

## **FHS Oral History Project – Kannan Srinivasan**

### **Description:**

Kannan Srinivasan was born in Madras, India, in 1966. Kannan recalled stories that his family passed down about India's independence movement in 1947, particularly how his father's participation and how Mahatma Gandhi encouraged him not to abandon his studies for the fight for freedom. Inspired by his father's engineering career, Kannan studied electrical engineering at the Regional Engineering College, Tiruchirappalli, India. Familial connections and higher education opportunities prompted Kannan to leave India and emigrate to Orlando, Florida, in 1991. Kannan recounted the cultural shock he experienced upon arrival, specifically the abundance of white people and linguistic barriers. He also emphasized how his pre-immigrant perceptions of the United States changed once he settled in Orlando permanently. A brief stint working as a software engineer developing pagers for Motorola in South Florida interrupted his master's timeline. He graduated with his master's in computer engineering in 1996, the same time he landed employment with Cincinnati Bell/Convergys, where he worked for the next fifteen years. In 2009, Kannan founded Global KTech Incorporation and explained the circumstances that led him to create his own company. In 2013, Kannan joined the Asian American Chamber of Commerce and served as its president four years later. In addition to highlighting his personal motivations, Kannan underlined the organization's broader significance for the Asian American community in Orlando. Lastly, Kannan shared his observations about Central Florida, both culturally and generally, while prognosticating the cultural and economic changes that might occur in the area's future.

### **Transcription:**

00;00;04 - 00;00;22

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** This is Sebastian Garcia interviewing Kannon Srinivasan Sebastian on May 21st, 2025, in Orlando, Florida for the Florida Historical Society Oral History Project. Can you please restate your name, your date of birth, and where you were born?

00;00;22 - 00;00;49

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Hi. Good afternoon. My name is Kannon Srinivasan. K-A-N-N-A-N. Kannon. Srinivasan. S-R-I-N-I-V-A-S-A-N. I was born in the year of 1966, and I was born in a city called Chennai, India. Formerly it was called Madras when I was born, but now the name changed to Chennai, India.

00;00;49 - 00;00;51

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And is that northern Indian, southern India?

00;00;51 - 00;00;51

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** South India.

00;00;51 - 00;01;01

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Can you tell me about your childhood growing up in India during the late 70s, early 80s?

00;01;01 - 00;01;32

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Late 70s. Yeah. My dad was working in the government with the Tamil Nadu government. So I was born in Chennai. We transferred to a city called Madurai and then came back to Chennai later. So I spent most of my school years in Chennai, India. And what was your other question?

00;01;32 - 00;01;34

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Were you an only child?

00;01;34 - 00;01;37

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** No. I had a sister and brother.

00;01;37 - 00;01;41

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And you mentioned what your dad did. What did your mom do for a living?

00;01;41 - 00;02;02

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** My dad was an engineer. He was a well-known water engineer in India. So he has been doing some of the big projects and my mom was a homemaker.

00;02;02 - 00;02;21

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** I am curious. You were obviously born almost twenty years removed from the Partition, but did your parents experience that or did they ever pass on stories about that transition from colonization to freedom and sort of all the tension that came with that?

00;02;21 - 00;02;56

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Oh, what a good question. My father was a freedom fighter. He attended some programs with Mahatma Gandhi and Gandhi requested him to go back and study because he was at the college at that time. So, yes, it was the early part of independence, and we were like probably twenty years after independence. So, yes, that it was a growing time and everything. We were developing at that point.

00;02;56 - 00;03;03

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And were there any particular challenges that your family faced during this time.

00;03;03 - 00;03;05

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** During the Partition?

00;03;05 - 00;03;09

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** No. When you were growing up.

00;03;09 - 00;03;27

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Nothing much really. In fact, we had a fantastic childhood in the sense it was an all middle income group. And all my friends were all similar like me. And we all enjoyed sports and we had a great time.

00;03;27 - 00;03;44

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And going back to the Partition, actually, thanks for sharing you're your father was a freedom fighter, and he had connections with Gandhi. That is incredible. Were there any other stories that, specific stories, that your father told you about that time?

