:06] Yes, yes, I got the job easily.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:40:09] This was.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:40:09] Something.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:40:11] You enjoyed and you were able. You said there were 12 of you.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:40:14] The first time. It will be bundle of hundreds and 20s and so many bundles. One like department. Also there was Montgomery Ward. Have you heard of Montgomery Ward there too? So one day we'll get I will get that account when I go to work and sit there to start my work. Whatever Montgomery made the previous day, the money, cash, those times. Credit cards were not prevalent, right? So a lot of cash. So it used to come in bags. So that account I have to do or something all morning on account on another department store like Macy's. It was not Macy's in Baltimore. There were no Macy's but equivalent to like Dillard's. So you have to know another account. Or if the if there is smaller amount from a departmental store, different grocery store or anything, then we will be given another business to count.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:41:09] And how long were you a bulk teller for?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:41:12] I was a teller.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:41:13] How many years.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:41:14] For? Let me. Not to long. Maybe to, um. Year and a half. I was a teller for 18 months. And the thing about Bulk Teller is you can't leave at the end of the day. We have a manager and head each person. We have a report like table. We

have to write the amount, how much it was for the company. It should tally when it. Because the the company will say we have send this much money. So we are not stealing it. The tellers you know attempted. So if one account if one person tellers doesn't tally, the others cannot leave.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:41:57] Oh wow.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:41:58] Because it could transfer to anybody. You know, that's the only.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:42:01] Everybody was good at math.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:42:04] No. Not good. I mean, stealing.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:42:06] Yeah. No, I understand.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:42:07] That much, bulk. Anybody will be attracted, even me, even though I don't have to. So like shoplifting, money lifting.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:42:16] So do you feel because you had said you were really depressed, it was a hard adjustment for you? Do you feel this job helped to get you out of that depression or feel more connected to?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:42:27] So no, my husband wanted to go back to India for good in 74, but there is a reason. And he's his being the only child. His mother was really ill at that time, and the reason is they suspected she had stomach cancer, but it was not a wrong diagnosis. She lived with us. 2009 here too in this country to pick up. But that was wrong diagnosis. But they scared him. So he he was too close to his mother. So he went back. He said, I look for a job in India with my experience

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:43:04] With him.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:43:05] And.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:43:05] With him.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:43:06] Okay, so 74. We went to India. He looked for a good.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:43:10] Were you happy to go back?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:43:12] Um, yes. Homesick. I was homesick going back to India that time. Still, I was attached to India only two years since married. So it was okay. But he was not happy. He didn't find a good suitable job. By then it was clear that his mom was didn't have stomach cancer. So he came back. By then he was, um, drafted in the US Navy towards the end of Vietnam War. So when we came back, he joined the US Navy as a lieutenant commander, post doctor. But the status is written, commander.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:43:51] And how was that for you? Thinking like, oh, you might go back home, you might be in India. And then knowing, oh, no, I'm not going to we're actually going back.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:43:59] To the US. I expected that when he left with me, he told me if I don't, first of all, if my mother is ill for a long time, cancer, if they means it will take a year and a half or two with all. I don't know whether there was therapy at that time, I mean, chemotherapy or radiation, but but within a month we came to know. He took to this good specialist in another state and everything was diagnosed that she didn't have cancer. So he had a little bit, uh, happy and hopeful. But he did look for a job. If my mom gets sick with something else, it's better if I live in India, but with the with the expectation, if he can't find a job there to his satisfaction and his qualification he will come back.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:44:49] And for you, like you were going to do with what your husband did. Of course. Yes, yes.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:44:55] Yes, yes.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:44:56] Did you feel a little sad that you weren't going to stay in India or you just.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:45:01] Moved.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:45:01] On and said, well.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:45:03] Yeah, I'm an easygoing person. So. So I said, if you can't find a job and we'll come back even before leaving from here in 74. So it happened. And by then he was drafted. He had to come back to even though he couldn't find a job. That was the main reason in India. Good job. By then his draft was waiting. He needed to do his draft time. Yeah, only two years.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:45:32] And you were in Baltimore during his draft time?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:45:35] No. When we came back, we came straight to Oakland. Oh. That's where. Because towards the end of Vietnam War, he was in a class A1. The doctors were ready to go to the end of the Vietnam War. Thank God he didn't go. He remained in the American side in Oakland, California. But he should.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:45:53] What did you do during that time.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:45:55] At that time, um, I got pregnant with Lara. Big job. So.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:46:02] So in Oakland.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:46:03] In Oakland we did want to get child because it's free medical thing if you have children. When he was there Oakland, we were given a home in the premises for the doctors. Beautiful, not beautiful, big spacious home. So we thought it's time to buy. Then it was 76, first year of Navy within to get used to that place. And then.

