LILY TRANSCRIPT

- I: INTERVIWER
- P: PARTICIPANT

P: Yeah, sure.

I: Okay. Can you please pick a pseudonym for yourself?

P: Suggest me something.

I: Sorry?

P: Suggest me something.

I: Okay. How old are you?

P: 22 years.

I: What is your gender?

P: Female.

I: Where did you relocate from? And Where- where did you move to? P: I am originally from Kolkata. I've relocated to Noida.

I: Okay. And what is your reason for relocation?

P: Education.

I: Okay and what is your living arrangement?

P: I live in a PG.

I: Okay, so if you're ready, shall we start with the main questions?

P: Absolutely.

I: Can you please begin with telling me what does the concept of safety mean to you? So, you can think of both physical safety or even emotional comfort. What makes you feel secure in a space that you're in?

P: Okay, let's talk about the physical safety first, yes, of course, being a woman, the first concern is that of physical safety and talking on a very base level, the first thing that comes to mind is, where shall we stay? The shelter. So, if the shelter is- for the stay is safe. Much of the problem is solved, I think, and I have felt that that I am safe in wherever I'm living, under the guidance of whoever is the owner and whatever. The next is the safety of me and my friends on road, contrary to the very popular belief of what Noida is or what Delhi is, my experiences is very different. It's very opposite, like I can go out at two in the night without any fear and all by myself. I also do not need to be in a group, so I really can't tell about the situation over there. I don't know if so much of rumors or so many gossips that come out of these places is true or not, but as of my experiences, as of my experience, it is mixed. So, I can only say that I do not lack that courage of going out. Maybe, if I do take consideration of the real scenario, maybe I shouldn't choose to, but for me, my fearlessness is the main factor for me, I would say so that is second and the third is emotional safety. As you mentioned, I do feel emotionally safe over there too, because I did not have experience- I have not experienced any kind of cultural shock over there. Since I am a Bengali, I have shifted to Noida with four of my friends, initially, who all are Bengalis. And over there we are now a group of 11 Bengalis living under the same PG. So that is the reason I feel emotionally safe. Also, I feel in my culture, although I have relocated, I do not feel out of Bengal, because after leaving food, I- we have left our food from the PG. Basically it is very bad, so we cook our own food now. So, because of the food factor, we do not feel out of home anyways. And I know it can be very controversial, but I enjoy my living over there more than I enjoy my stay over here, in my house. So, you can call that is my home. Now, that's the reason I feel that I'm safe enough from every dimension.

I: Oh, that's so nice. All of you together so lovely. So, for your sense of safety, how would you describe it like? What does safety mean to you in if you had to summarize it in a sentence or two, how would you say?

P: My definition of safety would include all the three factors that I've talked about. That is safety in the safety at home, I can say, safety on the roads and safety and emotional safety iss ko, how should I construct it in a sentence like I do feel that I am guarded enough in wherever I'm living I do not feel a sense of insecurity.

I: Okay, thank you for that. Can you please describe your initial perception of safety in your new environment after relocating? So, you said you came from Kolkata to Noida, so what was your first impression of your safety? So, like the language transport, how the general surroundings were. So, when you first arrived, what did you think of the safety in that place? What was your initial perception?

P: Okay, so the initial perception was that this is very different. Noida is very different from Kolkata. Initially I felt that this is not a safer place than Kolkata, because I had no idea about the transportation, because here in Kolkata, there are so many modes of transport. If I don't get a bus, I can get an auto, I can get a rickshaw, I can get a local train or a metro, or anything as I wish. Even I can get a ferry if there is traffic on roads. So, I can take a launch that can in that way, I can save time, that way, I can avoid traffic. But in Noida, the first choice that I have is app cabs. There are no busses on roads, which is very different from Kolkata to empty roads. It is not a metropolitan city like Kolkata. So obviously there are not many people on roads at night, so fewer number of people. These visuals did invoke certain feelings of Yeah, certain feelings of insecurities, or the fact that the place might not be safe enough for a girl to roam around at night like it was initially. It was, yeah, I can say it was isolated to an extent. So, it was not that safe for

me when I did not feel that it was safe enough, or safer than Kolkata when I first relocated. But now maybe because of adaption, I'm used to it.

