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Podcast transcript:
Fatima: *Welcome to the Pedagogies for Social Justice podcast. I'm Fatima Maatwk and I will be your host today. I am very happy and excited to welcome Aishwarya Tiku, who is a Doctor of Business & Administration student and who is doing research in the field of knowledge management practices in higher education. So, welcome, Aishwarya – thank you for being with us today.*

Aishwarya: Thank you so much, Dr Fatima – a pleasure to be able to speak to you today.

Fatima: *Thank you. So, Aishwarya has a very interesting journey through education and life, and I will just start by asking you to tell us a little bit about your educational journey…*

Aishwarya: Thank you. Thank you for that. Okay. Well, so I'm actually speaking to you from Zambia at the moment, in Africa, and this is where I've had most of my primary, my secondary education, and I've moved on from my higher education in Zambia, which was actually in a British school, onto my undergraduate, which was in Sussex University in the UK, and I did my Master's as well, in Management, at Warwick Business School, and then went on to doing my PhD in Scotland. So, I think I've travelled from different places, had my primary in Zimbabwe, crossing the borders, etc. in everything, so my educational journey has been quite exciting, across borders, but it was always consistent in following the British curriculum, down from my Grade 1, or Grade 0 if you must, all the way up to now my PhD.

Fatima: *Wow. Okay. So, tell us a little bit about growing up in Zambia and then becoming a leader and doing research here in the UK – how was it?*

Aishwarya: Okay. Well, firstly, thank you so much for saying "becoming a leader" – that's put a smile on my face. So, you know, I mean, growing up in Zambia has been always…it's always been fun, it's been interesting. I've been very privileged and blessed by family, who have worked hard right from my childhood to be able to allow me to get the best educational journey, put us in a good set of friend circle, and I've always learned from them, and I think it's the country as well. We're always put in situations where you have to be a leader. Someone as young as like my little brother – he went from selling his pens and his colour pencils in our primary school just to make that extra money, you know, for the tuck-shop and things like that, and that always pushed me to equally be able to give back and try to lead and pave the way for young people and children in Zambia, and that's how I found my way slowly climbing up into good universities, working hard to get into some of the most

prestigious universities in the world, and then being able to come and study and do research in knowledge management practices, which is just simply how higher education works, you know, all the systems of how we get lecturers, like yourself, and things like that.

Fatima: *Yeah. Thank you. I really appreciate also how you're showing us a little bit of your personal story and journey.*

Aishwarya: Thank you.

Fatima: *I'm wondering, did you ever find yourself facing challenges, navigating your identity, as a female BAME student from Zambia at a UK university?*

Aishwarya: Oh wow. Eh…well, yes. I think, you know, if we're going to have an honest conversation today, then yes, yeah, absolutely. I think, you know, it started off with just, you know – I know you've asked in a UK university, but in all the universities I've been in, it's always been the first question, "Wow, from Zambia! Where is that exactly?" Okay. And then once they've figured out where it's from, it's, "Oh, how are you here?" you know, and then, being a female of Indian origin, because that's my origin and where I'm from originally, and then coming from an international African country, it was always…I was always standing out, you know, and I'm not the type to actually sit in lectures and not really raise my hand and say something, so it was always, "Oh, okay, that's that, you know, Zambian girl putting her hand up and, you know, making comments" and stuff. So, trying to fit in when I wasn't, you know, easily…you know, like being able to blend in, so that's always been something.

Fatima: *Yeah, I can very much relate, as an Egyptian student back in Germany or also here in the UK.*

Aishwarya: Wow! Oh wow [laughing], in Germany, that's a very interesting…!

Fatima: *Yes. I often asked about camels and the pyramids and stuff.*

Aishwarya: Wow, oh wow. If you don't mind me adding then, you know, I got the same question of, "So, did you used to go to school on an elephant?" I said, "No, sorry, my elephants were just hanging out with my pet lions," you know [laughing]. I found it so funny but it just made me realise how, despite being in some of the greatest universities, there's so much backward thinking still, and the perspectives are still so, you know, old or traditional.

