

Transcript

S: Sarita Gnawali

Z: Zachary Taylor

Z: Will you please state your name, job title, and the name of the organization you work for.

S: I'm head cashier, I'm head cashier, at Owens Dining Food Court, um..

Z: And your name?

S: My name is Sarita Gnawali. I work at Owens Dining Food Court.

Z: Where are you originally from?

S: Nepal.

Z: Did you move from there?

S: Yes, I moved Nepal.

Z: And what did your parents do there?

S: My parents right now are doing nothing because they are retired, you know. But previously my dad was a teacher in the school so...

Z: Why did you move here?

S: My husband he applied for Green Card lottery and then he won Green Card lottery. That is why we moved to the USA.

Z: How long have you been here?

S: Seven years.

Z: Did you move here to Virginia Tech?

S: Yes.

Z: How long have you been at this job?

S: 5 years.

Z: 5 years.

S: It will be 6th year October 16th or today is the 16th. It complete six years to running 7 years.

Z: That's good

Z: Do you like the job?

S: I like it?

Z: You like it?

S: Yes?

Z: Is there any particular thing you like about the job.

S: You know, I like. You know. I can meet the new people that don't speak English very well I give them opportunity to learn English.

Z: I know what it is to learn a foreign language.

S: So I like it, you know I can spend my time to customer I can talk and speak, you know.

Z: Did you ever have a formal English course?

S: In Nepal?

Z: Anywhere.

S: For, I mean, you mean, I'm studying.

Z: Yeah, did you go to someone and they taught you formally? Kind of like a class?

S: No.

Z: No.

S: No, I just learn here, you know. From working, speak, customer. I you know. New sentence, new word. I learn from that.

Z: So when you came here, did you know much English at all?

S: I did not.

Z: So, how, how did you learn your job? Did they show you how to do it on the first day?

S: Yes, I know, I knew some English but I was not like I speak like I speak like this right now. I knew some words and then they showed me what to do then I learn by that way.

Z: Did you, did someone, while you were working, did they have you watch someone?

S: Uhuh, yeah.

Z: How was getting this job? Was it difficult?

S: First was difficult, you know I was nervous. My English was not good you know I was not speak English. Then I was getting nervous, but is ok. First time was difficult but now I'm fine. You know, I know everything that I'm supposed to do. You know my job, I'm very comfortable now.

Z: So now your head cashier?

S: Yes, I'm head Cashier.

Z: How long did it take you to do that?

S: Head Cashier?

Z: uhuh.

S: I think, um, two years. Yeah, I work almost one year in shop then after one year I work cashier for two years then after two years. Then they ask me to be head cashier then I said why not? If you want me I will be head cashier then I become head cashier. Its been two years.

Z: Are you proud that your head cashier?

S: Yeah, yeah.

Z: So, as head cashier what do you do exactly?

S: Head Cashier, I have to take care of Cashier. Then I have to train, if they need, other cashier. If they don't know. Then I have to train them, how to work the cashier, how to run register. Then how to open everything, you know. That's what I do for head cashier. I have five registers, that I have to take care for everything.

Z: So, is it difficult?

S: Um... It was difficult in the beginning, but now I'm good

Z: Um,

S: But you know, last, this semester they change new system, computer. You know. That is little difficult confuse. The computer is very slow, is very slow. So I like previous computer, previous system, but is still fine. So new system I am used to learning. But its good, I like it.

Z: Have other decisions that have been made by management or someone that you don't see that has affected your job?

S: I'm sorry.

Z: Has your boss or management made decisions to change rules about your job that have made it more difficult?

S: Yeah, it is difficult, they change sometimes you know.

Z: Yeah, but do you have an example of it? Another one? You can't remember it?

S: I can't remember it exactly.

Z: Has management, your job, the people in charge of Owens food court. Are they nice? Are they easy to deal with?

S: Some are.

Z: Sometimes? Its kind of like the manager who worked today?

S: Yes, Yeah.

Z: And how they let you, but the manager on would not.

S: Yeah.

Z: Is this your only job?

S: No, I have second job.

Z: What is it?

S: Kroger.

Z: So your time is full?

S: Yeah, I'm very busy. I work six days a week. Then 53 hours a week. So I'm busy. Then my husband he's studying as student. Then I have two kids, my daughter also she's senior in high school right now. She's busy, then I have to take care of home plus job I have two jobs. So I'm so busy. You know, I just have one day off, you know, I don't have time to yeah.

Z: Is it difficult then going to the jobs, does it take a lot of time to go to Owens and Kroger from your home?

S: Oh yeah.

Z: How long does it take?