I: So, like you just mentioned, as of adaption, you- you are a little bit more used to it. So, can you tell me how your perception of safety has changed over time, and what helped that change? What kind of factors made you feel safe or unsafe?

P: Okay, so, so the PG I stay here is in Sector 126 and the campus of our university, Amity Noida, is in Sector 125 so basically, I do not have to travel much. I have, I just have to take a five minute walk from my PG to college, and then college to PG. That was my periphery initially, because I had, did not have to travel much. And then, as I mentioned, see- there are many people over there, many Bengali girls over there in my PG. So, we did not know them all in the beginning, gradually, when we started to get to- got to know them. They are little, a little elder from us. They are little like- they are doing job at a company near our PG only. So, after mixing with them, after going on night walks together, we started going on outings. So that is how I understood the I can roam around at this hour in this place. And these are the places possible to like, possible for a college student to go at an affordable price, like a cafe or a roadside stall or whatever. So, this is the distance. These are the people I can get comfortable with. And these are the places which are appropriate for roaming around that night or in the morning alone, versus these are the places safe for everyone. So that is how I gradually got to know about Noida.

I: And how did that make you feel? Did that add to your sense of safety in any way, being more familiar with your surroundings?

P: I would still say it is not about the actual safety situation over there or scenario over there. It is about my group, my comfort with my group, or the fact that I am used to- I am used to it. I have adapted over there that I don't feel afraid to go out, I would say ki the highway is not that safe. I

would like to share an incident, because there are numerous news on the TV or on whatever social media or whichever media platform it is, we get to hear news about encounters taking place just outside Amity Noida campus, also in the campus. And that is- that happens literally just two minutes away from our PG. So how can I say that the place is safe enough? It is just that I don't feel the urge to not go out when I'm not with anyone else. It's not like that. I do have the courage to go out in spite of all these factors. So my answer would remain the same, that it is not about the actual scenario I have adapted to it. That is what makes me safe, feel safer.

I: So, you, you- yourself has, like, made yourself, like, go out, even though, if it's late, even if you know...what helped- what gave you that sort of courage? Like, do you take any sort of precautions or anything that gave you that sense of safety, that you can go out alone?

P: If I have to analyze, then I think that I know every- I know every time at the back of my mind, if anything happens, there are 11 people who will come to protect me. And also I have someone over there, like a CID officer over there, whom I know. I also have sources in the ministry the central government. And yeah, my parents are well connected, so that is how I know if anything happens. I do have people around me. Maybe because of that, I really don't know. I haven't thought of it very consciously.

I: Okay, that's- that's really great. That will help you feel like you have someone, when you're moving to a new place. Like you mentioned, like you have 11 of your friends from Bengal, and that really helped you feel connected still. So, how has making new social connections influenced your sense of safety? Having someone to travel with, which you mentioned, is not really an issue for you. You can go out alone, but just knowing that somebody is there if you need it, if you feel homesick, if you're struggling with academics at this new place, just knowing

you have someone- having some sort of social connection, how has that affected your sense of safety?

P: So, you're talking about emotional safety over here too?

I: Emotional- any sort of safety that having or making new connections has given you.

P: So, yeah, then again, uh, 11 of my friends, I would say, if I have to be a little humorous over here, I would say that none of them are very normal. So, I expect that something is going to go wrong today. If it is 10 o'clock in the night and nothing has gone wrong, that is some- that means that something is very like, something is way too wrong, that nothing has gone wrong. So, we have to go and inquire, yeah, we have to go and inquire ki everything is all right now, like, why is everyone behaving so normally? So, for example, we are sitting at our own room, relaxing and all just, we just opened the door and saw that two of the monkeys from God knows where have come in, and they have vandalized the entire fridge. They have opened the fridge door, taken out things from over there, they are eating them, and they saw me, froze for a few seconds and then left. So, like, even if someone is struggling, like even if someone is not having a good day, or there is a serious mental health condition, for example, depression or anxiety, the person cannot stay in that depressed mood, in that feeling, if the person has such a social circle. So I would say, ki anything- if I talk about safety, be it emotional, be it physical, it comes from that group and the very prominent academic pressure that we felt in my- that in our graduation, just right before our exams, it is very weird to me that we did- do not feel that anxiety, or we do not feel that sense of worry over there, like we study, if there is, there is A 10 hour of break, we study in that break like we do, not just a second sorry... that we do not take breaks in studies. We do study while we are on a break. So that is how, and I don't think that has hampered my academics. I think that makes me feel much more emotionally healthy right now, much more stable and

