

CHAT PATTI TRANSCRIPT

(0:05)(Purpose) Abhik: Hello, this is South Asian restaurants in metro Atlanta project, part of the project Lab at Georgia State. I am Abhik and I'm a Phd candidate at Georgia State University here in this project we are exploring some important questions to regarding south asian food culture specifically in metro Atlanta area we're asking about we are trying to explore the demographic history of demography and the socio-economic and political condition affecting food in you know Metro Atlanta area. We are also talking about exploring how the hegemony of Indian food has played a big role in the cuisine and the food served in this restaurant. At the same time we're also you know wondering and we had been really concerned about how pandemic has affected the business so today I am a Chatpatti at the Patel Plaza a very famous restaurant and we have our owner with us thank you for thanks for being here.

(1:16) Sunny: Thank you

(1:18) Abhik: So you know you can start by introducing yourself.

(1:24)(Introduction) Sunny: Yeah so my name is sunny again well I'm in helping my parents for almost roughly 15 18 years in the restaurant business and I grew up like since I since 91 and they did establishing this restaurant for so long and now I am growing growing the business and building an empire to like raise more restaurants in Atlanta so yeah that's myself and I want to continue this journey by establishing them you know my restaurant name knowing that my parents work hard for me

(2:03)(Background) Abhik: Excellent so that brings us the next question with will be would be very much interested to know about your background and where your family is from.

(2:12) Sunny: So yeah basically my parents are from the **place(2:14)** so my mom is from a small town called **place(2:17)** and my dad is from humdoa kind of like the city of Atlanta but very fast growing and so coming from from India to here what's the struggle for them and their background has been my mom has been cooking all her life from her childhood from her you know authentic food but yeah my parents are were born and raised in India

(2:50)(Migration) Abhik: When did you migrate here when did your family migrate here

(2:53) Sunny: So my dad and my mom and my sister came before it was 1985.

(3:02) Abhik: That's a long way back

(3:04) Sunny: way back before then I think I'm not exactly the numbers are right but like before that roughly but my parents came you know they they came and to the US and kind of knew the

environment and the aspects of how to live life and you know how to grow other businesses so yeah that that was the time when they really come to the USA.

(3:30)(Opening) Abhik: Okay that's interesting so when was this restaurant opened?

(3:34) Sunny: it was open in 1991 that's when I was born in the Grady hospital and I actually I was surprised how my mom and dad they actually it took them a long time to you know think about opening the business but they established it by working really hard by doing other work before that to open in 1991 .

(4:01)(Inspiration) Abhik: Yeah and that's very interesting because when we think about the inspiration that drives you know people to you know coming here especially migrants see how what else what has been the spared behind opening this restaurant so can you tell us briefly about what inspired your mom and dad to open this restaurant in Atlanta.

(4:30) Sunny: So basically you know the stories you know my mom and dad used to work for other restaurants before and you know small in American restaurants that are still here today but somehow are not here and they're struggles for them to come from that to build a under restaurant what's the difficult right now and so they actually had to like you know save and try to build a business they had to think about it several times because they knew that once we open a business it's a long term thing not a short term thing right so when I was born they new that this was the right opportunity for them so they came and opened a name called Chat Patti because my mom had a good background of culture foods and so me being raised in a small home, my grandparents and my granddad they actually taught her a lot of stuff. My dad saw that she could be a really good cook and so she and my dad struggled together to build a restaurant and now today for 30 years that same consistent taste has been there. And that is how we built this restaurant and my sister was there too the whole time. I was very young so I wasn't there the whole picture but I saw their struggles.

(6:03)(Name Influence) Abhik: I'm sure maintaining consistency is a big challenge. We'll come to those challenges and hindrances that you face but right now I'm a bit interested about the name you mentioned Chat Patti so what is the story behind the name of the restaurant because most of the time when we go to Indian and Pakistanian or Nepalese restaurants in Atlanta. We see that the name at times was very much influenced or inspired by the existence of similar restaurants of similar names in their own country. So what do you think is the influence?

(6:43) Sunny: So my dad and mom one day actually had the name. It was a name where it kind of put together they concept they knew that we would wanna be known for Chatts right and so not just Chatts but the authentic Pikodas and the other recipes my mom knew and the Chat Patti was kind of triggered to more of the Chat specialities that we were known for so my parents kind of knew that was the right name to put for our restaurant because we want to be known for that and so thats how they picked their name. It was a little difficultly moment for them but they knew that was the right name for their restaurant.

