

Interviewee: Parmjit K. Singh

Interviewer: Gurpreet Singh

Date: May 11, 2021

Format: Video recording

Zoom Location of interview: Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Transcriber: Gurpreet Singh

Additional Transcription Equipment used: Zoom

Project in association with: University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

**Abstract Bio-** Parmjit Kaur Singh, also known as Pami, is a hard working immigrant from Punjab, India. She came here when she got married and is the loving mother to 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 by the name of Sunoco, 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. She talks about the devastating effects of Covid that is currently happening all over India, all the horrible situations it has caused, the massive shortage of medicine, lack of vaccines, and how it has impacted her family in India.

### **Gurpreet Singh**

00:04 it is May, 11 2021 in Wisconsin there are 660 6401 confirmed cases of Covid.

00:16 Wisconsin vaccines administered so far has been to 39.6 of the population.

00:24 The total cases and the US entirely is 32.8 million.

00:31 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.

00:57 My name is concrete saying i'm 25 years old.

01:02 This is for Class at UWEC, and the classes public history with Dr. Frei and.

01:14 i'm interviewing.

### **Pami Singh**

01:18 Hi, my name is Pami Singh using my age is 58 year old and.

01:25 I live in Wisconsin Eau Claire and I am 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 and the Covid cases is.

01:44 A lot now.

01:47 And Okay, so people scared and I'm sometimes i'm scared too because this is, this is very bad virus and

01:56 We take precaution for that.

02:00 to wear the mask all the time in the virtual hall, and just take care for yourself.

02:06 And so respect other peoples and wear the mask.

### **Gurpreet Singh**

02:10 yeah so you 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 um So where do you usually get your news for Covid

02:24 From social media Indian news American news I watch all the time, from instagram, whatsapp and Indian news.

02:33 So from the TV channel from CNN.

02:37 I watch a lot of media.

**Gurpreet Singh**

02:39 So you have mainstream media and you hear from other people too.

**Pami Singh**

02:44 Talking and.

02:46 Im listening.

02:48 so yes, I got it. Yes

**Gurpreet Singh**

02:51 and um

02:54 What do you like better the Indian news or the American news when it comes to Covid.

**Pami Singh**

03:02 I like them both if they are true, you know, so I listen all these so.

03:10 I like both .

**Gurpreet Singh**

03:12 Like both.

**Pami Singh**

03:13 Both

**Gurpreet Singh**

03:14 Okay um.

03:16 So the places you mentioned whatsapp and you mentioned the Indian news um and hearing from different people do talk to your family members over there and India right now.

**Pami Singh**

03:29 Oh, yes, I talk to my family members so yeah they give me a lot of information to.

**Gurpreet Singh**

03:35 Okay, and so there's been new strain showing up over there. Of Covid

**Pami Singh**

03:43 yeah, um you said that, this is a third stage now that's that is attacking to the young kids and uh, people are very, very scared now because it's attacking on the kids the kids don't know how to protect them, they don't know anything, so this is bad

**Gurpreet Singh**

04:06 Okay, so um you said it was a third stage third.

04:14 um third um third wave coming in and there's also different variants that are coming into India that are also making it very bad for people.

**Pami Singh**

04:24 yeah the people have a black fungus.

**Gurpreet Singh**

04:26 Okay

**Pami Singh**

04:27 it comes from the medicine, the steroid they give it to them so lot of people.

**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.

**Pami Singh**

04:44 Yes

**Gurpreet Singh**

okay there's a lot of different difficulties over there.

**Pami Singh**

04:50 difficulties people don't have a oxygen

04:53 so yeah.

**Gurpreet Singh**

04:55 tell me more about the oxygen situation over there.

**Pami Singh**

04:59 Yes, the people, the hospital shut their doors they don't have a beds, they don't have oxygen so then the goal the virus, the people from the Gurdwara they distribute the oxygen calendars calendars.

**Gurpreet Singh**

05:14 Gurdwara, the Gurdwara if you can tell us what it is.

**Pami Singh**

05:18 This is the thing they call sikh aid.