emotional regulation is much better after I have shifted to Noida than I was in Kolkata. I do not get panic attacks that I used to get during my graduation days. So yeah, I think the group has contributed a lot.

I: So, did you take time for you to make these friends? Or were they like immediate friends when you got there?

P: Actually, I knew that four of us, three of us actually were going from Kolkata to Noida, and I did not know them previously. I only know my- knew my roommate, who was my tuition mate, and that too, not a very- not for a very long duration. I only met her twice or thrice, because I left the tuition after a while. So, I got connected to her through a mutual friend of ours. And then she told me that a friend of hers from her college is also going to come. So, that is how I got to know two other people who are going to shift to the other location. So, I already had the mindset that I know my roommate, I know I have a small group. After shifting over there, I saw that one of the friends I had from my graduation wala college, she is also going to stay there. She has also taken admission into Amity Noida. And then I got to know after the orientation at our college, I got to know few of the other Bengalis. That is how my circle grew. And on the third or fourth day, I got to know that there are few Bengali didis [honorific for older women/sisters] staying over here in the same page. But initially we did not have large conversations, like big tea parties with them, not like that. But gradually it happened. But gradually, when I use the word gradual, I do not mean that it took a lot of time. We instantly vibed. I can say like within a month, we were a group. So did not take much time.

I: That's really cute. So, knowing that you have these people, even before you moved, you mentioned you knew that three of the people that you already knew were going to be there. So,

did that help with your sense of safety at all? Did that alleviate any of your stress about relocation?

P: I would really not say that, because if I have to analyze myself as a person, I would say that I'm a very, very balanced person. If I know that I have to shift somewhere, I do not feel the anxiety, because it is my choice. I did not have any anxiety bouts or any feelings of sadness before leaving my home. So, it did not really matter to me if I had to shift alone, even if I did not know who's my roommate going to be, I don't think that would have affected me, analyzing me as a person.

I: So, you- you like being independent, and you- you like stick it through.

P: Yeah.

I: Great. Can you please describe any specific challenges or incidents that have made you feel unsafe since you- sorry- since you relocated, any difficulties in public transport like you mentioned in where you're at right now, there isn't any busses or anything like there was in Kolkata, so having to navigate those new things, like, where did you experience any sort of unsafe moment?

P: Yeah, it happened in October that the PG we were staying and initially we got informed by our owner, and by owner, I mean the manager of the PG. Because there- I don't know about Bangalore or other cities, but over there, the place that I stay, especially, is- was initially a village. So it is because of Amity Noida, and it is because of HCL tech over there, that population grew and people started to live over there. So, it turned from- transformed from a village to a proper town area, I would say. So, the entire area is filled with PGs, like it is only PGs and only accommodations for students and office goers. There is no residential area as such.