Speaker5: [00:46:31] Did you work during.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:46:32] That time? No, I did not.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:46:34] I did not.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:46:35] Work. Did you feel were you less depressed? You were more adjusted to being in the United States? Did you find community?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:46:42] Oh, yes. Yes. The neighbors were all doctors or other Navy people. They were all nice people. I made lasting friendship, and we took her seven year old son to Disneyland to. By then, I was pregnant with Lata, maybe 4 or 5 months, so. So in 75, we decided after being in the Navy for a year at the hospital, we said, oh, it's all free, it's better to have a child. And by then we were being married for three years. So. And Lata was born in March 76th. Three and a half years after that. And then when he did not like the Navy, because he is a guy who likes to teach, do research, but he did his obligation. Two years I was waiting for the day his contract is over, so he already found this guy is lucky wherever. Even if he didn't like any job, there is another job waiting for him and he had applied that way. He has been lucky all his life and I'm lucky to bless. So he tried the draft day before that he found a job in Albany, New York. Wow. As a as a medical center, teaching medical students and doing research. That's all he wants to do and write papers after.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:48:02] So Lata was.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:48:03] Lata was born. Lata was seven and a half months when. Yeah, yeah, my life has since childhood in India, moving, so I'm used to it. So I haven't made a lasting friendship. That's my problem even here now, from even this country with my husband. It continued from my father's side.

Speaker5: [00:48:26] I was going to say.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:48:27] All the moving that you had as a child, it probably prepared you for the life you.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:48:32] So see. See it was. It didn't bother me. That's that's what it is. Even in India, I didn't make lasting friendship. Different state, different language. It's okay because I had my family so that. So it didn't bother me or I missed or get depressed.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:48:49] You were used to that concept of needing to adapt to new environments and new languages.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:48:55] Maybe that is why I adapted here. And my husband wanted to go back when his mother was sick. Actually, he lost, my father in law in 1985, and since my husband is only a child at that time, within a month, my mother in law joined us. And when we were in New York.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:49:14] You went, oh, in New York?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:49:15] Yes. We were still in New York.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:49:17] Before we go on. Is there anything you wanted to jump in? And.

Ivy Cochran Murti: [00:49:21] Um, I mean, my question, I kind of were a little bit late on it because we kind of went past this topic already. If it's if it's.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:49:28] I don't know if you have any questions, you can stop. What do you want to ask?

Ivy Cochran Murti: [00:49:33] It seems like being a bank, a bulk teller was kind of a memorable job you had. Was that the kind of job that you imagined you'd end up and end up in when you were younger?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:49:43] No, no, it is just to keep myself busy. Just get out of the house. Yeah, that's all it was. A man. No children, you know. He was young. Yeah.

Ivy Cochran Murti: [00:49:55] Was a math teacher when you were in India. A job that, like, you really liked. And a job that you.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:50:00] I did, I did, yes. I did like my job. Yeah. If I had not been married by 24, I would have continued. I would have continued.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:50:11] Did you ever consider getting your teaching credential?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:50:14] Here it is, 12 five. Do you think we should stop?

