

Transcript of Interview with Parmjit Singh and Gurpreet Singh.

Interviewee: Parmjit Singh

Interviewer: Gurpreet Singh

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Transcriber: Michael Wohl

Abstract: Parmjit Kaur Singh is a hard-working immigrant from Punjab, India. She came here when she got married and had two boys by the name of Harpreet Singh and Gurpreet Singh. She currently lives in Eau Claire, Wisconsin with her family and owns a convenience store in town. She enjoys drinking tea, watching Indian soap operas, gardening, and spending time with her family. In this interview, she gives her thoughts on Covid-19, its impact on her business, and also how it has been devastating to her native country of India.

Gurpreet Singh 00:05

11/2021. in Wisconsin, there are 666,401 confirmed cases of COVID. Wisconsin vaccines administered so far has been to 39.6 of the population. The total cases in the US entirely is 32 point 8 million. The total vaccines administered in the USA is 34.8 of the population. And for India, the total cases confirmed is 23 million with 250,000 confirmed cases. And the total and vaccines administered has been to 11.5% of the population. My name is Gurpreet Singh. I'm 25 years old. This is for class at UW ECE. And the class is public history with Dr. Frey. And I'm interviewing

Parmjit Singh 01:17

Parmjit Singh, my name is Parmjit Singh. My age is 58 year old and I live in Wisconsin Eau Claire. I'm from India. And I have to I have a family here my husband and my two kids, we live together and we have a gas station we own the gas station. And I work over there. So in the COVID cases is a lot now. And okay, so people are scared. Sometimes I'm scared too, because this is this is very weird virus. So we have to take precaution for that. Wear the mask all the time and wash your hand and just take it for yourself. And so it's back to the other people's wear mask.

Gurpreet Singh 02:10

Yeah, so you already gave me a lot of knowledge. So far, I was going to ask you what your knowledge of COVID is. So you already got a good grip on that. So where do you usually get your news for COVID?

Parmjit Singh 02:23

from social media, Indian news, American news I watch all the time. So and Instagram and WhatsApp and Indian news. So from the TV channel from CNN, so I bought a lot media. So you

Gurpreet Singh 02:39

have mainstream media and you hear from other people too.

Parmjit Singh 02:43

Yes. Talking and I got it. Yes.

Gurpreet Singh 02:51

And what do you like better? The Indian news or the American news when it comes to COVID?

Parmjit Singh 03:02

I like both if they are true. So I listen all these? So I like both.

Gurpreet Singh 03:11

Like Both? Both. Okay, um, so the places you mentioned WhatsApp and you mentioned the Indian news. And hearing from different people. Do you talk to your family members over there in India right now?

03:29

Well, yes, I talk to my family members. So yeah, they give me a lot of information too

Gurpreet Singh 03:35

Okay. And so there's been new strains showing up over there.

Parmjit Singh 03:43

Yeah, this is the sad this is a third stage now that's that is attacking to the young kids. And people are very, very scared now because it's attacking on the kids. So the kids don't know how to protect them, and they don't know. Anything. So this is

Gurpreet Singh 04:06

okay. So, um, you said it was a third stage, third, third wave coming in. And there's also different variants that are coming in to India, that are also making it very bad for people.

Parmjit Singh 04:24

Yeah, the people have it black fungus. Okay, it comes from the medicine, the steroid, they give it to them. So a lot of people are in.

Gurpreet Singh 04:36

Okay. And that's, you think maybe that's happening because they don't have access to the other types of medicine that we have over here?

Parmjit Singh 04:44

Yes.

Gurpreet Singh 04:46

Okay. There's a lot of different difficulties over there.

Parmjit Singh 04:50

All these people don't have oxygen. Oh, yeah.

Gurpreet Singh 04:56

Tell me more about the oxygen situation over there.

Parmjit Singh 04:59

Yes, the people the hospital shut their doors. They don't have a bed, they don't have an oxygen. So then the goal, the virus, the people from the Gurdwara, the sick aid, they distributed calendars,

Gurpreet Singh 05:14

The Gurdwara, if you can tell us what it is.