So, people over there, come here- come there to do business. They buy PGs and they manage it. So, if I use the term owner, that doesn't mean the owner of the building, that means our owner, the person we know as owner, the manager. Okay, so these people, they have more than one PGs, they buy more than one PGs, and if anything goes wrong, like if there is a clash between the owner and the manager, the owner might ask the manager to back off, or the manager himself might back off and leave the PG. So that is what happened with us in October. We just got informed in the morning we have to leave the PG by evening, and he himself is going too on that day, and he is going to relocate us to a different PG, which is just opposite to our PG, the previous one, because both the PGs were his. So that was a real challenge for us. He- this does not happen, and this is not right. We got to know later on that there was a clash between owner and manager, and we did have a choice to stay there only, but our manager manipulated us in such a way that you have to leave the PG, the owner had no problems to the tenants. They only had the problem with manager. So, we call him 'Bhaiya'. So the owner had problems only with Bhaiya, but Bhaiya manipulated us in such a way that everyone has to leave the PG. PG 'khali kardena hoga' ["have to empty the PG"] these were his words, that you have to isolate the PG, and I am going to relocate you to a different one. That's one challenge. And even now, we have this feeling, even now we pray ki [that] when we go back to Noida, we should not be relocated again, because we have already heard of such news that the bhaiya has been in conflict with some other PG owner also. So, we are just praying ki that does not happen again. This is one, but still that I have told you this ki, it is not about the external factors. My sense of security, my sense of safety, depends on the people I'm with. Even if I did not have these people, I don't know what would be the situation, but if I have known myself correctly, my period of anxiety would last for 15 minutes only, but then I would know at the end of 15 minutes, ki I- what I have to do. I don't think ki if this, if this group did not exist, I would have much problems, or I would feel

unsafe. Having said about this, there is another very, very prominent incident that had happened while I was there in Noida that we were taking a night walk. And there's a very notorious Highway over there where girls should- girls are not advised to go alone. So, we were in a group. So, the group consisted of eight girls. It was quite a large group. And then we saw a van which came from behind, and it was following us. It was following us. And I am in shock ki like I don't know about these people. There are eight girls. There is not one or two girls, and yet they are not afraid to follow us. So that happened, and I would say this is a miracle, or what I don't know, but a group of dogs appeared out of nowhere, and they just encircled us. They encircled us. We were in that circle. The dogs surrounded us, and they started barking. So, one of the girls actually was very humorous at that time. She was very nervous, so her coping mechanism is humor. She began saying ki 'bhai hum samaj nahi parahi, gadi attack karega matlab, insaan attack karega ya kutha attack karega ya dono ek saath attack karega?'['Bro I cannot understand whether the car will attack, as in will the people attack first or the dogs or will both attack together?'].

I: Like who's gonna attack first.

P: Yeah, so, the dogs began to bark, and they barked until the car left. Oh, so that's a very, very significant incident.

I: That's like a miracle, almost like the dogs out of nowhere.

P: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

I: How did you feel? Like I'm sure having your friends gave you some sort of a confidence. But what was going on in your mind?

P: Of course, in these type of situations, I think about the extreme that I can do at that moment, I was thinking about calling the police, but then I thought, let's wait and see what happens. For a

few minutes, at least, because there was lot of- there was quite a few number of girls. I was not alone, so let's see what happens. And especially after the dogs came and surrounded us, we had no other option than to wait. Either someone would come down from the car, or the car would go. So, we saw that the car went- so we did not have to do anything. But yes, initially we did feel anxious, and it did evoke a sense of, what would I say? Yeah, we felt a little unsafe. We can say at that moment that makes sense. But that does not mean, sorry, that does not mean that we are not going to go out again. That's what is important.

I: Yeah, you seem like someone who doesn't like to like be held back by anything. That's really- that's really wonderful. Are there any measures or strategies that you use to cope with safety concerns? Do you avoid certain things you said you don't, but do you use any apps for guidance or any sort of habits that you have inculcated to help you navigate a little bit better?

P: Okay, so if I am- I'm not usually out at night alone, because all my friends are in the area. And if I have to be alone, out, I ensure that at least my roommate is there with me, because at one or 1:30 in the night, if I am with, what should I say? My best friend is a boy, so if we are at his place, he does not leave us- leave us alone. He- there are so many girls. So, he comes to leave us at our door, yeah, but I do not stay out. Usually at night after 11 or 11:30 if I do, I make sure that I share my live location with, like, with either my roommate or my best friend, or the group, the Bengali group that I have in my whatsapp this, and it is important to mention we, we went on two world trips, one For Rishikesh and the other in Jaipur. So, both the times, we were only four or five girls. So, during that time, we sent our live location to that Bengali group on WhatsApp, so that people know even we are- when we reach to the terminal, first terminal, or when we reach the station, or when we reach Jaipur, or whatever. And I made sure ki since I was new over there

in Noida, the Rishikesh trip was the first trip that we took, I was a little unsure about the safety condition over there, so I sent my live location to the CID that I know over there. That's it.