S: Kroger I only work part time, only Friday night 6-11 and Saturday 8-4:30, but Friday is longer to me. Friday is very difficult to me because I work here until 4:15 then I have to be at Kroger at 6'o' clock then I'm running home. Then cooking dinner for my family then for myself too. Then I have to go to Kroger until 11'o'clock. Then come back and get ready to work tomorrow next morning is very difficult. But I have to do it, its no choice. Because I need money, my husband doesn't have a job right now.

Z: How long have you been doing this?

S: Two years.

Z: Have you lived in the same house the whole time here?

S: Yes, when we first came here we live in one and half months with my brother-in-law. He lives in Blacksburg with his family. Then after one and a half month we move into an apartment for one year. Then we move into another apartment. Its been four, four or five years.

Z: Did moving make your job more difficult?

S: Oh yeah. Its very difficult to move.

Z: Are you going to stick with this job? Or are you looking for a new job?

S: No, I'm good with this job.

Z: Same with the Kroger one?

S: Same with the Kroger one.

Z: Which job is more difficult?

S: Um, I think its, work is good. Kroger is a different, Kroger I can get after two hours I can get 15 minutes break you know. But I have to be standing even I'm cashier. I can't see down then standing, that is difficult. But here I can see down. Then a lot of responsibility. I have to take here a lot of jobs.

Z: Both are the same?

S: Yes.

Z: How long have you had the Kroger job?

S: Two years?

Z: So you picked that up to help your husband's college?

S: Yes.

Z: Have you ever been discriminated at either of these jobs?

S: No. I got my "Outstanding Customer Service" award so I'm good.

Z: Have there been any difficult adjustments you've had to make because you have these jobs?

S: Um, not really.

Z: Because you have two jobs, how many hours of sleep do you get.

S: Um, I sleep Friday night only 6 hours. Then other night I slept for seven to eight hours. Its good enough. Yeah.

Z: So overall your happy?

S: I'm happy. I don't have any problems.

Z: In Nepal, did you have a job?

S: No.

Z: So is this, were you not allowed one, or?

S: No, in Nepal my husband had very good job, you know. Then I get to stay home. You know I have home in Nepal. I still have home in Nepal. Then I just stay home, I taking care of my kids, that's it. I did not have to work. So, you know, he made good money so I don't have to work so I did not work.

Z: What was your husband back there?

S: He work one project, was business management or something. He was trainer for business people. He had very good job.

Z: So you went to a comfortable lifestyle to this?

S: I won't want to say its comfortable life. I miss my previous life because I just did not work. I just stay home taking care of my, you know, kids. Then I can visit my friend or my family. Then I miss my religion, I miss my language for everything, you know, everything is new here, difficult. So I can say I had better life when I was in Nepal.

Z: Do you think this life is going to get better for you?

S: I can't exactly say that because, you know. I'm not really happy. You know, to work everyday. I have to work, its no choice, but Nepal I had choice. If I want to I can work, if I don't, then I don't have to work. But here I have to work no choice. So, I don't wanna say this is better.

Z: Will it? One day?

S: No. When I go back to Nepal then it will be better.

Z: When are you going back to Nepal?

S: We have a plan. Whenever my son graduate, at least undergraduate. We want him undergraduate, then from college, then we leave back to Nepal. I don't wanna stay in America because I want to go back to Nepal.

Z: So this is all temporary?

S: Yes.

Z: Why did you guys come over here.

S: Because I told you, he won green card lottery. Also, we didn't know exactly how is America. How is the American life. We thought America, American life will be very easy, very better than Nepal. That's why we move here. Then when we move here, then we realize our previous life was, is better than American life. Its very difficult here. You know, everything is systematic, I like it, but it is very difficult because I have to work, no choice. You know. That is difficult. So I miss my family, I miss my religion, I miss my, you know, culture, system, you know, for everything. So that's difficult

Z: So, what do you want for you children? Do you want them to stay here or go back?

S: That is there choice, we don't want to, you know, force them to stay here or move back to Nepal. That is up to them. If they want to stay here they can stay here. If they wanna go back they can go back to Nepal. But me and my husband, we will definitely go back to Nepal.

Z: So these jobs, they support you, but how well?

S: its...

Z: Its good?

S: Its good, yeah.

Z: So, in general, you are happy living here.

S: I'm happy. Right now, I'm happy. You know, in my country Nepal, its political situation is not good, you know, kind of..

Z: Yeah... China...

S: So, I'm right now, I'm happy being in United States. Better than Nepal.

Z: So would those political tensions keep you here?

S: No.

Z: So, you said you had two children, one was a senior in high school, one was a son?

S: He is only 12 years old. He is 6th grade. So your gonna stay here until he graduate, undergraduate.

Z: So when he's a freshman in college?

S: Yeah, at least 10 years, 10 more years.

Z: So, that's a long time.