**Gurpreet Singh**

05:21 Okay, and Gurdwara is the temple for the Sikhs religion.

**Pami Singh**

05:26 yeah the Gurdwara they provide the food for the people's, they provide the oxygen, they provide the beds, they help a lot more than a lot of people

**Gurpreet Singh**

05:34 all over India they're helping or also all over the world.

**Pami Singh**

05:40 yeah they are helping all over the world, anywhere people need help, they just reach there.

**Gurpreet Singh**

05:48 that's great and you said, hospitals are overflowing so a lot of people can't go to the hospitals.

**Pami Singh**

05:56 No.

05:58 hospital shut their doors, the people sitting outside and begging for the beds begging for the oxygen and a lot of people dying on the streets.

06:09 They can do anything and people scared, the situation is very worse over there.

**Gurpreet Singh**

06:16 And it's also hard for all the people's families that live outside.

**Pami Singh**

06:21 Yes.

**Gurpreet Singh**

06:22 You know, right now, you can't even travel over there, right now.

06:26 People can't even really go to the hospital either right.

**Pami Singh**

06:31 Yes, right.

**Gurpreet Singh**

06:33 So they have like the same restrictions, they have here, where they only let like one person go in, or they're not.

06:39 letting people say goodbye.

**Pami Singh**

06:41 Yes, one person or two person so the other people can go this one person go there and bury or burn them so.

**Gurpreet Singh**

06:49 So has covid changed the way they're you know.

06:53 doing the funeral rites, because normally they'll burn and then also put into the River Ganges.

**Pami Singh**

07:01 Yes, they.

**Gurpreet Singh**

07:02 Or the Ganga River.

**Pami Singh**

07:03 yeah people don't have any money to do the ceremonies or something like that, then they just throw the people, the bodies and in ravi ravi river, so people found 48 bodies in rav in Ravi river last night.

07:22 So they don't have to do anything.

**Gurpreet Singh**

07:26 This happened last night.

**Pami Singh**

07:28 Yes, last night.

**Gurpreet Singh**

07:34 Okay, and do you think it's a it's a more do you think it's more of a scary situation what's happening over there, then what's happening here.

**Pami Singh**

07:43 yeah it's more scary or there people don't have.

07:47 enough money to live there, they have a lot down, they can go to work some shops are open and just.

07:57 They can they can make money, and how can they survive.

08:02 What they are only one person make money and whole family going to eat so.

**Gurpreet Singh**

08:08 and

08:09 If you can for 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 farmer jobs or.

08:20 Big Hollywood acting or Bollywood Acting jobs, a lot of the people are working in the factories are working in the already really bad conditions, so with Covid, how do you think that's changed everything.

**Pami Singh**

08:34And the working condition is converting their lives gets it only having food at home family is struggling the most.

08:46The middle class families and hard more.

**Gurpreet Singh**

08:50The middle class families.

08:52classroom What about the poor people as well um.

**Pami Singh**

08:56poor people is always, struggling and they are struggling before they are struggling now and the rich people, you know, they don't worry for before then they don't worry now but the middle class is can be hurt.

**Gurpreet Singh**

09:10Okay, so that no its that's.

09:15that's very eye opening in in regards to Covid in the class system that works over there.

**Pami Singh**

09:22Yes,

**Gurpreet Singh**

09:23But it's good to hear that there's places like the Sikh temples ago the Gurdwaras that are there, helping everybody.

09:31With oxygen and stuff.

09:34And also, you said, I want to come back to what you said about whatsapp on there um so since people aren't able to go to the hospitals and there 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.

09:53So if they need to go to the hospital or they need to go get medicine they have to travel very far.

09:59One 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.

**Pami Singh**

10:16Yes.

**Gurpreet Singh**

10:18Yes, could you could you explain something on that can you explain that what are they getting on whatsapp.

**Pami Singh**

10:24 Oh sometime they put their story on the Facebook or any any social media, then the Sikh aid they they know that, through the media, then they reach their right away, then they give them help.