(7:28) Abhik: So I can see from the menu that there are so many different kinds of dishes that are served but you are saying that chat patti your focus is serving different kinds of chats.

(7:44) Sunny: Right. Thats Right. For 30 years that name kind of has brought our name out there and mostly in our line of market.

(7:54)(Location Impact) Abhik: So how has the location in Patel Plaza impacted your business?

(8:00) Sunny: So we're actually happy with the location.

(8:05) Abhik: Was it there from the beginning?

(8:08) Sunny: So before we were actually in Nadra Hills for almost say 2013 and we moved here so its been like almost 7 years we've been in this location. And ever since then our name actually has doubled and we have already been known for 30 years but being here has doubled our name because we have been known for so long but the people that have never came here have been going out of state too because people didnt know about our restaurant like they knew about it but the people who have never been to this restaurant have been going out of different states. So being here is a very good location, 7 years and the consistency is still the same. And we have never been impacted with our restaurant.

(9:00)(Barriers) Abhik: And this brings us to our next question which is what were some of the initial barriers you had to work on in order to open this restaurant and what are the hindrances you faced later to keep the business running? Because we know that you were not the citizens initially and know you are and as an immagrant from India coming here plus working at some place and then having the inspiration to set up a new business is challenging so thats why my question here is I'm interested to know what the initial barriers you faced while setting up the business?

(9:45) Sunny: So you know my mom and dad coming to the U.S, they didnt have a game plan of what they wanted to do right. Everybody that comes from any other country they have to grow something to think about opening a business. And its not very easy especially in the U.S.A. You are coming from another country, you want to learn their culture and know the environment. So my dad and mom didn't come here and open a business right away, they had to struggle at some points to think about opening the restaurant. So my dad had this idea that he had at the back of his mind that he wanted to open this restaurant. While my mom was still thinking if its worth doing it. You know. Even though my mom had that good hand of taste from back home. So coming here was a very difficult moment but they build upon that working for some people and then my dad initiated opening this restaurant.

(10:48)(Hindrances) Abhik: Do you think that they had to face a lot of hindrances?

(10:53) Sunny: Yeah. It was a lot of pressure and struggles because its not easy opening a restaurant. Its not just like open it and thats it. You have to make sure the consistency is there. You are always here all the time You have to make sure customers keep repeating. Thats what they were trying to make sure. That that taste and consistency is there. So in the start it was very difficult to bring the name out .right. But as they grew together my mom and dad and my sister, they all put it together as a picture that they can do it and saw their potential in the restaurant. So they knew that the name is going out there really well especially with our chats and dosas and stuff like that. So it was a difficult moment for them at that time, but keeping that consistency kind of get them like hey we can do this. You know.

(11:48)(Patel Plaza) Abhik: So you told me that you opened this ranch and shifted from 11:57 in 2013 and opened this ranch at Patel Plaza. So do you think that you had to face hindrances again here or was it relatively easier for you to set up your restaurant here in Patel Plaza?

(12:16) Sunny: So everybody says that if you go from one location to another you gotta really know the environment right. And the environment here is how is this environment differnt from there, right. I knew that when I come here its gonna be more busier you know from the location where we were because that place was very busy as well but the demographics here is completely different because they are coming from different states rather than just local people when we were in the other location. So when we came we knew our positivity at this location was going to be really great but we weren't saying like hey because our name is there thats gonna double us. We knew that but we can't always say 100 percent its gonna be beautiful. But when we came day one, we were fully packed because our name was there for almost so long. When we started in this location I think it was like 26 years in that restaurant business and today its 30 years. When we came here we knew that we wanted to build this location a name as well from our previous location. So when we did that, we knew that we could get our other locals from other states to come to our restaurant and that kind of pushed us the the highest limit we set that we were doing pretty well. And since then we have never ben going back down like its still everyday where we see the same customer and new customers, and other people referencing our restaurant is known for chats and dosas an now sandwiches. But we are doing really well the the point people are still putting our name out there.

(13:57)(Target Customers) Abhik: So I can assume that a lot has gone into opening this restaurant here in Patel Plaza in shifting it from 14:08 to Patel Plaza. So its excellent. Im sure. You know if a restaurant business is serving good food I dont think thats enough. You have to put a lot of part behind the location and the kind of customers that you want to target and many other different things that goes with this. So who are your target customers and why?