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:50:18] No. We're okay. Are you okay?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:50:19] I'm okay. But, Lata, you will tell Lara when to leave.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:50:23] Yeah, I think we. Oh, okay.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:50:26] It doesn't matter. 1230.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:50:28] If we don't finish everything today, we can do a.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:50:30] Oh, yeah. We can sit outside. The weather is nice. It was nice yesterday. We sat outside and. God, it was beautiful.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:50:37] Did you ever consider, uh, getting your teaching credential here?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:50:43] Yes, I did. I forgot to tell you, when we were in New York, Lata was five years old. I thought I should continue as a teacher. Yes I did. I sent all the credentials to the state, um, in in Albany. They said my Indian credentials, no, because I got a degree in teaching. They said nothing will be recognized here. So at that time, to teach high school, the kids were not that high school kids in Albany area public school. Uh, it's not easy to teach. So when the when they said you have to do everything for two years at least to get my teachers, I changed my mind. I went, oh, I forgot to tell you, I got my accounting degree. Instead of that being mathematics background. I didn't want to. I gave up teaching because of this reason. Because I have to do everything again. I didn't like it. And then what kind of children I will teach high school still and obedient or discipline them. And I'm so short and coming with an accent, I still I was better with my accent, but still I had an Indian accent.

Ivy Cochran Murti: [00:52:01] American children are much different than Indian children, I'm sure.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:52:04] Yes, Indian children, you know, you can scold them.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:52:08] In Albany it was pretty. Is it a was it a pretty diverse, I think, of New York as well. New York City is very.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:52:14] Albany is the state capital.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:52:16] Was it is it a very diverse town?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:52:18] Oh, yes. It's a state capital. I've never been.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:52:21] Oh, were there other Indian?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:52:23] Oh, yes. We were socializing with other Indians and local friends too. They were all very nice. And, uh, Lata, when she was five years old, I got my went evening school, business school and got my degree in accounting. So Saty took care of her in the evening while she was in school. And and then when I was nine years old, my mother in law joined.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:52:46] Did you ever get a job in accounting?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:52:48] Yes. I was working for four years in New York until we moved to Parsons, Kansas, where Saty wanted to practice.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:52:56] And that was during. Lata was in school and.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:52:59] Lata was in school, but Lata was in sixth grade when we moved from New York. With your mother in law.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:53:04] Mother in law.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:53:05] Mother in law? Yes, mother in law joined us in 1985. I was nine years old. April. No. May 2000. No, 1985. And she lived with us until 2009 when she passed away.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:53:19] And how this is also going back and knowing how close you were with your your mom and your dad.

Speaker7: [00:53:27] I used. Yes.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:53:28] How was that living so far away from them?

Speaker7: [00:53:31] I used to visit.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:53:32] Them quite often when they were alive. Every two years.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:53:36] You would go back?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:53:37] Yes. Sometimes with Sadty and Lata, sometimes me alone. And I'm still in. I'm really close to my younger brother, who lives in Bangalore. We are really close and the older brother and sister. They are okay, but not that close. Not that we have antagonized, but I have some differences. So when younger brother I visited in March this year, 2024 for a month. So every after my parents passed away, both of them I on an average I visit once in three years. And actually 2000. I couldn't go because I had to cancel my trip due to pandemic. And then I made it. This will be my last trip. That's a long trip. I couldn't take it. 2024 March. For a month, I had a good time and went and saw both my older brother and my sister, who lives close to my younger brother. I told you in Mysore.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:54:36] So you have. Do you have nieces and nephews?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:54:39] No, I'm not that close because I've been here for 52 years. Just visit for two weeks. Three weeks at weeks. That time I see it. But my niece is one niece, my younger brother with whom I'm close. The niece is in new Jersey. She lives there and the son was in this country. And then he became Hare Krishna. My younger brother and he went back to India. He didn't want to live here, to raise his children. So he lives in the same town where my brother lives in Bangalore. And my sister's daughter lives in Singapore. My niece, they're happily married and they have one child.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:55:18] And as is the story with immigrants you know, it's hard. I have family all over, right? So far away. You know, my mom grew up very close with her family.

Speaker7: [00:55:29] But you have some here.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:55:30] You have. You know, her world was very different than what she expected it to be. And you adjust. And so you went from Albany. Then you came to California, back to California.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:55:41] Parsons, Kansas. My husband.