00;03;44 - 00;06;08

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** It was funny because he was studying in engineering college that time, during the pre-Partition time. And that was only one or two of the engineering colleges in India. The very funny story, is, well, once when Mahatma Gandhi came to Chennai. He and his friends wanted to go see him. And at that time, it was the peak of the freedom fight. You know, Indians were fighting against the British for the independence. And these students, they wanted to go see Mahatma Gandhi and all the professors proposes were British—*[phone rings interrupts]* Sorry about that. So all the professors were British at that point, so that one Sunday morning they were walking towards the bus stop to go take a bus to go see Mahatma Gandhi. They were walking, and one of the professors was coming in his car, and he saw them, and they smiled, and he stopped and asked, "Where are you guys going?" And he was British. And they were going to see my Mahatma Gandhi who was fighting the British. So, they were hesitant, but finally they told him that they were going to see Gandhi right now, "He is in town. So we wanted to go see." And the most funny joke here is he turned around and said, "You were so excited." And he said, "I will give you a ride to go." And he took them. He took them to see Gandhi. And when they arrived there, these four or five Indian guys with a British guy, the people thought this—the cops *[tried]* to come and arrest him. And there was a big commotion, and Gandhi came out and then he found out these were engineering college students with their professors and then he took them aside and had a good chat and *[told all the students, "please go back and study. Do not worry about this. We will take care."* So that was one of the interesting incident.

00;06;08 - 00;06;31

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Wow. That is fascinating. Thanks for sharing. You know, part of the Partition also was sort of the or immediately after, was the divide between India and Pakistan as well. So did your father participate in that or have any experiences from that that he shared with you?

00;06;31 - 00;07;01

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** No, not really, because I think that was the year he graduated, and it was a sad event because people had to move from here to there and that to here. And it was a sad event, but nothing much because we were down south, and we did not feel anything. Maybe a people up north felt a lot of things about that, but, down south, not by choice.

00;07;01 - 00;07;05

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Yeah. You were not as close to the border.

00;07;05 - 00;07;17

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** No we were not. We were very far away. And my dad lived in south of India, so it was nothing much.

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**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** I know you mentioned very briefly sort of your education. Can you talk to me a little bit more about your education experience in India?

00;07;29 - 00;08;10

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Yeah. I went to school that was one of the good schools in Chennai. After my school, I got a pretty good score in my twelfth grade. So I was selected into an engineering college, one of the top engineering colleges in India. And it was called REC Tiruchi [Regional Engineering College, Tiruchirappalli], now it is called the NIT Trichy. And that was where I did my education as an engineer, and I did my engineering in electrical engineering.

00;08;10 - 00;08;14

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Was the fact that your father studied engineering, did that influenced your decision?

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**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Kind of. Yeah. Definitely. Because, while studying, all my uncles were in US, so I really wanted to do my undergrad there and do my masters here in the US, that was my aim. Many of our family members were engineers at that point. And compared to medical, I liked more math and things, so I thought engineering would be a good fit for me.

00;08;50 - 00;09;02

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Yeah. You just shared with me how your goal was to do your masters in the US. Why was that the case?

00;09;02 - 00;09;43

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Because many of our family members were in the US at that point. And also for most of the kids there studying engineering undergrad there and the masters here was a usual way of doing. And my father and everybody wanted all of us to do a masters after engineering because engineering is pretty much general. And when you do a masters, you specialize in a certain area. And that was one big reason. He wanted us and we wanted to do it as well.

00;09;43 - 00;09;45

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Did your father have a masters in engineering?

00;09;45 - 00;10;02

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Yes. He was one of the first guy to get a masters in that subject, although in public health engineering. In addition to being an engineer, he was a professor as well for that same university he studied from.

00;10;02 - 00;10;10

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Were there other circumstances besides education that prompted you to leave India?

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**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Mainly education only. And, also at that point, by the time I graduated, all my family was here in US. Me and my parents migrated to Florida, Orlando.

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**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And what year was this that you finally emigrated to Orlando?

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**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** '91.

00;10;41 - 00;10;58

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** 1991. In what ways did your perceptions about the US generally changed once you settled here more permanently?