(14:42) Sunny: We don't specifically have a target. Our demographic is wide open. I like to have mixed cultures coming into my business because those cultures are kind of similar to our

culture and so when I see other demographics that we see in this restaurant that means our quality of food is really good to the point that its going outside of this restaurant and our name is actually expanding to other different cultures.

(15:11)(Popular Among Americans) Abhik: So Im sure that I have seen myself from coming here that this place is really really popular with the Indians, with the Pakistans, and Nepalese people from Nepal or Buton so there is no doubt about it but do you think that your food is popular among the Americans?

(15:34) Sunny: Yes. Well known since the old location. We still have old customers that visit from there to here. So being there we had other demographics but here those people still come and we see a wide variety of other customers that come here. So we don't specifically target one community, we want to expand our community so that other people can see our taste still has been consistent for 30 years.

(16:04) Abhik: So this shows that how your business caters to not just South Asians but also you know the white and the African American, Hispanic population. Everybody is interested and wants to come and taste the food.

(16:19) Sunny: Yes thats right.Thats right.

(16:23)(Pandemic) Abhik:This brings us to the next question which is how do you think the pandemic has affected your business in the last two years?

(16:32) Sunny: So during the pandemic you know everybody was wondering whats gonna happen with you know not just my business, but all businesses. They were trying to figure out how we were going to manover through this pandemic situation. Myself was wondering what was going to happen. And when we first saw this pandemic we were like this is something new to us its not just like an ordinary feeling. It was something that was affecting the whole world. So we actually never actually got affected my the pandemic. Before the pandemic, I went to India in January and I actually went there to learn some new varieties of new culture food. So I came back before the pandemic really affected which was in March of 2020 so when I came here I was like that's the perfect comment for me to remodel the restaurant and bring my new authentic fusion foods that I learned from back home back in 2020 say it was a perfect timing so I wasn't worried about all the pandemic you know we were still doing well you know people were still doing it to go orders well my target was to bring that new fusion food and it was perfect timing.

(17:51)(Changes) Abhik: How have you changed your restaurant in order to keep up with the industry over the years?

(18:00) Sunny: So I'm going to say you know now everybody is in social media as you know right everyday I look at the new trends and figured that my mom and dad are from humdo (check spelling): 18:11 so my mom is from 18:13 – and my dad is from humdo so usually when we go I am at humdo all the time every I probably go every 2 to 3 years and when I go out there I see that the new trends of foods are converting the old traditional foods into fusion foods that are drastically changing so when I went there I was like I see these new sandwiches new dosa fusion and so I had to bring that because you still want to keep the old traditional food because you want to keep that customer still coming in the restaurant but if you don't bring the fusion foods then it's very uh you want to bring those kinds of clientele in here so I felt like that was the fusion foods that I brought into the restaurant and where we are at today I felt like we did the right thing so like I brought like the new sandwiches like our famous sandwiches called Kellari sandwich and as well known because they have so many different type of vegetables and you know different sauces in there that is well known back in India and so I brought that and then we have a famous dosa called Dugle Dosa so that was something kinda like Genie Dosa but it is similar to that but it's famous in humdo I just changed the name to kinda bring like a Bollywood fusion into it.

(19:36)(Strategies) Abhik: So do you think that the business strategies that you sort of incorporate in this restaurant do you think that you depend a lot on what is happening back in your own country to you know get inspired and to learn from there and then use it here or do you like you know do some sort of balanced you just take some things which you consider to be important and leave out other things other business strategies that may or may not be successful in Atlanta

(20:11) Sunny: So my thing is that you want to look at the younger generation as of know and what they want and hold their generation So you don't want to exclude both of the things you want to make sure you bring those two clientele in this restaurant and so what I had did is that I still kept the old traditional foods that my parents had established since '91 and myself came in and brought the fusion stuff so what happens is that you get both of the clientele coming into the restaurant saying oh out of these other restaurants in this Patel Plaza Chat Patti is known for other things not just the whole traditional food that they started in 1991 you know so when I came here I knew that if I bring that I'll bring more customers in because I have more of both aspects more of their older generation and the younger generation so it really didn't impact me in any way because I still will go every couple of years to India and bring new fusion foods and establish it here because the trend is now all customers want a new thing everytime they come to the restaurant if you don't keep that consistency the you start losing because their clientele people don't want to eat the same food all the time right they want to come and see they want something different see if I keep that consistency all the time and bring new things they will still come back overall yeah and at the same time we are talking more business strategies and I think it's been pretty challenging for you because we have some other restaurants you know

here and more popping up around this area so its been challenging yeah its not for me as I dont look at the other restaurants as much I focus more on my own because I know that being consistent is going to bring them back here right even though im known for shads but I want to be known for like sandwiches and the fusion dosas so that was another point of element.