Parmjit Singh 05:17

This is what they called Sick aid.

Gurpreet Singh 05:21

Okay? And the Gurdwara is the temple for the Sikhs.

Parmjit Singh 05:27

They provide the food for the peoples, they provide the oxygen, they provide the beds, they help a lot more. A lot.

Gurpreet Singh 05:34

And all over India, they're helping are also all over the world.

Parmjit Singh 05:40

Yeah, they are helping all over the world. Anywhere people need help. They just reach there.

Gurpreet Singh 05:47

Okay, that's, that's great. And you said of hospitals are overflowing. So a lot of people can't go to the hospitals.

Parmjit Singh 05:58

Hospital shut their doors, the people sitting outside and begging for the beds begging for the oxygen and slow people dying on the streets. They can do anything. And people are scared the situation is very worse over there.

Gurpreet Singh 06:16

So and it's also hard for all the people's families that live outside. Yes, you know, you right now you can't even travel over there right now. People can't even really go to the hospital either. Right? Yes. Right. So they have like the same restrictions they have here where they only let like one person go in or they're not letting people say goodbye?

Parmjit Singh 06:41

Yes, one person or two person so that the people can go this one person go there and somebody to them and so,

Gurpreet Singh 06:49

So has COVID changed the way they're, you know, doing the funeral rites, because normally they'll burn and then also put into the river Ganges.

Parmjit Singh 07:01

Yes, they... Yeah, people don't have money to do the ceremonies or something like that. Then they just throw the people the bodies in the in Ravi. Ravi river. So people found 48 bodies in in Ravi river last night. So we don't have any access to do anything.

Gurpreet Singh 07:26

This happened last night.

Parmjit Singh 07:28

Yes. Last night.

Gurpreet Singh 07:34

Okay, do you think it's it's more? Do you think it's more of a scary situation? What's happening over there than what's happening here?

Parmjit Singh 07:43

Yeah, it's more scary over there. People don't have a lot of money to live there. They have a lot down. They can go to work. Some shops are open. And just they can they can make money and how can they said why would there only one person make money and whole family going to eat? So

Gurpreet Singh 08:09

If you can, for our for the people who watch this, can you explain the kind of jobs that a lot of the people have? Because it's not a lot of rich pharma jobs or big Hollywood acting or Bollywood hack acting jobs a lot of the people are working in the factories are working in the already really bad conditions. So if COVID How do you think that's changed everything in the working conditions

Parmjit Singh 08:37

COVID changed their life schedule don't have a food at home. Family is struggling. The most middle class families heard more.

Gurpreet Singh 08:50

The middle class families?

Parmjit Singh 08:51

Middle class families.

Gurpreet Singh 08:52

What about the poor people as well?

Parmjit Singh 08:56

As always struggling so they are struggling before they're struggling now. And rich people as you know, they don't worry before then they don't worry now on the middle class is gonna be heard.

Gurpreet Singh 09:10

Okay, so, no, I that's, that's very eye opening in in regards to COVID in the class system that works over there. Yes, but it's good to hear that there's places like the Sikh temples that Gurdwaras that are there helping everybody with oxygen and stuff. And also you said I want to come back to what you said about whatsapp on there. So since people aren't able to go to the hospitals and they're aren't able to get the medications and a lot of people I know there's a lot of people that live in the very far away places. So if they need to go to the hospital or they need to go get medicine, they have to travel very far. So There's a lot of people if I'm correct, getting medicine and oxygen and buying it through WhatsApp, which is the Indian version of like Facebook or social media?

Parmjit Singh 10:15

Yes.

Gurpreet Singh 10:18

Yes. Could you could you explain something on that? Can you explain that? What are they getting on WhatsApp?

Parmjit Singh 10:24

Sometimes they put their story on the Facebook or any any social media then the sick aid they they know that through the media then they reach there right away then they give them help that's that's them social media help a lot. So.

Gurpreet Singh 10:47

And you about about the deaths so what are people doing with the bodies? Like what the burning so I saw there was something about a lot of people are burning their bodies at the same time.