00;10;58 - 00;11;51

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** A lot of stuff. But I will pick just a few of the stuff. While growing up and even now, US is perceived as more aggressive thing, and people are more aggressors. But when I landed here and when I came here, it was a total different stuff, no. And also I personally thought the people will be very serious here, but they had a super sense of humor, at work, at plays, at studies, everywhere. And everybody started liking that so much. So it was different than what the people outside think about US then the people inside the US are.

00;11;51 - 00;11;56

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What other cultural shocks did you experience?

00;11;56 - 00;13;22

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Very funny that you asked that. The first day I landed at Orlando International Airport, I was so shocked to see so many people white. Because I [was] so used to seeing Indians pretty much all during my school and college years. That was one big shock. And the second big shock came [was] the accent because once I came here, I came on a green card here, so I thought, I will start my work here because I already was waiting for my green card in India, I did my master's already. I did one master's when I came to US, so I thought I would apply for jobs. And the first few people call me, and I had no clue what they were talking, and they could not understand what I was saying. So first, the people were all white. Second, I could not understand, they could not understand me. So that was a couple of things, initially.

00;13;22 - 00;13;36

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Relatedly, what was it like doing your masters while still acclimating to life here in the US as an immigrant?

00;13;36 - 00;14;36

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Yeah. So I had this situation where they could not understand me, or I could not understand some of the words. So my sister lived here. She suggested me to go to school so I can understand and also finish my masters and get it. In 1991, when I came, they said, recession. And I did not know what recession meant, now I know. But at that point all I

knew was that it was a land of opportunity, land of job. But suddenly there was a freeze in technology area during that year. And so then I decided to do masters at UCF.

00;14;36 - 00;14;45

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And were you one of the only Indians in your master's cohort at UCF?

00;14;45 - 00;15;29

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** No, absolutely no. Not on masters. This is 1991. I went and sat in a masters in computer engineering class, one of the class. And the whole class was full of Indian Americans. And there was one white guy there. So it was 1991 I am talking about. Now things might have changed. But for Masters, I think a lot of international students, I cannot say all were Indian, but all the international students, most of them were [immigrant] students, and we had one, maximum two of the local people.

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**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Right. And what year did you finally finish your masters at UCF?

00;15;34 - 00;16;50

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** So very interesting. When I stepped into the UCF, and I wanted to do the Masters and I got a research assistant, so they paid me everything, so I did not have to pay for the fees or anything. They also gave me the monthly stipend, so all good. And two semesters down, I walked on the career center, and I saw something, a campus interview and I was only two semesters down, but I went in and said, "Okay, can I apply for this one?" And they said, yes, which is just funny. And, to make this story short, there are around hundred people applying for that. And I was the one or two guys who got the job for Motorola. And so after that, I had to move to South Florida to start the career [as a] software engineer. And then kind of did my remaining of my masters very slowly, intermittently and kind of finished it in 1996.

00;16;50 - 00;16;54

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Where in South Florida specifically?

00;16;54 - 00;16;57

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** I was in Boynton Beach.

00;16;57 - 00;17;00

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And what did you do as a software engineer in Motorola at that time?

00;17;00 - 00;17;20

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Motorola, they were producing pagers. And we were developing the software for pager. And Motorola was the leader in pager industry at that point of time. And our team were preparing the software needed for the pager.

00;17;20 - 00;17;22

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** How long did you work at Motorola?

00;17;22 - 00;18;14

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** I was actually, another interesting story. So I worked for nearly one to one and a half years and then came for a holiday. I mean, one of the vacations here in Orlando. And I met a gentleman who worked in the company Convergys or Cincinnati Bell, and he said, they have a opening there, and why do not you want to move there? And out of the blue, he asked me. And then I was thinking, and I spoke with my parents and my parents said, “Why do not you move here and finish up your masters?” Because I was kind of dragging my master's at that point. So pretty much to finish my masters is one of the reasons I moved back to Orlando. And I worked in Cincinnati Bell as a software engineer, which I later worked for fifteen years in that company.