Speaker7: [00:55:43] Went to.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:55:44] Neurology. Oh, yeah. We moved from Kansas. Here. Our life is all over. Yeah, right from my day, I'm born.

Speaker7: [00:55:52] Okay, so.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:55:53] How many years were you in Kansas?

Speaker7: [00:55:55] Uh, almost close

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:55:57] To eight years. He practiced. He didn't like practice. So he got a medical director job at a Kansas Topeka, Kansas, which is a Kansas capital for a Medicare Medicaid program. He was a medical director. It's a federal job.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:56:15] Did you work while you were in Kansas?

Speaker7: [00:56:17] Uh, not.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:56:18] Or maybe I was a retail store manager. It was a special store. He got a lot of things from Bali, Indonesia. Those decorative things. Unique, different. So Lata worked there, and then I became the manager while we were in Topeka, Kansas. Oh, I'm sorry. When my husband was a practicing, I was a business manager. Took care of all the accounts and you know, the payment and sending them to collections.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:56:48] And when your husband was.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:56:50] Was practicing in Parsons, Kansas, for seven and a half years in.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:56:53] The office, you were the.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:56:54] Business. I was the business manager for seven and a half years. Yes.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:56:58] And from Kansas. What brought you to.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:57:01] Here? These two

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:57:03] your grandkids.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:57:05] Yes.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:57:05] No, no. Yes. Because my mother in law died. Until then, we didn't want to move her. She was getting old. She died when she was 87 years old in 2009 in Topeka rightly. This girl, she she my my mother in law has seen her when she was five and a half months old. She was born in July, and she was in a nursing home in Topeka for a year. My mother in law, until then, she lived with us for 20 more than 23 years. We couldn't manage last few years dementia and I couldn't take care of her. She was okay taking care of herself, but mind and everything. So for the last one year, she was in a nursing home close to her house. We used to go and see her almost every day. Anyhow, when she (Ivy) was five and a half months old, Lata came from California to show her during Christmas holidays. So she is seeing her. She doesn't remember find her mind.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:58:04] So yeah, great grandma.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:58:06] Yeah great grandma. The nursing home. And anyhow, the reason we moved here was when Lata got the job. Um, no, not job she was doing still her last year of thesis dissertation at USC, she was born and she couldn't manage breastfeeding her. And Dave lost his job too in 2008 after she was born in December. So we financially, we helped them so she could finish her thesis with the baby, she couldn't finish.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:58:41] So you decided to pick up.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:58:43] Because we were free. My husband had already retired early. He was only 61 years old when he retired.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:58:49] He retired. And it was a happy move for you?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:58:52] Yes, yes.

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:58:53] I'm used to you. So it doesn't bother me. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [00:58:58] And you came to Santa Maria?