Fatima: *Yes. Yes, I couldn't agree more! And you're mentioning your research, which I know is about knowledge management practices in higher education in Zambia. Can you tell us a bit more about what you do exactly in your research?*

Aishwarya: Sure. So, I'm actually working with the University of Zambia, which is UNZA, and, you know, I feel that, for me, being a Zambian girl that went to study and live away from her family for almost eight years to receive that, you know, quality education, I thought to myself, hang on, why don't we have this back at home, you know? What about other girls, other children, boys and girls, who wish to follow their dreams and pursue their dreams – do they have to all go and study abroad, whether it's the UK or America or Europe or Germany, you know, for that matter? So, understanding the knowledge management – and that's how you manage knowledge, from the utilisation of your resources, your books, your online platform, your technology, you know, and then the lecturers, how qualified are our lecturers in our universities or our schools, and how are their education and their skills helping to prepare the generation to come to be leaders, you know, of tomorrow and our own country, for that matter?

Fatima: *Yes. This is very inspiring research that you're doing.*

Aishwarya: Thank you.

Fatima: *I feel like many places in the world need this kind of work. So, if you think again of your journey in UK higher education, and since you've also, as you mentioned, your whole educational journey all your life was based on a British curriculum, do you feel you had access to good representations of individuals you can relate to?*

Aishwarya: Oh yes. Actually, at the top of my head, I think I had almost one or two very relatable lecturers or teaching assistants throughout my educational journey, and, just to add, I'm fortunate to have met you, for example, in my final leg of my journey, who I can, you know, very much relate to and aspire to have the same experience, you know, as yourself. So, you know, you, Dr Fatima, are one, for example, at the end of my journey. You know, I had…in my bachelor's degree, I had a Spanish teacher actually, Dr [Graziano], I remember her, she was brilliant - a PhD student at the time, you know, had an accent, had her enthusiasm in class, but she just stood out. She was so understanding, so confident in her way and how she taught us, and I actually got always the highest marks in that class because I felt I could relate, I was inspired, and I wanted to make sure that I could end up in this position. Even in my postgraduate studies, in my DBA as well, I've always had one or two lecturers who stood up for us, and when I mean "us" I mean the BAME sort of community of students, you know. I had Dr Khadija Mohammed in UWS where I study and she always gave me a platform to voice myself, and Decolonising the Curriculum project, in being able to freely and openly talk about racism, and just in helping BAME students like myself get to a position that they're in.

Fatima: *Thank you. I mean, it's an honour that you also named me [laughing], but this is-*

Aishwarya: Of course! Of course I would!

Fatima: *Thank you. So, something I also know about you is that you were Vice-President of Education at your university-*

Aishwarya: Oh gosh, yes, I was [laughing]!

Fatima: *…before returning to your research.*

Aishwarya: Yes.

Fatima: *And not just that, but you were also the first female BAME student to be elected for such an important position. So, please, tell us more about that…*

Aishwarya: Well [laughing], yes, you know, to all of that, that is very true. I was elected – you won't believe it, I was actually just kind of encouraged as well by fellow BAME students and classmates, and lecturers as well, to go on and kind of put myself in, nominate myself for this position, and I really pushed. I couldn't believe how much went on behind the scenes in trying to get a voice for the students, and, for example, I was based in the London campus, right, of the University of West of Scotland, you know, programme, and I just saw the huge gap and the difference in how we had the support versus in Scotland, for example, and I told myself, you know what, I hope I can like put across the voice and be that bridge between it. So, I went, I campaigned [laughing]. It was such a fun experience and I really put everything forward on the table, laid it out in my manifesto and, you know, promised four or five pledges to the students, which, by the way, I did achieve everything in my term, in my one-year sabbatical, and I was the first female international BAME student ever, in the whole kind of almost 100 year history of UWS, to be elected, so that was a huge honour. And just after me, we had a BAME student, male, international as well, to be elected after me, in the same role as Vice-President in Education. I think we set a new precedent here.

Fatima: *Wow, congratulations!*

Aishwarya: Thank you.

Fatima: *This really sounds amazing.*

Aishwarya: Thank you so much. It was an honour to work with everyone and they were so happy to hear such fresh perspectives. I think we really, really pushed, for example, the decolonisation of the curriculum in our university, and we hoped to be one of the first in Scotland to try and push that agenda.

Fatima: *Yes. I know you had decolonising the curriculum in your manifesto, if I'm not mistaken…?*

Aishwarya: Yes, I did, yes.

Fatima: *That's perfect because it prepares…or it paves the way for what I'm about to ask you next.*

Aishwarya: Okay.