00;18;15 - 00;18;30

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Wow. And before I ask a question about sort of how your role changed within that company since you worked there for so long. Correct me if I am wrong, but you had to produce a thesis for your masters. What was your thesis about?

00;18;31 - 00;19;57

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Oh, very interesting question. When I was doing my master's, I was so excited by artificial intelligence [AI]. This was in 1991. AI at that point—and that was the area I wanted to do my masters. I wanted to do my thesis about and kind of changed a bit because I had another professor who thought—and he and I was talking about one day about something that we can—because I had a background in QA [Quality Assurance], as an engineer in Cincinnati Bell. He said from the design, when you are designing the system or, at least part of your software design, you can find out which of the modules will have more bugs. And it was very interesting. And so we took that subject, and we did that as a thesis. And, since I was doing a bunch of projects in my office, I was able to get some data about the modules and the bug related stuff. And so it was much easier for me to do the thesis on that subject, but my interest was in expert systems and AI during my master's.

00;19;57 - 00;20;24

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** That is interesting. And since we are on the topic, even though we are breaking chronology a little bit, to your point, when people think of AI, they think of it as something as a recent development, but you were doing this in the 90s. So just generally explain to me what was AI then and how has it changed till now?

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**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** I mean that time the AI was little complicated than this one, but my specialty was in an area called Expert System, where an expert, knowledge could be taken and be used later. So just for example, a mechanic, plumbing guy, you could take plumbing guy's knowledge, most of the knowledge, and we can store it in our database. And people can ask questions, then it pulls out and gives you—so that was the area I was kind of moving along. But AI at that point was started—I think it might have started earlier, but 80s it started, we had AI professors in early 90s and now it is much better now. They have made it much easier now and at that time using AI was a little complicated. Much more complicated than what it is now.

00;21;25 - 00;21;34

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Talk to me about your fifteen year career at Cincinnati Bell and how your role changed over time?

00;21;34 - 00;22;34

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Cincinnati bell I joined that as a systems analyst. And then I became a senior system analyst. Around that time, the company itself modified from Cincinnati Bell to Convergys. So it was called Convergys. As a senior system analysis, I was the team lead. I joined as a team member. I became the team lead for a QA team. And then I got interested in project management, and then I did my project management professional PMP [Project Management Professional] certification to become a project manager. And then I took a role of project manager and then the senior project manager, program manager. So on.

00;22;34 - 00;22;38

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What interested you about project management?

00;22;38 - 00;23;1

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Project management is something I do in and out. I like managing things, so I kind of felt that would be natural for me. And, at that work also, I was doing pretty much what all project managers need, different types of management. And so I was able to do the PMP, I was able to clear it immediately and then become a PM, project manager.

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**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And you were doing all this work in here in Central Florida?

00;23;18 - 00;23;21

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Yes. All Orlando.

00;23;21 - 00;23;31

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** You know, I am curious because during this time period September 11th happened in 2001.

00;23;31 - 00;24;18

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Oh, that time, yeah. Let me backtrack a bit. I was working that night. I got married in '95. This year, December, will be our thirtieth wedding anniversary. So I married and she is a physician, so she got into a residency program in Chicago, so three years, I went from Orlando to Chicago and back to Orlando. Luckily, the company I worked with, they had a branch in Chicago, and my boss said, she transferred me to Chicago. And then I worked in Chicago and then came back to Orlando after my wife residency is over.

00;24;18 - 00;24;19

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** So in '98.

00;24;19 - 00;24;40



**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** '98 to 2001. And 2001 July or August is when we came back to Orlando. And out of all the things September 11th, 2001 that this happened, that was the same day my wife joined the workforce as a physician.

00;24;40 - 00;24;41

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Oh, wow.

00;24;41 - 00;25;18

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** So, we cannot forget that day because, I mean, I was saying bye to her and we went and at work, I knew this happened, and her first day, she was so confused why people were watching TV rather than working. And so that was the first day at work. So she was concentrating and taking care of the patients and stuff, and everybody was watching TV at that point. And at some point she realized that thing is going on. But that was her first day at work.