Viji Satya-Murti: [00:59:01] No, first Pasadena. For one year, she was a baby. And to finish her PhD. And Dave was also started traveling quite a bit in his job. So they needed help. So I was the one who was then one 2010 for a year. We came to Pasadena and lived close by and helped Lata with the baby and us. And then she got a job at Brandman. Here. That's her first job. But by then she was. No, she was not pregnant. Once when she got the job, she wanted to have the second child. Lily, she got pregnant right away within a month or two. But when they moved here, Lily was not born. She was carrying Lily, and we didn't have anything. She's the only child. We are retired. And we moved here to help her. And Dave was traveling almost six days a week. He is never here, so she needed help with her. And then Lily. Lily was born by then. She was born in Pasadena in March 2011. We moved here in August 2011 to Santa Maria when she got the.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:00:11] Had you ever been here before?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:00:13] No, we never knew about Santa Maria. Boy, it's a heaven here.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:00:18] Yeah. What were your initial impressions when you moved to the area you had been traveling? You'd been all over the. Well, I've been India so many places in the United States. And then you end up in Santa Maria, California, that is. What did you like?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:00:34] Because God sent. Because of the weather we never expected at our old age. First, we rented a place on Eliot Street. Just big house, because children were babies moving because most of the time we took care of them. Either daycare or Lata was the new job. And, you know, Dave was never in the picture. Maybe weekend sometime in his job, not this job, which he's doing before. So she needed help. She was busy with the new job. She had to learn the job and teach. So almost we took care of these children mostly. And then we moved to this house rented, that was rented when they grew up. And they bought their own home. And the present home, we moved into a smaller place. This house rented for three years and bought it too afterwards. We own it now for the past eight years. And the reason we didn't know about Santa Maria after first two years, we were so busy with the taking care of daycare, picking them. Sickness means they will put the temperature here as soon as you enter the daycare. Oh, or some other child is sick. Don't bring the children. It was hard for Lata and us.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:01:46] Didn't even need community at that point. You were so busy with.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:01:49] Your first 2 or 3 years, right? Once when Dave's job situation changed, then we started realizing and enjoying this place as a couple. Just of course we were close to them, but get the experience of this town where we moved. That's the reason we rented this place. We are not sure whether we'll be staying or what it be. When slowly dawned on us after being here for 3 or 4 years, this kind of weather we have never seen anywhere. Beautiful weather.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:02:20] So the weather is the number one?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:02:22] Yes.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:02:23] And how about the community? Have you found.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:02:24] Community.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:02:26] Outside of.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:02:27] Friendship that much? No Saty has made more friends here. I have two two ladies in this neighborhood I made. I am still friendly with one of them. The other lady passed away across the other street. She was nice. We used to go out to eat anniversary and birthdays and we used to meet for lunch, and I've given them whatever. I made gifts till I'm friendly with one of them. The other lady, very nice lady, passed away. Saty has made more friends. I am a person. Maybe because of the way I have moved everywhere. I don't make close friends that much. It doesn't bother me. I mean, I'm friendly when I'm not introvert that I want. Now I talk too much, but I don't go out and make friends and life long lasting friends. That's my problem. It doesn't bother me that I don't have friends or something.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:03:26] And have you found is there an Indian community in the area?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:03:30] Not much, not much. There was an Indian lady. Sikh lady living this street within the gate, but she was a younger woman with her own children. She moved out and the problem is some of them, they. I go and approach and then it fizzles away. They don't. I don't know what the reason is and it doesn't bother me. Oh boy. I wanted to make friends. If they don't want to sit and cry or moan. No. Maybe that that's the way my not my personality, the way I grew up in India, I didn't make any long lasting friendship from childhood. Still keeping in touch like pen pal I didn't make.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:04:21] It sounds like.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:04:22]

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:04:23] Your community and your connection really is rooted in family.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:04:28]

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:04:29] Like where you feel connected in communities with family?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:04:34] Yeah. Family is good. Yeah. Ah. I don't sit and mourn. I don't have my age group. Some friendship to call it as a good friend. The relationship. I don't feel it.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:04:50] How do you feel? You know, part of what we talk about is cultural sustainability or sustaining, like our roots or our heritage. What are important parts of your culture that you hope you've passed on to Lata, or you share with your grandchildren? Like.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:05:12] Oh, you're. Asking we.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:05:14] We do teach some values and tell them we are not enforcing them. Our religion, our tradition. But we do tell them, like like Christmas, we have a festival called Diwali, the festival of lights. We they we still want them to know we are not forcing them. But every year before that, it doesn't come on like December 25th is Christmas Day. Depends upon the star's Hindu calendar so it doesn't come on a certain date, usually November during the month of November or end of October. So they still want to do firecrackers. So they basically they know what the culture is, what we worship, what kind, and how we worship. That's all. We are not forcing them to do anything. The culture. I think they are okay because Dave was a Baptist. He doesn't. I mean, his parents, um, he doesn't follow Christianity after marrying Lata, being a Hindu and they for the children they are teaching them. This is how we grew up, the religion. It's better to know the Hindu language, not to practice strictly. Because we did. Because we have left India. Sorry. And I. It is not right. And suppose if Lata had married an Indian, maybe because he will also think the children should learn more of our Hindu culture and how to worship and rituals. They will accept it, but not this kind of inter-racial marriage to.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:06:54] So what other ways have you felt you've wanted or other important aspects of your culture or religion you wanted to pass on to the kids or Ivy for you? Are there areas you have wanted?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:07:05] Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:07:06] Have you wanted to learn.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:07:07] From us?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:07:08] Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:07:09]

