

**EPISODE 1579**

So Money episode 1579, playing financial catch-up with Anisha Ramakrishna, star of the Bravo Show, Family Karma.

*“AR: In my twenties, I didn't do any of that. Had I done those things, right now, I'd probably have a few million dollars in the bank and two to three homes. Now, I'm at 39. I don't own any property. I'm starting out in life at 39.”*

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:09]

**ANNOUNCER:** You're listening to So Money with award-winning money guru, Farnoosh Torabi. Each day, you get a 30-minute dose of financial inspiration from the world's top business minds, authors, influencers, and from Farnoosh herself. Looking for ways to save on gas or double your double coupons? Sorry, you're in the wrong place. Seeking profound ways to live a richer, happier life? Welcome to So Money.

[0:00:55]

**FT:** Welcome to So Money, everybody. I'm Farnoosh Torabi. This episode is for any of you out there who feel like you might be behind on your financial goals. Our guest today is 39-years-old and says she just feels like things are coming together now, finally. You may know her if you watch Bravo, or are a fan of her podcast. Our guest is Anisha Ramakrishna. She's the star of the Bravo Show, Family Karma and host of the Dear Media podcast called, Currently Cringing.

On Family Karma, we watch Anisha manage her first-generation Indian identity, along with her family dynamics and culture. Anisha and I discuss the business of comedy, the entertainment world, why she feels like a late bloomer in her financial life and what she's doing to play catch-up, the behind the scenes of her Bravo Show, and also her immigrant upbringing. Her family

moved here from India, settled in Miami, Florida, when she was just 10 years old. Here is Anisha Ramakrishna.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:01:58]

**FT:** Anisha Ramakrishna, welcome to So Money. I have a Bravolebrity in the house. Look at us.

[0:02:05]

**AR:** Thank you so much for having me. I'm so excited to be here. I think it's a topic that my audience doesn't really talk about, so I really want them to listen to this episode.

[0:02:16]

**FT:** I mean, your podcast is called Currently Cringing, and what could be more cringe-worthy than talking about money? What are some, if you were to do a show on money on your podcast, which is very funny, and everyone should check it out. I'll put the links in our show notes for your podcast and your Bravo Show, and also you have – you're an entrepreneur, you're a fashion designer, like are you just having any time for yourself these days?

[0:02:40]

**AR:** I know people ask me what I do, and it's the dreaded question, because they can't quantify it, right? As in society people want W2, like do you go to a job? It's like, when you're an entrepreneur, you're doing a few things. I hate that question.

[0:03:00]

**FT:** Yeah. Same. You just say, just tell them you're a rainmaker. Just tell them, you make magic.

[0:03:06]

**AR:** Yes.

**[0:03:07]**

**FT:** Speaking of money, let's just go there. I mean, you cover a lot of different topics on Currently Cringing. Everything from dating to I was seeing you're covering like celebrity life, Jonah. Is it – which Jonas is getting divorced right now?

**[0:03:22]**

**AR:** Joe.

**[0:03:23]**

**FT:** Joe, right. You're terribly funny. What would you want to talk about money on your show? Like I would be happy to join you, but what's on your – you're just, you're newly married, you just turned 39, like what's on your money mind?

**[0:03:39]**

**AR:** I actually would love to have you on my podcast, because we've never had a money episode. It's perfect timing that I'm on your podcast right now, because for the first time in my life at 39, I am able to save. A lot of people don't talk about that. I come from an upper middle-class family, but my parents they're old school, they're immigrants. I've never had any handouts. They've never given me money.

It's been a rollercoaster of a journey being an entrepreneur, leaving a very good job in corporate America, in fashion in New York City. I had a very good job from 2011 to 2017, and leaving that job to move back home to start my own clothing line, and then doing Family Karma, the show that I'm on, on Bravo and not having that steady paycheck when you're an entrepreneur, until you've really hit it, you're kind of, every month is a surprise.

**[0:04:45]**

**FT:** When you were working for, is it –

**[0:04:48]**

**AR:** Elie Tahari.

**[0:04:49]**

**FT:** Elie Tahari. I never know if it's Eli or Elie. I love their clothing, but you were VP of product development for Elie Tahari, and you weren't able to save then either?

**[0:05:01]**

**AR:** I did not save, because I lived by myself in New York City. I chose to travel. I know that's not good money advice. Had I known then what I know now, which I didn't know this stuff. We don't talk about this stuff, especially as an elder millennial. People are talking about it now. I didn't know that you could go to the bank if you have good credit. Good credit is important for your listeners.

If you have good credit, and you're starting out in life, you can get out alone and purchase a home, not for you to live in, but as an investment property, and people can live in it and pay you rent, which in turn that rent pays the mortgage, and all those things, right, like the Roth IRA. You hear about these things, but you don't really know what it is. In my 20s, I didn't do any of that. Had I done those things, right now, I'd probably have a few million dollars in the bank and two to three homes. Now I'm at 39. I don't own any property. I'm starting out in life at 39.