00;25;18 - 00;25;53

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And I asked mainly because I have spoken to several Indians for this project and they have shared with me how after September 11th, there was a shift in sort of how people viewed brown skinned folks in America because of the terrorists. So I ask to see if you experience anything like that? Maybe not explicitly, but implicitly, from your perspective.

00;25;53 - 00;26;42

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** To be frank, I did not feel it straight, but again, people were very cautious and, especially when three or four brown guys are in a plane together, you will have some looks, but we had nothing to do with 9/11 and we are from India, not from other countries so many other people were affected. But to be frank, I did not feel anything straight. The Floridians, all the people in Orlando, were very nice, always. And so, there was no question about that.

00;26;42 - 00;27;05

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Absolutely. I met you, an Asian American Chamber of Commerce event. I am also looking here from my notes, that you have been a board member, and you have served as the president at one point. Correct? When did you join the organization? What year?

00;27;05 - 00;27;35

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** I have to go check the exact year, but I think it was around 2013. I became a board member in 2013. And then went to become the president in 2017. And then I remained as a board member for a couple of years and kind of wrapped up around 2019. 2017, I was the president.

00;27;35 - 00;27;45

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Why did you join the organization? Why did you feel like it was important for you to join?

00;27;45 - 00;28;46

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Because Asian American Chamber was bringing all the Asian American business owners together, and they were doing a lot of things. And prior to that, becoming Asian Chamber president, I was the president of the Indian American Association. And, Indian American community, locally. And pretty much most of the Indian American people know me at that point. And I was also involved in the temple here in Orlando. So I have already served everywhere in Indian American community. And I thought the next one would be at the Asian community and you would be seeing a diverse community people and becoming a president of that organization with a diverse chamber members was something different. And also we had people from different countries, so I collaborated with all of them to get things done.

00;28;46 - 00;29;24

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And I have a question about that. But I want to ask this first. You know. A lot of people like not to join these organizations or they prefer to do something—my point is no one is forcing you to join these cultural organizations. So I am curious as to why—and you just mentioned how before the Asian American Chamber of Commerce you served in the Indian American—why did you feel like it was important for you to join these organizations?

00;29;24 - 00;30;16

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** I wanted to always give back to the community that was main thing. The reason I became the leader is whenever the new person came in, I felt them welcomed. And the many of them became my good friends later. Again, I really thought to bring the community together and it is always good to have a strong community, either Indian community or Asian community. If we all unite, we can get a lot more things accomplished. So that was the goal.

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**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And things like economically like...?

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**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** When I joined chamber in 2013, I was an entrepreneur at that point. Definitely that was one reason where I could meet fellow entrepreneurs and business owners and kind of know their problems. And also the second thing [was] giving back to the community.

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**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What did you learn about—especially when, since you said you learned a lot of things when you were serving as president for the Asian American Chamber of Commerce—given that it was a diverse demographic. So what did you learn about not only the Asian American community in Orlando, but also just Orlando itself? What did you learn from that experience?

00;31;14 - 00;32;09

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** The plan is to make it inclusive. We brought people from different countries of Asia and to be part of the Asian Chamber, which helped the organization to be very

inclusive at that point. But always you learn different things from different culture. I enjoy knowing culture. I like to travel around the world. So, I like to know about different cultures and there a lot of good things to learn from other cultures as well. So the main thing I got is I got friends from different countries, different communities, different cultures, and get to know them, learn about them and collaborate with them was very important.

00;32;09 - 00;32;26

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Why do you think is important for not only your culture but, other cultures here in Orlando, generally [in the] US, to create these relationships through these organizations?

00;32;26 - 00;33;18

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Why is it important? It is important because they got to be united. If Asians are united, just like other communities are united, at least they will get a strong presence in the thing. So, it is good to know about other people, other cultures and other thing. But always, when you collaborate with thing—and also, as a Asian Chamber president, we had a collaboration with Indian Chamber of Commerce and Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, African American Chamber of Commerce. So it not only the collaboration within the Asian American communities, but with other organizations as well.

00;33;18 - 00;33;40

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** As you mentioned, you became an entrepreneur in February 2009, you were chief executive officer for Global KTech Incorporation, which you currently still serve. So my first question is, what inspired you to create this company? And what is this company?