Ivy Cochran Murti: [01:07:10] Yeah. I mean, as I've gotten older, I've become really interested in Hinduism. And I mean, I think of my religion as I am Hindu and I really do want to learn more about it. So, you know, whatever you want to teach me, I'd love to know.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:07:24] Oh, okay. Yeah, yeah. But. A seat. Saty grew up in one town until he was 22 when he came here more Hindu, Orthodox, Hindu Brahmin culture. You better ask your grandpa. He's good.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:07:40] What about. Are there temples or what are the places of worship and practice? Are there any around here?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:07:49] Oh, temple? No. To be Hindu. Hinduism is such a liberal religion. You don't. If there is a temple, there is plenty of temples in India. It's different. If you had lived there, we'll be going to the temple with so many multiple gods and goddesses. But we have all the prayer book you can do personally to God. That is the good thing. So since we knew that if there is temple, we try to go. We went to Sacramento, there is a temple, we went there, we took them. So so we we are not forcing them to follow the particular Hindu religion to both of them, but at least they should know. And they know, and whenever they are ready, like she's asking now, we are ready to explain it to them and teach.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:08:38] Them such a rich, rich traditions and so many traditions.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:08:43] Of Hinduism. You know that you know, I came to know. I'm not bragging because Tamil is the oldest language, my my language, Dravidian and all the temples, or they say 3000, 4000 years old. Sculptured so many temples, especially where I come from, Tamil Nadu, so much rich. And I'm learning slowly because I never lived in one place in India. That's my problem. Saty knows more than me. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:09:14] And what other ways? Food, music, dance, values. Are there values that you want to pass on?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:09:21] Yeah. The Bollywood like Lata and you suggested at Arroyo Grande. I have seen Bollywood because of my age or something. Sometimes I see in YouTube that fusion we are used to the traditional, Bollywood is a fusion of our my state classical dance is Bharatanatyam. Yes. Oh, you know you are a dancer, right?

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:09:45] Well, I don't know that dance.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:09:46] That is my classical. That is different. They mix. Bollywood is more entertainment and movie people and see, Bharathanatyam is the oldest classical and you may know and Kathak, they go around, you know, the skirt that is from the north dance. And then Odissi. Have you heard of Odissi dance? It's similar to Bharatanatyam, but Bharathanatyam people can see the difference.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:10:15] Well, South India has so many dances.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:10:17] Oh yes. No, classical is better than Indians mostly. Yeah. And Kathak is mostly from north and Odissi is another form a folk dances in Kerala (khatakali). You know, they put that mask. It takes 3 to 4 hours just for the costume, for the person who is going to dance. That is another thing. It's a neighboring state. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:10:41] Mhm. So wait, there are different ways you'll share your culture and your tradition with your. It sounds like you need to ask Ivy, right.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:10:51] Yes. Yeah I yeah I.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:10:53]

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:10:56] It. She wants to learn. She needs to ask any time.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:10:59] She's welcome. Honey, if you want to ask question. No.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:11:03] I mean about Hindu, about culture, about tradition. Sounds like.

Ivy Cochran Murti: [01:11:07]

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:11:08] Honey, you want Daddy Baba to correct me? Sometimes I may go wrong if you are too much. Because the way I grew up in different places. Survival and all my parents didn't insist like his friends every day. This is the way you should do this. God should be prayed this way. Even though he doesn't, he can't. You can't practice it here. But at least the book is there. Quietly read the for each God the prayer book. Yeah. Okay, honey? Yes. What do you want to ask? I'll make it brief, which is hard. Okay.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:11:41] No, I really don't have any questions about Hinduism. At least not for now. On the mic.

Speaker8: [01:11:46] Unless you think of.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:11:47] You can call or text us and we'll fix a day and do it. We can meet. We are in the same town. This is a good chance to see you. You are going to go to college.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:11:57] So cooking food. I know you cook a lot.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:12:00] Oh yes.

