



KALKI KOECHLIN

INDIAN AT HEART

<https://youtu.be/JDfP3thQYrM>

Lakshmi Pratury: So Kalki, I want to talk about identity. What is identity to you? I mean, you have an amazing mix of backgrounds to be here. So tell me your background and your mix and your identity.

Kalki Koechlin: If I figure it out, I'll let you know. Right now, I have no idea. As you know, I was born in South India. My parents are both French, but I grew up all my life in India, lived here all my life. They've been here for 40 years. So basically my skin is white and my heart is brown

Lakshmi Pratury: Do you ever have situations where somebody says something in Tamil, not knowing you understand?

Kalki Koechlin: Very, very often. I mean, I've had very entertaining conversations happen right in front of me. Two boys, you know, commenting on me saying, you know, not, I mean, they can be taken as flattering or slightly, you know, lewd comments that they'll be making about me. And then at the end of their conversation, I'll say something in Tamil and their jaw drops open and they're like, oh my God. So yeah, that happens. That happens quite a lot. Yeah.

Lakshmi Pratury: So you obviously raised here, went to a boarding school. What were you like as a kid? I mean, for an actor, we always think of people who are exuberant, excited out there. Were you like the popular chick in school or what were you like when you were growing up?

Kalki Koechlin: Not at all. I was very, very painfully shy. I... you know, I grew up in a school which was this British school in South India, English medium school. When I first got there, I had a French accent because I was six years old and at home I spoke French. So I used to say things like, concomber for cucumber. And you know, people used to really make fun of that. So I quickly like changed that and became very, you know, normal in the way I spoke or whatever. And then, you know, my Tamil like sort of took a backseat as well because English was like cool and everything. So there were all these things where I... you know, I was, I think since a very young age, trying very hard to just be, be what I, you know, what everybody else wants me to be. I was always quiet. I was very, you know, shy. I never really, you know, expressed what I felt and things like that. And, and I was, I had braces for like five years. So, you know, I had no

chance with most of the boys. And I think the, the way that I was to protect myself was by being a clown, by making people laugh, you know, so that was my kind of barrier. That was my way of, you know, making friends and not really showing people my insecurities or what I was really inside.

Lakshmi Pratury: So from this painfully shy girl to take one of the most daring roles in Dev.D, I mean, that's quite a stretch. So what was it, what made you decide you wanted to be an actress? Maybe tell us a little bit about, did you have a struggle before you wanted to become an actress or was it easy for you?

Kalki Koechlin: It was a long struggle. It was a long struggle convincing my mother that I'm not insane. Really, from a young age, I always was, was the one place where I could just go and do something and become a character was, was on stage, you know? So in school we used to have drama productions and suddenly I was, you know, somebody else and it was very liberating for me seeing as I don't know who I am myself. And then when I grew up and suddenly I had to, you know, become an adult and do something with my life, I don't take myself seriously enough to do something serious. So you know, like everything I do, I've got to do it with some fun and... also really I don't take myself seriously. Like you know, I'm the first person to laugh at myself and things. So I think this was for me just the first thing that came to mind was, was something creative, drama. And then I went to university in London. I went to Goldsmiths and I studied drama there. And again, I felt like I didn't know where I was, who I was because suddenly I was in this country where everybody thought I was, you know, I mean, I was from there, you know, they thought I was from England or from France. And yet, you know, when I said I'm Indian and my name is Kalki and then they were like, oh, you don't look Indian, but you don't sound English, but you don't, you know, and you don't, where are you from? And I, yeah, I still don't have an answer for that. So... I lost my train of thought. What were you asking?

Lakshmi Pratury: It's okay. You know, continuing on that, what was your first break, you know, when you, when you auditioned for that?

Kalki Koechlin: See, I... after I finished my theatre studies in London, I went ahead, I came back home and I started doing theatre here. And... I did a lot of sort of physical theatre, improv, improvisational theatre. And... I didn't know where I was going, but I knew that there was one thing that I was really hungry about and that's, you know, telling stories and becoming somebody else. And in that you start to understand somebody else, I think. And that's what I loved about it, about acting, that, you know, acting is therapy. It's like you go into somebody else's mind, you discover things, and then you feel a lot less distant from people because you, who cares if they don't think the same way or they behave strangely or, you know, they might have so many different things which at first you, you're so, it's so easy to judge somebody just by looking at them. And I think when you start to take acting seriously, you really sort of break that down and, you know, see the humanity and the people behind that.

Lakshmi Pratury: So how do you prepare for a role?

Kalki Koechlin: I'm just so over excited when I get a role that I do too much work. I believe in doing too much work. I believe in just going out researching and digging and and annoying my

director and calling them up every day and saying, what can, what else can I do? Tell me, tell me, should I watch some movies, read some books, do this, do that? I do my research and everything. And I have way too much information, which I'll never be able to use. And then I let it all go when I come on set. You know, I feel you have to be ultra-prepared and then wait for the surprise, you know, just let things surprise you. Let the other actor surprise you or let your director tell you, no, I don't want you to do it in this way. I want you to do it that way. So yeah.

Lakshmi Pratury: So everybody knows you as an actress. What tell me your other avatars as a writer, poet. What are the other things you do that are, that you're equally excited about?

Kalki Koechlin: I like to write, but no, you know what? I don't know if I like to write. I'm a very reluctant writer. I've written all my life, but I've noticed that I only write when I'm depressed or unemployed. So I don't know if I really like to write. It's a...

Lakshmi Pratury: Have you been writing anything lately?

Kalki Koechlin: I've been writing something, yeah, a few months back.

Lakshmi Pratury: Which one is it? Depressed or unemployed?

Kalki Koechlin: Both, both. Or bored, maybe. That was the other one. But yeah, I just wrote a play recently. It's a very personal thing, my writing. It's not really something that I do for somebody else. Of course, you know, when you put a play up, you put it up for an audience. But when I write it, I really just get it out of my system.

Lakshmi Pratury: My last question to you, Kalki, you are the future young, you know, you're part of the Ink Fellows program. As you look at the future as a young person, what do, what would you like to do and what do you wish happened?

Kalki Koechlin: I think it's too early for me to say what I wish to happen. I don't wish anything to happen. I'm terrible at planning things and I don't want to predict anything. I feel that everybody, you know, actually is so afraid of facing themselves most of the time. You know, we are always being people for somebody else and this is me personally I'm talking about as well. I've always been somebody for somebody, you know, like played somebody for other people. And I think acting and finding something that you're passionate about is a way to really be truthful with yourself and be honest with yourself. And I don't really have any, you know, sort of way of living or, you know, philosophy of life except that, you know, there's a Japanese saying that I like which says, yesterday worse than today, tomorrow better than today or something like that. So basically, you know, there's another day coming and you just need to keep going and you need to get better. And I think that's it, you know, we're too busy judging other people or, you know, judging how we should be with other people rather than just concentrating on, you know, what's in front of us. Take a step, move forward, do something.

Lakshmi Pratury: Great. Thank you for being here, Kalki.

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