S: Yes, that's a long time. We might stay in United States, because it's a long time, 10 years, we might stay in United States, but right now we don't have a plan. We want to go back to Nepal. That's our plan, until now.

Z: Are you, with these two jobs, do you have any extra that your putting away so that you have money to go back?

S: Not since two years, because I'm the only one working. So I have to take care of everything, food, the apartment.

Z: When your husband gets a job will you still have to have two jobs?

S: My husband say that when he graduate, so when he has job, then he say he's not gonna let me work. He just want me to stay home and relax, but that will be difficult because now I get used to work, you know. So I don't wanna stay home by myself. You know, I getting bored one day, or one week will be ok. Then after one week then somedays its difficult to stay at home. So I will like to keep working, but not working full-time job. Just only part-time.

Z: Under such a scenario, would you have a different job than this?

S: Um, maybe different job. If we move from Blacksburg to other city or other town I will definitely have different job. If we stay in Blacksburg, but I don't wanna lose this job. I like it here. Its easy, because I learn everything, I know everything. So if I start everything then it takes time to learn

Z: Thank you, do you have anything else you would like to share?

S: I think I'm good.

Z: Thank you again.

S: Thank you.

Narrative:

Zachary Taylor

Sanita Gnawali, Head Cashier at Owens Dining Food Court and Kroger Cashier

Questions:

1. Will you please state your name, job title, and the name of the organization you work for?
2. Where are you originally from?
3. Did you move from there?
4. And what did your parents do there?
5. Why did you move here?
6. Did you move here to Virginia Tech?
7. How long have you been at this job?
8. Do you like the job?
9. Did you ever have a forma English Course?
10. So when you came here, did you know much English at all?
11. So how did you learn your job Did they show you how to do it on the first day?
12. Did they have you watch someone?
13. How was getting this job? Was it difficult?
14. So now your head cashier?

15. How long did it take you to do that?
16. Are you proud that your head cashier?
17. So, as head cashier, what do you do exactly.
18. So, is it difficult?
19. Have other decisions made by management or someone that you don't see affect your job?
20. Has your boss or management made decisions to change rules about your job that have made it more difficult?
21. Has management, your job, the people in charge of Owens food court. Are they nice? Are they easy to deal with?
22. Is this your only job?
23. What is it?
24. So your time is full?
25. Is it difficult then going to the jobs? Does it take a lot of time to go to Owens and Kroger and your home?
26. How long does it take?
27. How long have you been doing this?
28. Have you lived in the same house the whole time here?
29. Did moving make your job more difficult?
30. Are you going to stick with this job? Or are you looking for a new job?
31. Same with the Kroger one?
32. Which job is more difficult?
33. Both are the same?
34. How long have you had the Kroger job?
35. So you picked that up to help your husband's college?
36. Have you ever been discriminated at either of these jobs?
37. Have there been any difficult adjustments you've had to make because you have these jobs?
38. Because you have two jobs, how many hours of sleep do you get?
39. So over all, your happy?

40. In Nepal, did you have a job?
41. Were you allowed a job?
42. What was your husband back there?
43. So you had a comfortable lifestyle?
44. Do you think this life is going to get better for you?
45. Will it? One day?
46. When are you going back to Nepal?
47. So this is all temporary?
48. Why did you guys come over here?
49. So what do you want for your children? Do you want them to stay here or go back?
50. So these jobs, they support you, but how well?
51. So, in general, you are happy living here.
52. So would those political tensions keep you here?
53. So you said you had two children, one was a senior in high school, one was a son?
54. So when he's a freshman in college?
55. Are you, with those two jobs, do you have any extra that your putting away so that you have money to go back?
56. When you husband gets a job, will you still have to have two jobs?
57. Under such a scenario, would you have a different job than this?
58. Thank you, do you have anything else you would like to share?

Narrative

I'm head cashier, I'm head cashier, at Owens dining food court. My name is Sanita Gnawali. I moved from Nepal. My parents right now are doing nothing because they are retired, you know. But previously my dad was a teacher in the school. I moved here because my husband, he applied for Green Card lottery and then he won Green Card Lottery. That is why we moved to the USA. I have been here for seven years and we moved to Virginia Tech.

-You know, I like. You know. I can meet new people that don't speak English very well. I give them opportunity to learn English. So I like it, you know I can spend my time to customer. I can talk and speak you know.

-At Owens, I work almost one year in shop then after one year I work cashier for two years then after two years they ask me to be head cashier. Then I said why not? If you want me I will be head cashier then I become head cashier. Its been two years. As head cashier, I have to take care of cashier. Then I have to train, if they need, other cashier. If they don't know. Then I have to train them how to work the cashier, how to run register. Then how to open everything, you know. That's what I do for head cashier. I have five registers that I have to take care for everything. It was difficult in the beginning, but now I'm good.

