



Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots

Interview with Kumari Northam

Interviewers: Sue Stevens & Wendy Nichols

Note: The recording of Kumari's interview is blank until 00:01:35.

Interviewer 00:01:35

I can hear something coming in now. I think we have -- Hold on. [Various bumps and sounds around the microphone].

Interviewer 2 00:01:51

I think you're right. I think that might be on.

Interviewer 00:01:53

My name is Sue Stevens and this is Wendy Nichols. And this interview is taking place at the Museum of Mid Devon Life in Tiverton. Could you tell me your full name, where you were born and, and date of birth please?

Kumari 00:02:07

Yeah, my name is Kumari Northam. My country in Sri Lanka. I born in Sri Lanka in [Place name] in the hospital. I'm born 1958, tenth of March.

Interviewer 00:02:28

Ok thank you very much, Kumari for coming in to speak to us. Can you tell me anything about your name? For example, what it means in Sri Lankan?

Kumari 00:02:38

Kumari mean is a coin.

Interviewer 00:02:41

A coin?

Kumari 00:02:41

Yeah. That's why it is -- I hear that, I don't know if it's true. And then.

Interviewer 00:02:51

Okay. And can you tell me a little bit about yourself and your story? How you came to be in Tiverton? Or how you came along? You know, how you actually travelled and that sort of thing?

Kumari 00:03:05



Yeah. I'm working in Sri Lanka in the factory. And then just a little money I - not enough. And I planning on coming to -- Hong Kong, do the job, domestic job. And then, after that, I'm working a few year after that. I find my husband. This mean I'm look after his son as well; he's a four-year-old. And then after that -- [clears throat]

Interviewer 00:03:43

[Whispering] Shall we turn it up again?

Interviewer 2 00:03:44

[Whispering] No it's ok.

Interviewer 00:03:48

Okay, if you could explain to me, you know, why it is that you -- well, how you met your husband and then decided to come together back to the UK.

Kumari 00:04:01

Yeah.

Interviewer 00:04:01

And why you chose Tiverton actually.

Kumari 00:04:04

We have three kids. And then in me planning, husband and me I in the planning come to UK because his country in here. So we decide in it's Hong Kong we have a very bad [uncertain] as well, and then kids need to go to school and very high fees in Hong Kong. And then we're planning coming to here because all the Chinese school, if kids sent to English school, costs lots of money and the three them, 3000 pound for the three them. For one month, we need to pay 3000 pounds. And then we decide, husband and I, so we come to England. And then after that, we coming here, we planning, we renting house in Hemyock.

After that we -- I decide, I tell my husband I need to do some job, I don't want to any government money. I have a hand, I can do, I was still young, I think. And then I can manage look after my family. We don't want the government money. And then I say to my husband, I need my own business and then I went to Petroc, I do the English my course. I, I get my British passport and thanks to my husband, he doing very hard, helped me, look after me and then he helped a lot, I do the my curry business, open all my curry business, Ceylon Curry House. And most the time, be honest, I'm cooking. My husband do the other things very well.

So one thing I want to tell in here, totally different than in the people. I'm very free say, people are very friendly. Very nice. Like the first time see me even they very humble, big thing for me I'm very proud about this UK people. But only one person, he's a teenager, I'm thinking he's a young guy, maybe that's why he misunderstand about me. Lots of people in here, [page turning] so I'm very glad about that, compared to my work in Hong Kong. This people, this is very different. I feel in new life. Anyone know I'm introducing this country people, most popular, most famous, most nice people, I'm thinking. And this country I'm preparing now may stay here, that I am happy. I'm glad that this human, this very nice people. That's why I want to say it.



Interviewer 00:07:05

Excellent. Excellent stuff. [laughter] I know it's horrible talking into -- It's like answering the phone, isn't it or leaving an answer phone? [laughter] It's still going, isn't it? [laughter] Do you want to talk more about your work?

Kumari 00:07:30

Yeah.

Speaker 4 00:07:30

We started in - We start in -

Kumari 00:07:36

Two thousand --

Speaker 4 00:07:40

Eleven. Twelve.

Kumari 00:07:42

No 2011. No 11. Yeah.

Interviewer 00:07:45

You started in 2011?

Kumari 00:07:47

Yeah.

Interviewer 00:07:48

And you have like a little - a mobile --

Kumari 00:07:53

Van, [yeah]. Yeah.

Interviewer 00:07:53

[Van, yes.]

Kumari 00:07:56

I did actually start doing the catering, birthday party thing, wedding. Now, now more popular and lots of people know about us, and then they always everyday one call and asking booking or something like this. They want to doing wedding or birthday party, something like this. And then I'm doing every Friday and Saturday in the Moorhayes Community Centre car park, and then Thursday I'm doing to Sandford and five to eight and sometimes we go in Exeter Uni doing the curry business. In the moment this, this few months, literally slow actually, my business, and then maybe I hope this is getting sunny and the people more interest in coming to curry, yeah. That's why I'm thinking.



Interviewer 00:08:55

Where do you do the cooking? In your house?

Kumari 00:08:57

Yeah, in my house, yeah. Because I have outside, I have a six burner in the outside, big cooker and then I'm cook -- I've all preparing inside my house, kitchen. Then this cooking outside the burner.

Interviewer 00:09:14

Outside the house?

Kumari 00:09:15

Yeah outside, my conservatory, yeah. In the garden. Yeah.

Interviewer 00:09:21

So do the children help you?

Kumari 00:09:23

My younger daughter very exciting cooking, she helps sometimes. Most of the time my husband more helping, he's chopping vegetable and the meat and everything, yeah.

Interviewer 00:09:40

Yeah, what's the most popular dishes you're doing? [Unintelligible] people like?

Kumari 00:09:44

Lots are now more vegan, actually.

Interviewer 00:09:46

Oh?

Kumari 00:09:47

Yeah, and vegetable curry. And then other one chicken. Kotthu roti. We're doing a kotthu roti we call, lots of vegetable, fresh vegetable, and tortilla, and we chuck together and the people can choose any curry, and then I mix it - the lemon, ginger, garlic and coriander. This makes it and then people, this is the very popular this actually. And -

Interviewer 00:10:21

This is authentic?

Kumari 00:10:23

Yeah, authentic.

Interviewer 00:10:23

Sri Lankan food?



Kumari 00:10:24

Yes, yeah, yeah,

Interviewer 00:10:25

Okay.

Kumari 00:10:26

Yeah, without rice, yeah.

Interviewer 00:10:28

And it is very delicious, I have to say. I had some myself.

Kumari 00:10:32

Thank you very much, yeah.

00:10:33

[Pencil scratching]

Interviewer 2 00:10:33

Shall I turn it off, yeah?