(22:14)(Menu) Abhik: This brings us towards the end of our interview and definitely because we all love food it will be great to know about your menu and sort of what offerings or dishes are the most popular here and what kind of changes or adaptations that you brought in tradiaitonal cuisines to suit not just the indians living in or asians and south asians in this area but also the american palate.

(22:46) Sunny: So as I said right we I brought the new sandwiches for example I got the new sandwiches and milkshakes Could you name some of them yeah so some of the names are like killari sandwich veggie hotdogs so its kind of like ok what is going on here like veggie it is not well known right so what I did was I in that for example the veggie hotdog its like a long piece of bread that has cutlid inside which they use in Inida which has mixed vegetables and then you put the green sauce and spicy sauce and tomato and potato cucumber and mayo which they do back home so those putting together and grill it the taste and consistency from that is that you want to feel the crunch and the taste of the mixed vegetables so that was one aspect I learned from back home and another dosa is like the dongle dosa as I said before that is more of a rice flour crepe that is put on the grill and we actually put like one different green pepper arnin and cabbage and it has like indian (mesovalah): 23:56 and spread that on your dosa and then roll it in coconut 24:02 —cheese and so it has that indian fusions culture still has that fusion taste to it.

(24:09)(Indochinese) Abhik: I can see also in your menu I can see some Indochinese food also that you are serving do you think that Indochinese is popular in your restaurant?

(24:19) Sunny: Yeah so now a lot back home in India when I went recently the chinese foods are booming everywhere humdoa so when I came back I had to bring that culture here because I knew that taste is missing here locally and especially in this cater location so like having chinese vill its like what is going on its like its fried noodles but its not soft like regular noodles like chinese noodles right so I had to bring that culture like different Indochinese ingredients so its similar but still Indian style rather than the regular chinese dish that people are known for and we are well known for our chaats like our number one seller is our chaat chat patti special right and that is been known for years and it has like indian nachos chick pea they put the lental ball with the sweet and sour they put the green sauce yogurt coconut mango and so it kind of brings like the fusion but more of the traditional Indian sauce that people can feel the taste and crunch.

(25:30)(Food Changes) Abhik: Yeah and I can see from your menu that its not just about the fusion food that you claim that are popular but I think that you are you know you are not just serving indian vegetarian food and south indian vegetarian food. And You were discussion about the not indian south indian distinction between the two. So we will start again with the menu if you dont mind. So because we love food and we all are interested in exploring food

culture which brings us to the most important question for food. And so could you describe your menu. What kind of dishes are the most popular and why? What adaptations or changes have you made in traditional cuisines to suite the american palate.

(26:10) Sunny: So basically I will start with our well known dish which is Chat Patti special it has more of a track like our signature name for years and that consists of the Indian nachos with chick pea and it has the yogurt ball which is in the middle which is made out of sweet and sour and then we put the green sauce, hot sauce, tera sauce, yogurt, coconut, chai, and mango so its more of a sweet side with the indian sauces that we put with the crunch and taste that brings that whole picture together and that has been known for almost 30 years. In the newer dish which I brought is all of our newer sandwiches. Number one is our Kalari sandwich which is like a four layer bread it has an indian **27:41** which is potatoes, cashews, and peas . It has all the traditional indian mesolas that we put in there with two different sauces they put potato, cucumber.

(27:53) Abhik: That sounds delicious.

(27:55) Sunny: It is very tasty. We grill it the indian cheese on top. It has been well-known for years. It is more of a fusion dish. Then we have our fusion dosa that we still kept our traditional tast but I made it more of a fusion dish which is called dongle dosa. We put a bollywood name to it because it was a well known name for years and so I was like I got to put the name together. That one has the dosa which is like a rice flour crepe and its flat and it has cabbage, green pepper, arnin it has an Indian mesola to it an we put Indian cheese inside of it and then we roll it with coconut, mayo, and cheese in it and its very well known because it has that fusion to it but it has that traditional indian stuff that they still know which is a dosa.