I: Has it become some sort of a habit for you to send the live location if you're going anywhere, or is it only?-

P: Yeah, this is one of my coping strategies. I would say, yeah, that's it.

I: Okay. That's great. You mentioned how you've heard certain stories about- not about, but, like, about Amity Noida, like some crimes or something have happened near the place you mentioned. So, it's not like, safe, safe. So how has like, hearing news stories or social media posts about certain things like this influenced your sense of safety before moving to Noida and or even after moving there, hearing of such stories, how does- how did that impact your sense of safety?

P: Honestly, it does not matter to me, because I knew that Noida is not a very good place. I knew that Amity Noida is infamous for these happenings over there. And in spite of that, I was ready to move from home to move in, and after moving to Noida, I saw a crime taking place in front of my eyes. The reason the Dandiya program was canceled, according to the puja Navratri, that time there was a shootout at the campus. So, we saw the person being injured being taken on a stretcher to the hospital. I don't know which hospital or what, but for that, the entire program was canceled. Doors were shut, and then cocaine was found from the girls hostel, three kgs of it, very recently. And then these keep happening. These just keep happening. But I, I really don't care. I have just gone to get my degree, get a good placement. That's it. Others I don't care about.

I: So having that sort of very strong focus on this is what I'm here to do. I can handle this. Having that sense of, see, like confidence in yourself that really impacts your safety, would you say, like it really influenced?

P: Yes.

I: That's really great. So, you mentioned you lived in a PG, and you had to move because of the PG bhaiya and things like that. So how does the physical layout of where you are influence your sense of safety? For example, if the streets are very isolated, and there's no street lights or no surveillance cameras anywhere, or where your campus is located, things like that- has that influenced your sense of safety?

P: So basically, the layout of my PG, the current one is like a very- is it- is like a very normal home type, like, it's not a PG-PG type. It's like a house type of PG so I live in the ground floor, and there are six people living on the ground floor in total, out of which five are Bengalis. There is one in the first floor and the others in the second floor. So I don't feel that there is any sense of insecurity or unsafety in my PG or in the layout of it, because we feel at home. Then if we move out, or if we talk about the roads, the place that I stay is very densely populated, so I do not have a problem moving at night or day or whichever time of the day it is. Also, since it is a very small place, people know everyone, like people know each other. And since it is a PG area, PGs provide food, so girls or boys do not usually need to go and shop like vegetables at all, but since we do take food, we have to go to the shop, to the grocery and all very frequently. So that is how people know us. So, there was another eatery just beside our PG. We just got over there to get, I think, the cold drink maybe at 11:30 in the night. So, they just offered us a new drink they launched just to, like, just to get a review. And they did not charge anything for that. So, it is fairly a good area, I would say, the vegetable vendor that we go to is very friendly with us that He gives Chili's for free. He gives dhanya pathi [Coriander leaves], for free, coriander for free. So, roads are quite safe, but yes, if I go to the highway, it is not that safe. And there is that that is

the place where every kind of encounter or any kind of murder takes place. So it's a mixed review.

I: So, both exist, and do you make an active effort to avoid those areas? or you're just okay with just letting it be?

P: if I am in my area, in my PG area, then I have no issues in traveling, like travel in walking, also, night walks alone or in a group of two to three. But I do not prefer to go to the highways. But yes, if we go on night out, night out and say, night walks with the entire PGs Bengali population. So, if didis [older sister/womaen] are present over there, they are going to call their office colleagues who are going to join us. So now it's a group of 20 to 22 people. So, then I have no problem in going out. So yeah, that is when we actually- there is, there is everything, there is crying that is good, the good part of it also. But the problem is how I see it so I do not feel that urge to restrain myself. I do take certain precautions, like not going over here and there alone, or when I'm not in a group or not in a large group. But usually that is not the case.