Fatima: *So, if you think of decolonising the curriculum, what spaces within Management Studies do you feel have been colonised and are racist?*

Aishwarya: Okay, that's a very interesting question, Dr Fatima, because, you know, again, from my undergraduate to my postgraduate and DBA, one thing in particular I always noticed – this is the first thing I identified when I also kind of presented this at the university in our meetings – was: why are all the case studies, right, and all the examples – so you mentioned Management specifically, which is Business Studies, right – all the case studies we had and all the examples we were given were all of the Western kind of world, you know, and if was the Eastern side, it was often maybe China, or India at the maximum, but it always case studies of American companies, European companies, especially, you know, in terms of, for example, cars when we had to talk about like lean manufacturing and all of that and mass production and how all of this started. It was always Henry Ford or Toyota Japan and things like that. So, I thought, okay, all of this, case studies, the theories – you know, my favourite one was Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions. I absolutely loved that topic in my Management Studies classes, to the point I'm, you know, remembering it today, and it was so weird to feel that the examples we're given were, you know, first world countries and higher, you know, power dimensions are Western, and the lower power kind of dimension or indexes were African countries. So, things like that just…you know, growing up, I always thought that's…that's not entirely true, you know, I'm pretty sure there are other examples and case studies, brilliant ones, that could be given in Africa, you know, and other countries.

Fatima: *Yes. Yes, absolutely. I really couldn't agree more with everything you said, which leads me to possibly a more difficult question…*

Aishwarya: Okay [laughing]!

Fatima: *Thinking of how the curriculum is colonial or racist, what does decolonising Management Studies or curricula in general involve to you?*

Aishwarya: That's interesting. I think…if I can break it into maybe two parts… I think the first would be…educating and maybe training, I would say, the lecturers first in the content that they teach the students. So, again, to elaborate on this, that would be: what are they using as materials? So the case studies and examples, are they just using, you know, if you have to say, colonial, racist case studies, for example, because that's all they know or have been taught? What about those lecturers that make the exception to go and actually find case

studies that are a little bit more friendly and more culturally acceptable and not so offensive? So, is there, you know, some sort of a training that would be offered to lecturers in saying, "Look, this is how we could help in decolonising the curriculum", by actually offering them the support first because they can't be entirely at fault when they've just got a set curricula, you know, content, and you've got 12 lectures you need to do, "This is the materials - just deliver it" you know, does that make sense, whereas there's no leeway for them to create their own materials and content to then go on and teach us, which then appears to be racist. You know, that, to me, sounds like the first thing that will, you know, be involved in decolonising especially Management Studies in terms of the case studies and all that, and I think the second thing I would say is that, you know, having the institution as a whole, so the senior management, it starts at the top, right? It all starts at the top, of being open-minded, being culturally entuned and sensitive to that…the world is changing, you know? We talk about equality, we talk about…you know, we have so many international students that come to university. I think half the universities in the UK, em, I think international maybe you'd have 70%, and then 30% would be the locals, so how is there no consideration of their history? And a lot of these students go back to their home countries, but you have not taught them or prepared them in facing their country and their economies and how to deal with their local problems. It's all how to solve, you know, the country where they're studying in.

Fatima: *Yeah.*

Aishwarya: I hope that answered it [laughing]!

Fatima: *Absolutely, that is a fabulous answer, and, yeah, international students, and also considering the difference in fees paid, it's…it's quite an interesting aspect.*

Aishwarya: Oh absolutely, absolutely! Oh, that would be…oh gosh, that just opens a whole can of worms if we speak about, you know, fees and, you know, the difference, so, for example, instalment of fees, that in itself is so…why is there a difference and segregation between local/national versus international fees? You know, what's offered, the support that's offered, for example, you know, I guess therapy sessions, and mental health and wellbeing, you know, the differences that are offered, I think that [is a hole/as a whole], and decolonising the curriculum is…it sounds easier, but what's harder is decolonising a whole environment. The whole campus and the university must be free of all these chains and traditional and old, backward thinking, you know, from the statues to the building names, etc. Sorry, I could go on on this, you know [laughing]!

Fatima: *That's fabulous, that's just what we want! I really liked the examples you gave about how we can decolonise Management Studies and how we need to offer something to lecturers so that they can do this.*

Aishwarya: Yes.