Speaker8: [01:12:01] I love.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:12:01] To cook. Source food. The Indian in this town, there's not a lot of Indians. There's not an Indian market. How do you get the ingredients?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:12:08] Groceries, Indian groceries, food? Food Max has some.

Speaker8: [01:12:13] Okay.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:12:13] Has everything.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:12:15] Mostly. You know, the Sikh? Whatever. North Indians, mostly North Indians. But we use that to all the spices are there. But the Indian sambar

powder. I have to get a South Indian from my all that. I have to get it from the Indian grocery store either I. When we were in Pasadena, there was an Indian grocery a few times where we asked them to ship it by UPS. Whatever I need. We went to Sacramento in June. Last June we I found a grocery store and I got some. And then after being here for 52 years and our stomach and all say we don't have to eat Indian food, Trader Joe's is good for. So I am unable to cook every day. I used to cook every day Indian food when I was young and taking care of the family with with my stomach being so sensitive and getting old to stand and cut and vegetables, we have adapted. Just like everything, Saty is easygoing. He cooks his own soul. She learns all our cooking day before yesterday. Yeah, from her grandpa.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:13:22] And so thinking. I know we're getting close on time. No. Thinking about your life.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:13:27] Sorry I delayed you guys.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:13:29] No, no, we're not late at all. Um, just thinking about your life, right? The richness of your life from you were born. You lived with your grandparents all the moving, and you ended up here in Santa Maria. What are some of you would, when you reflect back, are there key moments that come to light to your mind that really changed your life, or that are memorable experiences? Or, um, what would you want to pass on to your.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:14:03] My grandchildren?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:14:05] They have they should have faith in God. It doesn't matter. You practice one religion, you have to do it a certain way, whatever is comfortable. You do it with good You grow up to be a good moral person, kind, generous, and good Samaritan. And what else can I say? But that both the parents are teaching anyhow, even though we are close by. They be affectionate and. You guys are doing that? I don't know what else can I say? Get educated. Education is important. Yes.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:15:04] Are there any key people in your life that you would like you talked a lot about your grandpa. Is there?

Speaker8: [01:15:11] Yeah. Yes.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:15:11] Because that's only, you know, the young age memory bond. That's the age you bond with some family members, right? I mean, my parents, it was okay. And then I came here. I mean, I was with them for 18 years with all the time they took.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:15:28] Good care of me. But with three other children each moving different places, they can't do everything. Concentrate only on one child. So, I mean, I was raised well, loving and took care. But that bond didn't happen with my parents. That important part of the year, 15 months to six years is strong, right? The affection. So I wish I had that with my parents. That's all I regret now.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:16:02] Which wasn't in your control.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:16:04] But I have a good husband since I came not knowing him the whole life after married life, I have no regrets.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:16:14] So I always ask this of my mom or my dad, or different people that have immigrated. When you first came to the United States, are there any like, funny moments or memorable moments where you realize the stark difference between your upbringing or your culture and American culture? Like, for example, my mom tells a story when she went to the grocery store and we had a pet. And so she went to the pet food aisle and she could not believe how many choices of pet food there were. She just sat, she says, I just sat there for like five minutes because where I grew up in Egypt, you just give them scraps. Here I come to the United States. I couldn't find a pet food because I.

Speaker8: [01:16:59] Know your mom's.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:17:01] Experience I had when we came to Baltimore after I joined him, within 2 or 3 weeks, he took me to one grocery store I have never seen produce. And this big store, giant store. And then there is another store, A and P those times in Baltimore. First he took me to giant. The way it was arranged the produce. And then 2 or 3 days after, when we needed groceries, he took me to A and P, I was he got mad at

me. I said, we came to this store. We came to my husband said, no, that was giant. This is a and P the same. It was the same way it was. It took look, it took a while to convince me. So. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:17:44] Just that was shocking.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:17:45] Yeah. Right.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:17:46] Yeah. And is there anything else you want to share that you forgot about?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:17:51] I think I talked too much. Then if you have any questions, which I missed to answer in your list. So.