10:38That there's some social media help a lot. So.

**Gurpreet Singh**

10:47You.

10:49about the about the death So what are people doing with the bodies like.

10:56With the burning so is know I saw there is something about a lot of people are burning their bodies, at the same time.

**Pami Singh**

11:05 yeah they burn it, they burn, the bodies at the same time, and sometimes they burn on their yards they don't find the room, they don't find the place from the graveyard is all full all packed.

11:18 And they burn their bodies on the streets, some people throw their bodies from the car and ran away this situation is worse.

**Gurpreet Singh**

11:29 Worse, then America, or worse than..

**Pami Singh**

11:30 Worse worse, than the whole world

**Gurpreet Singh**

11:35 Okay, yes, um because there's a lot of people over there.

**Pami Singh**

11:40 Yes, a lot of people and too much pollution and now, when they burn the bodies, the smoke you know it's making more worse.

**Gurpreet Singh**

11:51 Okay, so when they're so close that makes 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.

**Pami Singh**

12:04 Yes, very bad and then.

**Gurpreet Singh**

12:06 very bad okay wow that's that's really intense that's that's very sad.

**Pami Singh**

12:14 very sad.

**Gurpreet Singh**

12:15 But, especially now that there's the possibility and it or not, possibility it's actually happening that the children are getting infected.

**Pami Singh**

12:26 yeah. Very bad children getting infected.

**Gurpreet Singh**

12:28 Do you think it might come this way, since a lot of the strains that came to India we're already you know new strains from the UK in different parts of the country or the world.

**Pami Singh**

12:44 Oh, you don't know where the strain came from but situation is bad.

**Gurpreet Singh**

12:50 Okay yeah because there's new variant that showed in India.

12:54 new variant also that showed in UK and also South Africa and I'm sure more places are going to have more variants and India has a huge population.

**Pami Singh**

13:08 Yes.

**Gurpreet Singh**

13:09 So that could be also affecting that as well.

13:14 um.

13:16 With the, with the vaccines, what are your thoughts.

**Pami Singh**

13:21vaccine is okay, So yes, people a lot of people scared a lot of people interested to take the vaccine So yes.

13:31The vaccine is good, I think vaccine is good, so you have to take your yourself if you have a vaccine then its chances 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.

13:48Everybody has to take the vaccine.

**Gurpreet Singh**

13:51Okay, I completely, I completely agree everybody should strongly.consider taking the vaccine.

**Pami Singh**

13:58 Some people scared don't be scared.

**Gurpreet Singh**

14:05 Is there a preference that you have for the certain type of vaccine for the Pfizer or Madonna or Johnson and Johnson.

**Pami Singh**

14:12Pfizer

**Gurpreet Singh**

14:13 Pfizer is your, your vaccine of choice.

**Pami Singh**

14:17Yes

**Gurpreet Singh**

14:18Okay, 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.

**Pami Singh**

14:37yeah they don't have any option, they just begging for the vaccine they don't know what kind they said just give us a vaccine, we want a

14:47protection from the Covid.

14:49So I don't know about the vaccines name in India, what they getting but it's very hard situation and I don't know they get the vaccine or not

**Gurpreet Singh**

15:01And that kind of led to them using a lot of the other medicines and the steroids, and now that they have the black lung fungus like you told me.

**Pami Singh**

15:11Yes, they said, this is the side effect for the other medicines and medicine is whatever they have the stores have they just charge a lot of money the. Money that the rich people can afford, but the poor people can't afford that so.

**Gurpreet Singh**

15:31there's not any laws in India that prevent that.

**Pami Singh**

15:34no laws in India know.

**Gurpreet Singh**

15:37cause I know, I know the same thing happened here and there where some people that started charging more,

15:44For toilet paper water and,

15:49Hand sanitizer.

**Pami Singh**

15:50yeah.

**Pami Singh**

15:52Then they caught it right away in here they caught right away, but in India, they can't find who did that you know.

**Gurpreet Singh**

16:01So, like the police really don't care also.