Fatima: *Now, if you think from a lecturer's perspective, do you think there is something they need to do to decolonise Management Studies' curricula?*

Aishwarya: Em…you know, yes, I do think so. I actually had a few years of experience in being a teaching assistant, so I've been blessed to be in the shoes or get into the skin of a lecturer before, and, you know, Dr Fatima, I found some topics and issues that were so, you know, difficult for me to discuss with, em, with my students, if I may so, and, as a lecturer, I thought, oh gosh, I wish I didn't have to bring this up, but I was told that this is my content, this is what I need to teach, and, you know, I had to really try and give a relatable example. So, I thought here I am, you know, teaching international students – how can I give them a topic and how can I go about this one-hour lecture without being offensive but being relatable, you know? And it was a topic, for example, on cultural differences and cultural barriers, so we were talking about, you know, the change management culture barriers of difference in language, you know, what happens in the workplace, you know, female leadership and all things like that, pay, equality, and we had some very strong male voices in there, and we had also some strong female voices who said, "No, this is how it should be," and I thought, wow, it's definitely difficult for lecturers because they're put in a position where they just have to deliver – that's their job. Their job description has certain things and criteria and learning outcomes they need to meet. So, you know, I think offering the training, offering the support, some webinars, some sessions. A lot of things are online. There could be courses that could be created and made, or a programme, you know, tailored to each university depending on their content, their degrees, and how they offer that support to lecturers.

Fatima: *Yes, absolutely. So, I'm interested, what like other topics or issues have you found to be difficult to discuss in the classroom or also with your lecturers and peers?*

Aishwarya: I think…I think it's always often the case of…whenever it comes to the gender equality, that's one. Whenever it comes to, you know, the focus on, as I said, the country. We are all very proud to be wherever we are from. I'd like to think that at least I am, definitely, even if I was born and raised in Zambian but I'm Indian. I'd like to feel strongly for my roots and my home country, you know, where I am at the moment. So, we get a bit defensive whenever we have, oh, em, just an example, I'll just try to think of something off the top of my head… If you're base in Zambia and you're working with an international company that's in Germany – I'll take this for an example as you mentioned that – you may not have the best of technology in your country, so how will you deal with something? That in itself, when, you know, a lecturer is saying this to you, or your peers, or your classmates are making fun of, "Oh, you must not know this because you're from here…" It just makes you feel awful. They don't mean it either, but that whole racist environment, I think, em, it doesn't help us going forward to create a sustainable kind of education and environment, and we're not learning anything from each other either.

Fatima: *Yes, absolutely. You've put this also in a really good example…*

Aishwarya: Thank you.

Fatima: *…because it's something so simple that can just happen all the time.*

Aishwarya: Yes. I don't know if you've faced anything, you know, yourself, maybe in your teachings or whenever you were a student and something similar…you know, even just appearance, how you're dressed coming into class, that often stirs up a topic. There was one time, if you don't mind if I add, where we had to talk about, again, as I said, the cultural difference with language, body, you know, body language, and attire, like work attire, and some people mentioned how being in a certain country but dressing a certain way made others feel uncomfortable, but why would that…why would someone's attire make you feel uncomfortable when that's got nothing to do with their work ethics and what they bring to the table? Or, if it's a classmate, how does it matter how they're dressed as long as you're working together in a group project or they're working by themselves – how are they making you feel unsafe or uncomfortable? I think…you know, I'm looking forward to the day we overcome all these small barriers.

Fatima: *Yeah. I mean, I can relate to this topic very much because, for the longest time, I was…back when I was doing my bachelor's and master's in Germany, I was veiled, and for a very long, I was the only veiled student…*

Aishwarya: Oh wow, okay. Oh my gosh, yes!

Fatima: *…[in a lecture] with 200 students [laughing].*

Aishwarya: Oh gosh, yes, I can imagine – that too in Germany, you know, it's a very…it's a very Western country, yes.

Fatima: *Yes. And it was…like I often…because my German is also mother tongue German-*

Aishwarya: Oh wow!

Fatima: *…so often people were surprised that I would speak, they would be shocked that I can speak German or I think…and a nice anecdote I always like to tell is that I was once asked by a friend if I wear my veil in the shower, and then…*

Aishwarya: What?! That is…that's ridiculous!

Fatima: *…funny but also, later on, I realised, wow, like people just don't know so much about things, em, yeah, so…*

Aishwarya: Wow, that just shows… I think this brings me back to that close-mindedness and the backward thinking, like…but then, Dr Fatima, I don't know if you understand that that's where this comes from because they're being educated, you know, it starts from their home, it starts from society, it starts from the communities and the elders that they listen to and what they're being told and what they see on the news and hear from others because you obviously have to be taught from somewhere and watch it somewhere or hear it somewhere to even, you know, construct these thoughts by yourself.

Fatima: *Yes. Yes, absolutely, which brings me to another complicated question…*

Aishwarya: Okay [laughing]!