Parmjit Singh 11:05

Yeah, they bury they buried their bodies in the same time. And sometimes they buried their yards, they don't point the room. They don't find the place from the graveyard is all fall all packed. And they burn their bodies on the streets. Some people throw their bodies from the car and runaway is situation is worse.

Gurpreet Singh 11:29

Worse than America is worse

Parmjit Singh 11:34

Worse than home.

Gurpreet Singh 11:35

Okay. Yes. Because there's a lot of people over there.

Parmjit Singh 11:40

Yes, a lot of people and too much pollution. And now when they burn the bodies, the the smoke air, you know, is this make more worse?

Gurpreet Singh 11:51

Okay, so when they're soaked? Does that make sense? There's a lot of people burning their bodies because there's a lot of people dying and that's affecting the breathing air because it's already really bad in Delhi.

Parmjit Singh 12:04

Yes, very bad in Delhi. Very bad.

Gurpreet Singh 12:07

Okay. Wow. That's, that's really intense. That's very sad, man. Especially now that there's the possibility and it or not possibility it's actually happening that the children are getting infected.

Parmjit Singh 12:24

Yeah. Children? Yeah, affected.

Gurpreet Singh 12:27

Do you think it might come this way? Since a lot of the strains that came to India, were already, you know, new strains from the UK in different parts of the country? Or with the world?

Parmjit Singh 12:43

Oh, I don't know about where the strain came from, but the situation is bad.

Gurpreet Singh 12:50

Okay. Yeah, because there's new variant that showed in India. New variant also the showed in UK and also South Africa. And I'm sure more places are gonna have more variants. India has a huge population. Yes. So that could be also affecting that as well. With with the vaccines, what are your thoughts?

Parmjit Singh 13:21

Vaccine is okay, so yes, people, a lot of people scared a lot of people interested to take the vaccine. So, yes, the vaccine is good. I think vaccine is good. So you have to take your yourself if you have a vaccine, then the standard is less to get the COVID. And if you get the COVID, then it's not going to affect you that much. So you should take the vaccine. Everybody has to take the vaccine.

Gurpreet Singh 13:51

Okay, I completely I completely agree everybody should strongly consider taking the vaccine.

Parmjit Singh 13:59

Some people are scared, don't be scared.

Gurpreet Singh 14:02

Okay. Is there a preference that you have for the certain type of vaccine for the Pfizer or Moderna or Johnson and Johnson?

Parmjit Singh 14:12

Pfizer.

Gurpreet Singh 14:14

Pfizer is your your vaccine of choice?

Parmjit Singh 14:17

Yes.

Gurpreet Singh 14:19

Okay. And what do you think about how do you feel about over here in America, they're wasting millions of vaccines. And in India, people aren't even able to get the vaccines. They don't even have an option of what kind they want.

Parmjit Singh 14:37

Yeah, they don't have any option. They just begging for the vaccine. They don't know what kind. They just said, just give us a vaccine. We want a protection from the COVID. I don't know about the vaccines name in India what they get in clearing, but it's very hard situation and I don't know they get the vaccine or not.

Gurpreet Singh 15:01

And that kind of led to them using a lot of the other medicines and the steroids and now that they have the backflow fungus like you told me

Parmjit Singh 15:11

yes they said this is the side effect for the medicines and medicine is whatever they have the stores have they just charge a lot of money they charge money the rich people can afford but the poor people can't afford that so

Gurpreet Singh 15:29

and there's not any laws in India that prevent

Parmjit Singh 15:34

No laws in India. No.

Gurpreet Singh 15:37

Because I know I know the same thing happened here where some people started charging more for toilet paper water and hand sanitizer

Parmjit Singh 15:50

Yeah then they caught right away in here the caught right away but in India they can't find who did that.

Gurpreet Singh 16:01

So like in the police really don't care also.

Parmjit Singh 16:04

Yes, people sometimes, you know, the police know, but they don't do anything.

Gurpreet Singh 16:10

You know, maybe they say like, if you give if you give me some

Parmjit Singh 16:14

Yeah. Sharing so then they don't they bribe them. So, you know, open their mouths because they get the some portion.