Ivy Cochran Murti: [01:17:59] Um, I mean, I guess this is kind of a specific question. You and Baba both grew up vegetarian in India, and I know that when Baba came to the US, at least, there was a while where he was eating meat and he wasn't vegetarian for a while, just out of necessity and just needing to get food in his stomach. How did, uh, did you have any struggles with trying to be vegetarian in the US? Because this isn't the greatest place, you know, for finding vegetarian food?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:18:25] Oh, no, I didn't have any problem. Uh, when I came to Baltimore, I was cooking because I had the time and young and energy. No child. So I was cooking. He enjoyed all the food, you know, when he changed, stopped eating meat. He. When he was in the Navy. Baba used to be chubby. The Navy doctors in the cafeteria. They used to give food free or real low for the employees. And he used to eat fish, fish or fillet that fried string every day. And then cheesecake. He spoiled, I mean, that that he developed when he was bachelor in the residency. Nobody to cook. He exhausted 36 hours working in the cafeteria. That's how he started eating. Only for five years after marrying me slowly two years, he cut a lot of food, eating meat or actually red meat. He cut right away because there was somebody to cook and give him tasty food, Indian food, which he grew up until he was 22 years old. And then when his mom came, he was all, she told him, why are you eating there? You get everything vegetarian, good food. And he completely stopped. His mom influenced.

Speaker6: [01:19:42]

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:19:42] He felt guilty. Yeah, yeah.

Speaker9: [01:19:45] So you were able to adapt?

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:19:47] Pretty easy.

Speaker9: [01:19:47] And with the diet.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:19:49] And the foods?

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:19:50] Yeah. And the Baltimore. Baltimore. I never had problem. We had Indian grocery store. So why do you have to go to the meat store and fruits and vegetables in a regular store? And I was a great cook, and I used to love to cook and cook everything a lot when I had. Now only it's about 7 or 8 years after my fracture and then old age. I am unable to stand and cook and my stomach problem. Everything bothered me. Indian food. So this is how. And now I got old. And Saty is used to cooking his own food. No problem. He didn't bother him.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:20:28] Anything else?

Ivy Cochran Murti: [01:20:30] No.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:20:30] This valuable time with your grandma?

Ivy Cochran Murti: [01:20:33] Yeah. No. Thank you for doing this.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:20:35] Oh, yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:20:36] You were curious.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:20:37] They do spend valuable time. I bug them sometimes and they come on their own, so. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:20:42] Well, when they're.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:20:43] Older, nag them.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:20:43] When they're older, they're going to value so much time. So much. This time they had with you. I hope that for my girls too. Who? My mom.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:20:52] She they were close. Your children?

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:20:54] My mom lives in Orange County. She's about five hours away.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:20:59] How old is she, if I may?

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:00] 75.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:02] Oh, she's a year younger than me. Yeah.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:05] Yeah, but I hope they when they're older, they will value the time that they had.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:10] But they go and see her, or you go and take them.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:13] Yeah, either she'll come up or we go down. We try to see her every 4 to 6 weeks.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:18] Oh that's nice. And how about your husband's family?

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:21] His mom and dad are in Los Osos.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:24] Oh.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:25] So they.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:25] Oh. Oh. That's good. Just like. How far? Yeah. In the same town. Just for 4 or 5 miles. It's a small town.

Speaker9: [01:21:32] Yeah. Yeah.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:33] Like just like here. Yeah. Okay.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:35] But now they're teenagers, you know, so they don't want to spend.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:37] How old are your children? No. Same here. We don't bug them, but they come sometimes. They don't come. Huh? No.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:45] 17 and 15.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:21:48] Oh, almost. This girl is going to be 17 in July. And Lily, 14, in a couple of months. Wow.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:21:56] Any final closing thoughts? Thank you so much for this time for sharing.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:22:01] Oh no problem.

Sandra Sarrouf: [01:22:02] Enjoyed it.

Viji Satya-Murti: [01:22:04] Enjoyed it. Yeah.

END