Fatima: *I'm wondering, in your opinion, like how can we engage in decolonisation, anti-racism, in higher education and in designing curricula when our very reality is very much colonial and racist?*

Aishwarya: Wow. That's a…well, that's a brilliant question, and I think a very sensitive one as well because, you know, your final part of the question is "when reality is very much racist and colonial" and that, em, you know, that does make me sad to know that we have to have so many different movements, you know, and the Black Lives Matter and, you know, all sorts of things happening in Israel, and all sorts of countries all the time, you know, and the UK itself, where so many acts are neglected or just brushed under the carpet, em, because of this racist approach and colonial, I think, thinking that's still happening. So, how I would personally like to see things unfold and how we could engage – and I say "we", I think I mean the higher education institutions because that's where it starts from – would be being open, being open in the classrooms. That's where it starts. Dr Fatima, you won't believe it, when we…when we have our lecturers that are so open and ask us, "Look, you know, hi guys, how is everyone today?" and this is happening in online sessions, so you can imagine how difficult it might have been for that lecturer to have the courage to have this conversation with his students, with us, and said, "I want to make you all feel comfortable, first of all. I would like you to enjoy what you're being taught. How could we present that to you in a manner that is, you know, decolonising your studies and your education so that, going forward, you feel comfortable to return to your countries or be able to work anywhere in the world?" and we thought that's amazing. So, having that communication, that peer-to-peer, and then the student-to-lecturer, and then the lecturers to their programme leaders, you know, who then take it on to the deans and deputy deans and, you know, the Vice-Chancellor, etc., and then take it all the way up to the top. I'm sorry for using all these technical terms. I think the benefit of being Vice-President in Education when I was helped me to see that there is a process, and if we took advantage of the communication between all our…our steps in the hierarchy in an institution, we'd be able to engage freely and better, and have open, safe platforms. I think the key word is "safe". The minute you feel someone's being defensive, whether it's a lecturer, whether it's a classmate, I'd automatically be put off, and I don't think I'd be able to open up again, you know? And I've

been so blessed in being able to attend conferences, so webinars, conferences, seminars – these are all brilliant ways in engaging in the discussions on decolonising the curriculum.

Then, the anti-racism part of a university or a school, or a secondary or primary school, starts from I think the campuses. So, having a fair share of…whether it's gender, whether it's cultural, you know, cultures that come into the campus from the lecturers, to the teaching assistants, to the administrative staff, to everyone, the balance of everything would be, you know, a great way forward. I think I've said about three or four points, and finally would be, as I mentioned earlier, things like the statues and stuff. It's…that's so…50 years ago, you know [laughing]! When are we…when are we going to move from the need to credit people who are long gone and are not even aware of either the damage or the role that their stone-made statute is doing in a university for people who, you know, have had their families or ancestors suffer through certain things that other people will never be able to comprehend? So, I think things like that make a difference, especially building names. I always had to say, "Oh, we're going to this building…" and then I'd stop in my tracks and say, "I'm not even going to bother with that – just meet me at that building over there," you know, and rather point at it than have to say a name!

Fatima: *I like all the examples you gave. They are very practical and things we can actually do.*

Aishwarya: Yes.

Fatima: *And some of them really easily, like changing building names.*

Aishwarya: And I wonder why there's that…I think the word is that hesitation, maybe. I think change is always difficult for everyone, but, you know, I don't understand…I'm not able to see why it's a difficult thing to do for universities, other than, you know, maybe the capital going into it or the money that's put into changing and the breaking down and the cleaning up of it, but it'll make so much of a difference, and isn't that better for the environment and your students?

Fatima: *Exactly. So, I have a couple more questions for you. One of them is really close to my heart so I'll leave it for last. For now, I'll ask you, since we talked about curricula and how things are colonial and how we could start to decolonise, so what is something you'd like to see develop within higher education in the next 10 years?*

Aishwarya: Oh, that's brilliant. That's also I think very easy-

Fatima: *Feel free to dream big.*

Aishwarya: Yes, okay [laughing]! I think I will have to do that because I don't see another way round this, and this is me honestly speaking from my heart and being very honest, but I

would love to see a gender balance in higher education. This is in terms of students, this is in terms of staff, this is - all members that ever enter the campus should feel comfortable and like balanced in their own skin in being, you know, being able to come and study. To receive an education, first of all, is, you know, an absolute blessing. We learn every single day, from the day we're born to the day we leave this earth, you know.