Gurpreet Singh 16:23

Okay, that makes sense. Wow, that's, that's crazy. Anyway, family members in India that have gotten sick?

Parmjit Singh 16:35

No, the touchable they are not sick. So they are they are good. They are healthy.

Gurpreet Singh 16:41

That's how do you know how they're feeling about everything that's happening over there?

Parmjit Singh 16:45

Yeah, they're scared. Always talking about scared but they are not sick. Oh, they are sick, some families sick, or they talking about them but they are not sick

Gurpreet Singh 17:00

In their in their village and their city? Is there a lot of COVID cases compared to the rest of India? Or is it?

Parmjit Singh 17:12

No, they don't have a lot of cases because they are North side so the North side Punjab is is literally safe. It's not safe safe, but it's just better than New Delhi and Bombay.

Gurpreet Singh 17:30

Okay, like the population is a little bit less

Parmjit Singh 17:34

And the open they have a little open area and you know that New Delhi too much crowd Bombay with too much crowd. But they have a like a very open. So maybe they live, they just live far away from each other. So that's why they don't have a lot of villages have a safe now.

Gurpreet Singh 17:56

And then, when was the last time that you talked to a family in India?

Parmjit Singh 18:03

Just like three days ago.

Gurpreet Singh 18:05

Three days ago. So they know about the kids getting affected in the black fungus and stuff.

Parmjit Singh 18:11

Yeah, they know about that. They were scared and they are very careful for the kids now.

Gurpreet Singh 18:17

Okay, so that's, that has affected the way they're there. They live their lives.

Parmjit Singh 18:23

Yes. Yeah, they are. Now because kids don't know anything, so that's why they worry for them then young kids and the whole family. So three young kids and one is like a 10 year old so that's why they no five like that.

Gurpreet Singh 18:43

And how has that affected you knowing that all your family is in India and it's not safe at all and people can't get this medicine?

Parmjit Singh 18:52

Yep, no, no Madison's over there. No facilities, the hospital is false. So what can they do? You know, then I tell them to stay safe.

Gurpreet Singh 19:03

How does that make you feel? With your family over there?

Parmjit Singh 19:07

I feel sad and I'm scared.

Gurpreet Singh 19:13

That's that's very reasonable. And if you would, if you'd like to tell me so you said you had a gas station? Yeah. that you own?

Parmjit Singh 19:27

Yes, I own and I work every day.

Gurpreet Singh 19:31

Okay. Yes. That's good. That's good. Hard work is good. Well, how do you how has that been affected by COVID?

Parmjit Singh 19:43

Yeah, and people come that you know before it's like a people come feel free, you know, like, they're enjoying their life. Now. You can see fear for fear on everybody's face. You know? They they're scared and they have too much, like they do too much percent- precaution for them. So and they don't want to go too much outside. So otherwise people you know, they enjoy their life. They go outside they doing some stuff. They love their lives now everybody is like a scared

Gurpreet Singh 20:23

It's just changed. Yeah, you can see everyone's life. Yeah. And you can see their customers

Parmjit Singh 20:30

Or we see everybody's smiling face, now everybody covered their face and you know they're scared, they don't talk too much. So they just ready to go leave. So before they just standing and talking like a friendship now. Everybody is like, Stop doing that.

Gurpreet Singh 20:49

And then like you said, people are covering their faces and stuff. So with the mask mandate, have you had any trouble with people not wearing their masks?

Parmjit Singh 20:58

No, they didn't wear the mask. They they follow the rules? That's good. We have good customers.

Gurpreet Singh 21:05

Okay, well, that's good to hear that everybody's safe and respecting each other.

Parmjit Singh 21:11

So they follow the rules. This lemmings behind six feet distance, they follow everything.

Gurpreet Singh 21:19

And they're with also COVID. A lot of Asian Americans have been having some racial hate and been treated differently. But have you experienced any of that or no,

Parmjit Singh 21:31

No, I didn't see anything with me and I never did to other people. So, they are seeing for me before I'm seeing now. And I would do that. But nobody did with me that there.