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-Yeah, I'm very busy. I work six days a week. Then 53 hours a week. So I'm busy. Then my husband he's studying as student. Then I have two kids, my daughter also she's a senior in high school right now. She's busy, then I have to take care of home plus job I have to jobs. So I'm busy. You know, I just have on day off, you know, I don't have time to yeah.

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home. Then cooking dinner for my family then for myself too. Then I have to go to Kroger until 11 o'clock. Then come back and get ready to work tomorrow next morning is very difficult. But I have to do it, its no choice. Because I need money, my husband doesn't have a job right now.

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standing, that is difficult. But here (Owens) I can see down. Then a lot of responsibility, I have to take here a lot of jobs. Here I got my "Outstanding Customer Service" award so I'm good.

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We have no nextra money to save. Not since two years, because I'm the only one working. So I have to take care of everything, food, the apartment. My husband say that when he graduate, so when he has job, then he say he's not gonna let me work. He just want me to stay home and relax, but that will be difficult because now I get used to work, you know. So I don't wanna stay home by myself. You know, I getting bored one day, or one week will be ok. Then after one week then somedays its difficult to stay at home. So I will like to keep working, but not working full-time job. Just only part-time. Maybe different job. If we move from Blacksburg to other city or town I will definitely have different job. If we stay in Blacksburg, I don't wanna lose this job. I like it here. Its easy, because I learn everything, I know everything. So if I start everything then it takes time to learn.

Personal Reflection:

Zachary Taylor

Afterthoughts of an Interview of a Nepalese

The interview of Sanita Gnawali was new ground. Granted, there were limitations in the interview. One being a difference in language, another being the time and place, and there were others. These limitations were not able to inhibit the interview. It went on and it is surprising how well it went, how well information was passed on despite the difficulties.

Sanita Gnawali is a resilient woman. More than that, she is an example of the difficulties people go through in coming to America. She came here looking for a new, better life even though her old one in Nepal was nice. In Nepal, Mrs. Gnawali was happy. She came here looking for the American Dream too,

from half-way across the world, in spite of that. She had thought it would be better still over here, for her family.

The length that she and her husband went through to improve their life is astounding. Perhaps some problems they had in Nepal were not mentioned here, but if there are none, it speaks on the pull of the American Dream. It means that when she moved here six years ago, the Dream still spoke in foreign nations half-way across the world. It means that the power of a better life may never die and that people will always go to the greener grass. One would think that maybe it would end, people would stop coming, the rumors of a nicer place would end. But Mrs. Gnawali is proof that they do not.

Her story is also somewhat inspiring. She came here and got a job, with her child. She is a single-mother with two children, with one full time job and a part time job, and a husband studying to get a degree so their life can be better. That is a difficult life and she does it because she loves her family. Those are values that seem to cross cultures. Anyone can appreciate the hard work she does and how she goes about without depression.

A larger lesson from the interview though was the intensity a person's desire for home can be. She had moved here after growing up and marrying in Nepal, it was a big part of her identity. Mrs. Gnawali had a life she knew how to live. Then moving to the US there was an entirely new lifestyle. In her words, it is very "systematic" here, which is nice. Despite this, and people being nice, she is homesick. She misses her parents, her home, her language, her culture. She misses them so much that regardless of the political tensions in Nepal with China, she wants to return. She plans to return, if she can. This pull seems stronger than gravity itself. The only thing that stands in her way is the harsh reality of America, a shattered illusion.

Despite all of her troubles here in America, she is happy. Despite coming here to learn that life will not be better, but worse, she is happy. She takes pride in her job at Owens, she does her best to feed her children. She forgoes slumping in defeat to hope tomorrow will be better. Even though she will have her current jobs for four years, even with their toll on her, she goes on so that her family can live and she is content. She is happy with so little.

There is just one possibility of error in this: the language barrier. It appears uncertain sometimes whether she understood the question or failed to give a satisfactory answer and the interview went on. Such as when she was asked whether she had been discriminated against. Mrs. Gnawali mentioned that everyone was nice and that she had received an award, but that does not mean no discrimination has occurred. This error does detract from the interview. However, by understanding the difference between the answer given and the answer sought for questions due to cultural dissimilarities there is more understanding of her background and her perspective of her life.

The entire experience of the interview, seeing a point of view in life, means so much because it is an up-close, personal experience. It goes beyond the news articles, the books, the movies, and media portrayal to one's own eyes. The interview is genuine proof that another side of the dice exists and shows itself up close. It gives weight to the virtues we are taught about being happy with one's family and working hard. However, it shows that working hard doesn't always lead to riches. It shows that the American Dream has barriers and broken. This interview shows a small part of the world through someone else's eyes, what's good, what's bad, and how they see it and the difference between one's and theirs is the lesson learned.