The second thing is the fees. That would be a dream. So, Dr Fatima, I don't know if this is what you meant by "Dream big", but imagine a world with free education, even if it is at the start, for the primary, the secondary, and for those who may not be as blessed and privileged as you and I are, if you don't mind me saying that, in being able to receive the good quality education, you know, sit in a classroom and attend lectures and meet your friends and new people and, you know, have fun as well. So, I think that would be the most amazing thing as well that I could ever see, that, you know, education should be free. We're always learning. Why am I having to pay for it? Why should anyone feel that they are not blessed or are different because they can't afford to receive a simple education? You know, one plus one will always be two. And for someone to feel that they can't receive that because they, you know, don't have the funds, or don't have the means or the family to support them, is awful.

And my third thing [laughing] would be decolonising the curriculum, so a world in which we can have education, em, the same again, so that equal, equality across education, across the curriculum, where, one day, a child, a student from the UK would say, "I want to go to Zambia and study at the University of Zambia because I've heard it's incredible there," and you wouldn't have that fear of, "Oh gosh, if I go there, will anyone even know which university I've graduated from?"

So, a lot of big dreams, don't know when it will happen, but, you know, we have to…we have to be the stepping-stone. So, if this is in terms of…when you identified me as a leader earlier, I think that's what I would love to do, and that's part of why my doctorate has been trying to, you know, voice and be that reason and seeing and collect as much information as I can in coming up with something for my country.

Fatima: *This is amazing. And, yes, definitely, we need to dream big because, otherwise, what's the point?*

Aishwarya: Absolutely!

Fatima: *And so my very favourite question… You just mentioned, so you are doing this research in Zambia, in your home country, and even just talking to you, I'm sure you are a role model and an inspiration to many young girls in Zambia.*

Aishwarya: Oh, thank you!

Fatima: *So, what advice do you have for the young girls in Zambia who see a role model in you?*

Aishwarya: Oh, that's a…that's a very touching question actually, and I can see why it's your favourite, and definitely it's close to home because I have always been told – again, you know, you've said specifically young girls. So, my mother has been integral in the future, the education that my brother and I have had, and she always, always told us, "Never, ever give up," you know. We come from a society, a sort of community, where, for a girl to study beyond secondary school, where a lot of my friends, I always heard in a lot of other schools as well, they kind of just maybe got married or stayed home to have their own roles and responsibilities in the house, and that's always been kind of that notion for young girls, you know, that's all that they ever had. But I've been blessed to be able to receive that support from my parents, both my parents, my mum and my dad, in never giving up, pursuing my dreams. I wanted to go to Warwick Business School since I was 15 years old, since I – I stumbled across it, researched on it, and I said, "you know what, one day I'm going to go to this university," and I did. So, if there are young girls out there that are passionate in their studies, in wanting to open their own businesses – and we live in Zambia, for crying out loud! We've got natural resources at our disposal, we live in a continent where we have so many things from tourism, from resources as I said, from pottery and food, and there's so many things we could go into to be this incredible continent, as a whole. So, young girls that feel that they want to give up or they don't have that support, you're never alone. You're never alone. There's always someone out there – like I had the support from my primary to my secondary, to my undergraduate onwards, where there was someone that believed in me and said, "No, you can do it," and pushed me to be the best that I could be. You know, you'll get peer-pressured, you'll be in environments where you're not, you know, you don't have maybe good family or you're orphaned – it could be all sorts of things. You know, there's young girls here, Dr Fatima, that go through awful things in life, and I've seen them come out strong, and we need to be the helping hands for those girls. So, never give up, and I hope to be that role model that can actually reach out and make a difference in their lives.

Fatima: *Wow. That's…the answer is way more moving than the question…*

Aishwarya: Oh!

Fatima: *I'm sure our audience and listeners will agree and, yeah, I'm sure we all also want to send our greetings to your mum, who seems to have been a key figure also in your journey.*

Aishwarya: Oh, thank you. Oh, absolutely. Thank you so much. I hope the listeners and our audience today can relate and share, you know, our emotions today because it's something I'm so passionate about, as I can see you are, and I just wish, you know, maybe 10 years from now, you and I are having a different conversation that's more happy and positive, with some progress – that would be amazing.

Fatima: *Yes, that is a good wish to wrap up with.*

Aishwarya: Yes.

Fatima: *That's amazing. Thank you so much, Aishwarya. It has been a great pleasure speaking to you today, and I think all our listeners will enjoy this conversation very much.*

Aishwarya: Thank you so much. It's been an honour to be speaking with you, so thank you so much for having me today.

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