00;33;41 - 00;34;49

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** I worked in Convergys for many years, and then, 2009 sometime, they gave me a package to which I could not refuse. So I took the package, came out. Then, I worked as a consultant for a few smaller companies at that point, but then later, I started my own company. I started doing projects. What I did is I took the projects here and developed it in India and brought it back and delivered to companies here. And so we set up an office in India as well. And so we did that and that is what early part of my, Global KTech was doing so if the company needs a project to be done, we did it in more competitive price and good quality. But we did the work in India and brought it back to US.

00;34;49 - 00;34;51

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What type of projects?

00;34;51 - 00;35;21

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** That was a lot of projects we had done. 2009, it was so many projects at that point. It depends on the clients as well. And we have done a lot of e-commerce projects, mobile apps, later. And we had a big client in the insurance space and we did the property and casualty insurance system, the whole system, start to end, that we developed in India for them.

00;35;21 - 00;35;31

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Did the recession from 2008-2009 affect this decision to sort of branch out and create your own company or no?

00;35;31 - 00;35;54

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** The time was such that people was trying to reduce the cost for the projects, but they want to get it done. So, doing it in India was more cost effective. So yeah, we saw a lot of companies come towards us and asking us to develop software for them.

00;35;54 - 00;35;57

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** How is your company changed over the past fifteen years?

00;35;57 - 00;36;3

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** We have been doing the development in India. The last five or six years, I am concentrating only on the staffing in the US. We do permanent staffing; we do contractor hire and we also started a center in Costa Rica now. So it is a near shore center, because the India Center, I sold it four, five years back. Currently, I am doing most of the work in US and Costa Rica.

00;36;35 - 00;36;37

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Why Costa Rica?

00;36;37 - 00;37;22

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Costa Rica is such a beautiful country, wonderful people, nice people. And it is very near. It was only two and a half hours flight from Orlando. I love the people of Costa Rica. They have such a fun thing. And it is much easier to work there. They do not have problem in the language or anything, and in fact, the thing started when one of my clients asked me to start a center in Costa Rica, and that prompted me to go there and start up a center there in Costa Rica.

00;37;22 - 00;38;01

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** You have spent thirty plus years here in Orlando, give or take, I know three years in Chicago, and you have served in cultural positions like in the Indian-American organization and in the Asian American Chamber of Commerce. Prominent positions. President and board member. But you are also a businessman. Entrepreneur. You work and you are an active member in the workforce. How has Orlando changed culturally, economically and any other way you want to take it since you have been here in 1991?

00;38;01 - 00;40;01

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** It has changed a lot because earlier when we go in I-4, there would not be any crowd at all. Now it is so crowded. Luckily, now the express has come and reduced the crowd. But it has changed a lot, lot more buildings, lot more companies, lot more industries. At that point, early stages, in early 90s, Orlando was perceived as only a tourist city. And little did they know, there was a lot of tech industries, manufacturing industries and other industries here. You know, so slowly the things changed, and also, I was the board member of Orlando Economic Commission. It is now called Orlando Economic Partnership. And we try to work

with all the board members. We tried to work to bring lot more industries here. And at that point when I was thing we brought Deloitte and then we brough Verizon, which is across the street. Those projects were signed when I was a board member of Orlando Economic Partnership. Deloitte, we had brought around 2000 jobs a year and Verizon around 500, 600 jobs moved here, so slowly all those things made a lot of changes locally here and many people started moving into Florida because of weather and not only weather, [but they also now] have good job opportunities in Orlando or the Central Florida area. So we see a lot more people coming every year from up north. And the whole landscape has changed and changed for good.

00;40;01 - 00;40;08

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** And how has that influx of people change the cultural scene in Orlando since—?

00;40;08 - 00;40;55

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Big time. Big time. Even here [Lake Mary], Indian American community is so huge right now, and the Asian community is also huge. And I like a lot more Indian restaurants, a lot more Indian stores and a lot more temples now, which is good. People enjoy it. I enjoy different cultures. I went to the mosque for their celebration a few months back, then I have been to the Buddhist temple, churches and so on. And it was wonderful. The more people, the more the merrier.