(28:51)(Street Food) Abhik: So I can see that you are serving more street food and food that are more consumed as a meal for maybe lunch or dinner, So I know that you are serving vegetarian food so which are and I also know that you focus your food on cuisines coming from the state of Brujrat. Do you ever go beyond it and include street food from let's say Bombae.

(29:27) Sunny: Yes for example like **(29:27)** is known for many years in **Bombae** and we brought that and I believe same thing Dabeli we did the same thing with that. **Balmaji** is also known in Bombae for years its wide over there and we brought that too and so we brought not just chat its also the fusion foods from Bombae an you know you have the south which is the dosa and you have the talhi which is more north Indian it has a little bit of south plus the glati so its just not specifically in one part of the indian culture, we kind of put it all together. So every demographic can eat this.

(30:15)(Indochinese) Abhik: When I look at your menu I can see that you are serving indochinese food as well. Do you think indochinese is popular here or what demand you have for it at times?

(30:26) Sunny: So Indochinese has been really well known recently in India and has been growing very rapidly and so when I went there I was very surprised how they brought that Chinese dish and made it a more Indian fusion which is very surprising. So I was actually like Wow you are bringing this culture here I'm going to take it back here to the USA and so I first brought Chinese beef which is like what is going on here what is this concept and it's like this Chinese fried noodles which we put the Indochinese ingredients on. So you have the soft noodles with the Chinese noodles and we brought the fried noodles which is different because the crisp and taste is very different in elements.

(31:12) Abhik: Do you think people have accepted it?

(31:14) Sunny: Yes they have accepted it. And they love it because nobody has that culture you know and bringing that here is like wow. What's going on. This is something new. People still ask can you bring other Indochinese ingredients.

(31:28)(Non-vegetarian) Abhik: What about the challenge that you face from non-vegetarian South Asian restaurants that are also nearby which are also really popular in Atlanta.

(31:46) Sunny: So I have never told myself that I wouldn't become a non-vegetarian restaurant because I knew that my business has been there for 30 years right and being a vegetarian a lot of people are vegetarians for long time even back home. So seeing those other restaurants I never said it was going to be a challenge you know my customers since then and since now are still coming. And as of today you see a lot of people becoming vegan and becoming vegan is a popularity they're going to follow going only to vegetarian restaurants. So that was something that was going on for probably the last 5-6 years and those vegans are telling other vegans to come to our restaurant because they're vegetarian and there is no non-veg here and so they are going to prefer this restaurant more than all the non-vegetarian and I see in that the future, the non-vegetarian restaurants will have to follow the vegan trend because people are going into that healthy lifestyle and I see that they are going and looking at today's world.

(32:56) Abhik: Are you yourself a vegetarian?

(33:00) Sunny: I have been a vegetarian since I was a kid and I'll never change that.

(33:05) Abhik: So this brings us to our last final question. Do you think that your menu and your business strategies have put an end to stereotypes that people hear.

(33:44) Sunny: When you say that what do you mean like the different cultures?

(33:49) (Breaking Traditions) Abhik: I mean If you go to south asian restaurant lets say pakistan or Indian non-vegetaran restaurant we known that people ask for the chicken but do you think that your restaurant in your own way has challenged the traditional stuff that you serve here. I can see that you serve fusion foods which is one way of breaking the tradition. So do you consider your restaurant to be successful in breaking the traditions?

(34:43) Sunny: Yeah in a way because that culture and food is still here and its never going to go. So like with the south indian and north indian food I see that people are still wanting that and its never going to go away because they want to feel like they are still at home. They want to feel that taste and consistency and they want that every other week or ever other day and they want that because a lot of restaurants they don't want to keep that because they want to keep going with today's world. And I feel like they need to stop thinking like keep the traditional foods there. You know so that thing is never going to change.

(35:26)(End) Abhik: Thats all and thats it than you for your time again it was a pleasure meeting you and talking about your ideas regarding running your business and idea about your food and the kind of food that you are serving. Thank you.

(35:43) Sunny: Yes. Thank you so much.