I: Okay, so for my last question, can you please tell me if there were any cultural differences in your new environment that influenced your sense of safety? Maybe the difference in how they function, like social norms or dressing even, or language, any sort of thing that you felt added or took from your sense of safety, any cultural difference or misunderstanding?

P: The first thing was a language barrier, though I knew Hindi. Hindi was my third language, and I was also the topper of Hindi in my school. So, I had no problem. And I had no problem in speaking Hindi, but the type of Hindi, the dialect they speak in Noida, is a very meerut type of Hindi which is very fast and which is hard to comprehend. So that was the initial challenge that I had to face. That is language. Second was the frequent use of very nasty, dirty slangs, cuss

words. Cuss words is fine to use for me, to an extent, but not those words which involve parents, mothers.

I: Derogatory?

P: Yes, very derogatory. And that is such a normal culture over there that people don't think about giving it before giving it like they are in a road. They are in front of elders. They are in front of women. They do not think so that was and that still is a problem for me, because I am not going to be able to change myself or start resorting to giving or using cuss words just like them. That was the second challenge, and the third was the misconception. I don't know why, but the misconception of Bengalis being able to do black magic, and- and the food habits, like, why do you eat fish? What it gives you, like these things, and the- the infamous government over here, so generalizing the qualities of the leader of that party with all the Bengalis and then derogatory terms being used about the state, the condition of the state, the condition of the state, is true. I do not have a problem if people do talk about these, but when they say that your state, that hurts differently, like there is a very different side of Bengal too. It is not Bengal is not what it is now, West Bengal is not just what it is now. It is a very rich place with a lot of history. The national anthem that we sing, we leave our seats, we stand and we sing. The anthem is written by a Bengali. So, you also need to think about that also before pointing your fingers at someone. So that invokes a sense of defensiveness in me. So, I began defending, and sometimes I know how to ignore the stuff and take it very casually and make jokes on it only myself. So basically, I roast- make myself only in front of people when I feel like it is appropriate to do and when I think that it is getting serious, so then I defend that is how the sense of safety regarding cultural changes or what affects me. That is all I can remember.

I: Thank you. How did that make you feel like you said, the language, the dialect, was a little bit different? So did that affect how you could communicate with even auto-valas [auto-drivers] or anything? Did that impact your safety in any way or make you feel a certain way?

P: So in the initial days in Noida, I had to only communicate with the owner of my PG director, manager. So I used to take help from one of the didis over there, which we are friends now, but initially we did not know them. So, I would keep her as a translator, or any of the Bengalis over there as a translator. So, they would translate whatever he was saying to us, and understandable hindi for Bengali. So, then we would communicate, and then after staying over there, being adapted to his language, we are able to understand and comprehend and about communicating with auto-valas and all- we usually do not need to travel much because our university is very close, but even if we do have to travel, language was never a problem, never that a problem. But yeah, but the bad gaze that drivers have, especially at night, when we can understand that this It was great talking to you. I enjoyed a lot. person is drunk, that does invoke a feeling of being unsafe, otherwise, it's okay.

I: Thank you so much for sharing everything that was really wonderful. I can't wait to code all of this. It was really wonderful. Thank you so much, so much. I really, really really appreciate it. If there's any questions or anything, please feel free to message me anytime. And I really, really appreciate this. Thank you so much.

P: It was great talking to you. I enjoyed a lot.

I: You have such a nice energy, like honestly, like you have a lovely energy, and I- and I hope you have the best time wherever you go, please stay safe. Thank you so much. Please rest now. I'm so- thank you for this, for being patient with me as well, with all the network issues, I really appreciate it.

P: It was very nice talking to you. I had a great time, and all the best for your future, your career. I wish you all the best.

I: Thank you so much. You're so sweet. Thank you.

P: Good night. Bye Bye.

I: Good night. Bye bye. Thank you.