Gurpreet Singh 21:46

Has COVID affected the business aspect and making money or foot traffic.

Parmjit Singh 21:52

Yes, that one is affected. Yeah, they affect our large COVID affect a lot for the business. People don't want to go outside, they don't want to be sick. So they just come for what they need. And they just left quick.

Gurpreet Singh 22:12

People aren't walking around and looking at their stuff.

Parmjit Singh 22:15

They don't have money to spend. So sad money wise,

Gurpreet Singh 22:23

has there been any help from the government? For the business or No, really?

Parmjit Singh 22:28

Not really? No.

Gurpreet Singh 22:34

That's understandable. How is your health then you? Have you been good during this time?

Parmjit Singh 22:40

Oh, yeah. Some tattooed I'm very good last year, and I'm very good this year, too. So I'm healthy.

Gurpreet Singh 22:47

And have you so you haven't gotten sick? Have you gotten your vaccine? Or do you plan on it?

Parmjit Singh 22:53

Yeah, I plan on it, but I'm not sick. So. Okay, I'm getting I have a plan to get the vaccine.

Gurpreet Singh 23:05

We talked about some really serious stuff over there in India. That's happening. Do you one last question before we wrap this up? Do you think it's gonna get better over there in India? Or do you think it's just going to continue to get worse until it's, you know, froze for a while.

Parmjit Singh 23:26

For a while is getting worse than I hope hope they are getting better soon. I wish and I hope they're getting soon better. So

Gurpreet Singh 23:36

You're saying maybe the government should be playing a bigger role

Parmjit Singh 23:41

Maybe? Yeah, the other countries help them. So they hope the God is going to help them and they're gonna be better soon. Like other countries clear out? Maybe they they're gonna clear out very soon. I hope so.

Gurpreet Singh 23:57

Okay. Yeah, I hope so, too. It's just absolutely horrible to hear that this is happening, and especially when people are throwing away vaccines here or they're not even getting their vaccines. Yes. And people in India don't even have the option to get vaccines they have to take other medicines and that in turn, they're getting fungus and they're facing a whole nother wave. And you know, people aren't even getting admitted to the hospital but but the rich people are

Parmjit Singh 24:30

Yeah, the hospital charging too much money.

Gurpreet Singh 24:35

Even the hospital increase their price.

Parmjit Singh 24:37

Oh, yes. Oh goodness. Well, the one lady sick for four days in the hospital. She said four days and they charge one lakh 45,000 rupees for four days.

Gurpreet Singh 24:53

One, how is how much is one lakh is that 1 million?

Parmjit Singh 24:56

No no one lakh is like a You want to be done for the dollars amount?

Gurpreet Singh 24:56

Dollars or the Indian.

Parmjit Singh 24:57

1 million 100, 100 Lakh is I think 1 million. Is less than

Gurpreet Singh 25:11

100, It's \$100,000. Around US?

Parmjit Singh 25:15

Less than that. One lakh 45 is maybe \$2,000 or something or 25,000.

Gurpreet Singh 25:23

Yeah. But over there a lock is like 100,000

Parmjit Singh 25:28

Too much for the poor peoples, and they charge for the bodies then they charge the money to the bodies.

Gurpreet Singh 25:37

They're charging money to bear or to burn the for people to burn their loved ones bodies.

Parmjit Singh 25:43

Around \$100. They said, because they're using PPE kit for the family members through family members go there and they charge for the PPE kit.

Gurpreet Singh 25:53

The PPE kit is okay, protective

Parmjit Singh 25:57

The gloves, the dress they were then they burn the body. They charged money for that.

Gurpreet Singh 26:05

Wow.

Parmjit Singh 26:05

It's worse where yours.

Gurpreet Singh 26:07

Wow, that's man that's that's very, very sad.

Parmjit Singh 26:15

Very sad. They've been struggling.

Gurpreet Singh 26:18

Well, I'm happy that you're okay. Your family's Okay, your family and then gets Okay. Thank you for doing this interview with me very much. Thank you.

Parmjit Singh 26:29

Thanks. All right.

Gurpreet Singh 26:31

Thank you have a good one. Thank you