**Pami Singh**

16:04Yes, people sometimes you know, the police know but they don't do anything.

**Gurpreet Singh**

16:10You know, maybe they say like.

16:12If you give, if you give me some.

**Pami Singh**

16:14yeah they have a sharing so they don't want to.

**Gurpreet Singh**

16:17They bribe them, so you know.

**Pami Singh**

16:19They don't open their mouths because they get the some portion.

**Gurpreet Singh**

16:23Okay, that makes sense.

16:26um, wow that's, that's crazy.

16:31Anyway, family members in India that have gotten sick.

**Pami Singh**

16:35No they are in touch but they're not sick, so they are, they are good, they are healthy.

**Gurpreet Singh**

16:41 how, do you know how they're feeling about everything that's happening over there.

**Pami Singh**

16:45yeah they're scared, they are always talking about they are scared but they're not sick.

16:52 they are friends are sick and their Families sick, or they talking about them, but they are not.

**Gurpreet Singh**

17:00In their, in their village and their city um is there a lot of Covid cases compared to the rest of India, or is it.

**Pami Singh**

17:12No, they don't have a lot of cases, because they are Northside, so the Northside Punjab it is literally safe it's not safe safe but it's just better than New Delhi and Bombay.

**Gurpreet Singh**

17:31okay like the population is a little bit less.

**Pami Singh**

17:33population is less and the open, they have a little more open area, and you know that New Delhi too much crowded, Bombay too much crowded, 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 having.

17:52 So a lot of villages have a safe now.

**Gurpreet Singh**

17:56 And then, when was the last time they you talk to family in India.

**Pami 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.

**Pami Singh**

18:11 yeah they know about that they are very scared and they're 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.

**Pami Singh**

18:23 Yes, yeah they are.

18:27 Now, because kids don't know anything so that's why they worry for them than the young kids and the whole family so three young kids and one is like a 10 year old so that's why they are you.

18:39 know.

18:42 like that.

**Gurpreet Singh**

18:43 And how has that affected you, knowing that all your family is in India and it's.

18:48 Not safe at all and.

18:51 there's medicine.

**Pami Singh**

18:53 yeah no, no medicines over there, no facilities, the hospital is far, So what can they do you know, then I tell them to stay safe.

**Gurpreet Singh**

19:03 How does that make you feel.

19:06 With your family over there.

**Pami Singh**

19:08 yeah I feel sad and I feel scared.

**Gurpreet Singh**

19:13 that's very reasonable.

19:16 and

19:19 If you will.

19:21 If you like to tell me, so you said you had a gas station, yeah, that you own.

**Pami Singh**

19:27 Yes, I own.

19:29 And I work every day.

**Gurpreet Singh**

19:33 Okay, yes that's good that's good.

**Pami Singh**

19:34 Hard work is good.

**Gurpreet Singh**

19:36 Oh wow, how do you how has that been affected by covert.

**Pami Singh**

19:43 yeah and people come that you know before as like a people can feel free you know, like a

19:50 They are enjoying their life now you can see fearful, a lot of fear on

everybody's face, you know they are, they're scared and they have too much like a,

20:04 They do too much 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,

20:22 scared.

**Gurpreet Singh**

20:23 it's just change. Yeah you can

**Pami Singh**

20:27 yeah, yeah its changed everyone's life.

**Gurpreet Singh**

20:28 And you can see it with you customers.

**Pami Singh**

20:30 before we see everybody's smiling face now everybody cover 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 a stop

doing that.

**Gurpreet Singh**

20:49 And then, like you said, people covering their faces and stuff so with the mass

mandate, Have you had any trouble with people not wearing their masks.

**Pami Singh**

20:58 know they they wear the mask they follow the rules that's good, we had a good customers.

**Gurpreet Singh**

21:05 Well, good it's good to hear that everybody safe and respecting.

**Pami Singh**

21:11 each other, so they follow the rules, this lemmings behind 6 feet distance they follow everything.

**Gurpreet Singh**

21:19 And there with also covered a lot of Asian Americans have been having some

racial hate and been treated differently, but have you experienced any that or no.