00;40;55 - 00;40;59

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** What challenges does Orlando face today?

00;40;59 - 00;42;12

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Orlando faces a couple of things. One is I could see the traffic. Luckily, the I-4 experts, those projects kind of reduce the traffic. Otherwise I-4 was getting clogged and, we could not—I live in Lake Mary area, and I could not go into the downtown zone because of the heavy traffic, but now I-4 Express is better. I think what we need to continue is to get more companies here, more jobs and more economic improvement. What we have done till now is really good, but we have to continue to improve this. Those are little challenges here. The second challenge is all the real estate prices have gone up. And the real estate was much cheaper in 90s compared to what it is now. So those kind of things. But our incomes have also gone up. So I cannot blame that.

00;42;12 - 00;42;19

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** From your perspective, how will Orlando change in the next thirty years?

00;42;19 - 00;42;58

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** I think they have a big plan in Orlando. I finished my board membership at the Orlando Economic Partnership, so I am not tracking it, but they have a plan to 2047 or 2036. I forgot which year. They are thinking Orlando will be as big as Dallas at that point or even overtake Dallas. And so they are planning and working on that and based on that I could see also a lot more things coming here. And it is going to grow. Nothing short of that.

00:42:58 - 00:43:09

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** How has your Indian heritage influenced your perspective on life generally and living in Central Florida specifically?

00:43:09 - 00:44:14

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** In life? I think one good thing in my religion, Hinduism, is always they say to be positive, which is very important, and enjoy life and do not worry about what is going to come. You just work, you do your work, and whatever comes will come. It was already thrown on you and it is going to come to you sometime, but you do not have to—and if it comes in phases and you do your work and then God will take care of that and those kind of positive things, and a good in *Bhagavad Gita*, it is our Scripture, a lot of good things. So that really help to be positive and enjoy life. That is my goal. But the second question you asked, it was about Orlando, right?

00:44:14 - 00:44:21

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Well, how has your Indian heritage influenced your life in Orlando, living in Central Florida?

00:44:21 - 00:45:26

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Oh, it changed. When we came, it was only a few hundred families. Now, a bunch of thousands of families are there, and things have changed. Now you get a lot more variety of food, comparatively. And, you have lot more program, a lot more stuff. It has changed a lot, which is it in a good way. We used to know every Indian at one point of time in the early 90s. If there is someone new, we would know who is this person. Right now, there is no way, even if I go into the Indian community, Tamil community, where I was the president, chairman, I see a bunch of people, I do not even know who has come for Deloitte and other companies, which have moved here. But it is for good. I always like the more the merrier.

00:45:26 - 00:45:39;

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Absolutely. And lastly, if someone is listening to this recording fifty or hundred years from now, what do you want them to know about your culture and the state of Florida?

00:45:39 - 00:47:48

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Okay, that is a good question. Culture wise, we were all first generation and that point of time, like my daughters now they finish college, and they are going into medical and law school right now. And there will be lot of second or third generation people and, we were all first generation. And people like me had challenges with in my English accent and also we pretty much came—I mean when I came to US, I came with \$200 in my pocket. That was all. It was just the barebones situation. And then we got the opportunity, and we grabbed opportunities and able to grow. So we have done as much as we can, with why we came, how we came. But the second and third generation need to be united and enjoy the culture and get to know more about the country, more about India, and also help others. I am sure by then, right now, even now, many of the physicians are Indians and lawyers and they get into different areas, different field and take leadership and make the country big and make, America a much better place to live. And for Orlando, definitely. Orlando is going to grow, as I

told you, it is going to be Dallas at one point in time. And I am sure in fifty years from now, Orlando will beat Dallas, and be one of the big cities in America.

00;47;48 - 00;47;56

**SEBASTIAN GARCIA:** Kannan, thank you so much for taking some time out of your day to speak with me and share your life story. I really appreciate it.

00;47;56 - 00;47;58

**KANNAN SRINIVASAN:** Thank you very much. Bye.