**Pami Singh**

21:31 No, I didn't see anything with me and I never did to other people so.

**Gurpreet Singh**

21:36 Okay,

**Pami Singh**

21:31 No I didn't see anything with me and I never did that with anybody and

nobody did with me either they are friendly.

**Gurpreet Singh**

21:44 Has has, Covid affected the business aspect and making money or.

21:51 the foot traffic.

**Pami Singh**

21:53 Yes, that one is affected.

21:56 yeah they affect a lot, Covid effect a lot for the business.

22:02 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 for stuff.

**Pami Singh**

22:15 They don't have money to spend so.

22:22 that's the thing, so sad for the moneywise.

**Gurpreet Singh**

22:23 Has there been any help from the government for the business or not really.

**Pami Singh**

22:28 not really. No.

**Gurpreet Singh**

22:34 that's understandable um how is your health, then, you have you been good during this time.

**Pami Singh**

22:40 Oh yeah, 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.

**Pami Singh**

22:53 yeah I plan on it, but i'm not sick so.

**Gurpreet Singh**

22:57 Okay.

**Pami Singh**

22:58 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 um, 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, for, for a while.

**Pami Singh**

23:26 For a while is getting worse than I hope hope they are getting better soon.

23:33 I wish, and I hope they're getting soon better so.

**Gurpreet Singh**

23:37 Do you think maybe the government should play a bigger role.

**Pami Singh**

23:41 yeah, the other countries help them, so the hope the god are gonna help them and they gonna be better soon, like other countries clear out, maybe they, they're going to clear out very soon.

23:55 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.

24:13 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.

**Pami Singh**

24:31 yeah the hospital charging too much money.

**Gurpreet Singh**

24:35 Oh, even the hospital increase their price.

**Pami Singh**

24:37 Oh yes,

**Gurpreet Singh**

24:38 Oh goodness.

**Pami Singh**

24:40 We one lady sick for four days in hospital.

24:44 he's, she sit four days and they chose 1 lakh(100,000) 45,000 rupees for four days.

**Gurpreet Singh**

24:53 One how is how much is one lakh is that 1 million.

**Pami Singh**

24:57 No, no one lakh is like a you want to be doing know the dollars.

**Gurpreet Singh**

25:03 dollars or a indian

**Pami Singh**

25:05 lakh is not 1 million.

25:06 hundred lakh is, I think 1 million.

25:09 it's it's less than.

**Gurpreet Singh**

25:11 So around hundred it's \$100,000 US.

**Pami Singh**

25:15 Less than one.

25:18 Maybe \$2,000(US).

25:20 or \$25,000(US) yeah.

**Gurpreet Singh**

25:23 But over there, a lakh is like.

25:27 100,000(Indian Rupee).

**Pami Singh**

25:28 yeah too much for the poor people's and they charge for body, the body's, then they charge money to.

25:36 Burn the bodies.

**Gurpreet Singh**

25:37 they're charging money to bury, to burn the bodies, for people to burn their loved ones bodies.

**Pami Singh**

25:42 around hundred dollar they said because they using PP kit.

25:48For the family members 2 family members go there and they charge for the PP kit.

**Gurpreet Singh**

25:54The PP kit is the okay protective.

**Pami Singh**

25:57 its all over the clothes, the the dress they wear then they burn the body they charge money for that too.

**Gurpreet Singh**

26:05Oh.

**Pami Singh**

26:06it's worse, very worse.

**Gurpreet Singh**

26:07Well that's.

26:10Man that's a very.

26:13that's very sad.

**Pami Singh**

26:15That he said, people struggling.

**Gurpreet Singh**

26:18Well i'm happy that you're okay our families okay our family and then gives okay.

26:25Thank you for doing this interview with me very much.

**Pami Singh**

26:28Thank you.

**Gurpreet Singh**

26:29Thanks alright, you have a good one.

**Pami Singh**

26:33Thank you.

Transcribed by Zoom and Gurpreet Singh