**[0:06:15]**

**FT:** What's your plan? I want to get to your Bravo show and more about the podcast, and also your comeuppance. I know you were born in India, and you moved to the States at 10 years old. I want to know what the first day of school was like for you in Florida, but I just can't get away

from this money topic, obviously. I just want to know now at 39, and also newly married, and coming into some great money as all your hard work is paying off. How are you playing “catch-up” in your financial life?

**[0:06:44]**

**AR:** Well, first of all, I've never had people say they have three months or six months for a rainy day. I never had that until now. That's not because I didn't make money, it's because when you're an entrepreneur, a lot of your money goes into reinvesting into your business or your personal brand. Whatever money I would make I'd reinvested in either new product or advertising. We all know how expensive advertising is, if you're an entrepreneur.

**[0:07:12]**

**FT:** Oh, yeah.

**[0:07:13]**

**AR:** Now, I actually have excess income where I can save. I don't believe in the don't buy your \$5 Starbucks coffee, because those are the simple pleasures for some of us that are not making a lot of money, buy the Starbucks coffee. I'm also in a unique position, because I don't have a family. I don't have children. I was able to make those decisions, because I'm not responsible for anybody else.

Now, being married, I've been married, it'll be a year October 8th. I'm with someone who is also starting out later in life, because my husband is a vascular surgeon. He just started his first job at 37. We're both starting out in life. We've decided every month we're going to put this month, this much away. Eventually, buy investment properties, not necessarily a home for ourselves, but more property investments. Now I have a vanguard account with him and all these things that I always knew about, because I do have an MBA in finance that didn't really do much for me, because I ended up on Bravo, but I have the knowledge. I just never had the funds.

**[0:08:36]**

**FT:** What are the conversations about money with your new husband? Are there things that feel awkward or cringy to talk about? Tell us.

**[0:08:44]**

**AR:** Yes. It's very awkward. It's very cringy, because when you make the decision to get married, it's a topic you have to discuss. I was someone that always hated talking about money, because I didn't have any. When you don't have any, you don't want to talk about it. My parents good, hardworking, immigrant parents would always tell me to save. Don't go on the trip. Invest. I never listened to them. I was more live in the moment, which is a problem, I'd say, in our millennial culture. It's more YOLO than the YOLO last for 10 years. Here I am. We had that conversation. We sat down and we wrote down our finances.

**[0:09:32]**

**FT:** That's great. He's also –

**[0:09:34]**

**AR:** Because I started making money when I met him. It was more getting educated on money. What do you do in 2023 as a couple with your money? We're not a traditional couple. We have our separate bank accounts and then things that we received together. For example, we received money at our wedding, even though we said no gifts. Now, we have to write thank you notes, **[inaudible 0:10:01]** problems. We opened a savings account for us both, because prior to that, we had our separate accounts, even though we knew our finances. We didn't have a shared account. We share the money that we earned together. In this case, it's money from family or birthday money or the money we got from our wedding.

**[0:10:25]**

**FT:** Makes sense. Yeah. I think that modern couples, especially those that are getting married, “later in life” not in their twenties. I think it makes a lot of sense, because at this point, you have

your own financial system, which I think should still be honored while also working on a new system, a combined system. I think that I always say three buckets, yours, mine, ours. You're doing it right, Anisha. Well –

**[0:10:51]**

**AR:** I don't have kids. I think kids changes the whole story. I'm not there yet in life. I'd love to get into that with you, too.

**[0:10:57]**

**FT:** Oh, yeah. Well, as you're someone who's made me a few years ahead on that front, you can ask me all the questions. I would be happy to do that for you. Now, you went from fashion, big job in fashion, studied fashion to this pivot, sort of. I mean, you're still working in fashion by choice as an entrepreneur now. However, in addition to that, you're also touring on your comedy tour. You have the Bravo show. You have the podcast. You have very much your own comedy celebrity brand. How do you break into that? Because that feels like you don't go to school for that, right? You don't get a job for that. You have to create those opportunities. Advice for anybody who wants to go down the entertainment path.

**[0:11:44]**

**AR:** Yes. I will say, I was not good at saving money, but I know how to make money. Money is always coming to me. It's saving it. I can finally save it now, because I'm making enough to save. I pitched the show, Family Karma to Bravo, with my friend and classmate Vishal in 2014, while I was working at Elie Tahari. They all knew this. Everyone was like, "You should be on Bravo." At the time, I was a Bravo junkie. I thought, I want to see Indians on Bravo. We had Shahs of Sunset. I was obsessed.

I thought it would be cool to see Indians. So, we pitched it in 2014. Back then, you just sent a DM and an email. They actually found me on Instagram. They were looking for a friend group, not necessarily Indian, just a friend group that had ties. In our case, our parents have been friends for over 30 years. We've been friends for over 20 years. there was this history there.

That's what they loved about us. Our show is multi-generational. So, you have grandparents, parents, and then us, the kids, who we call kids, but we're all in our mid to late 30s.

**[0:13:00]**

**FT:** Did it take a lot of convincing to include the older generation? I feel like you might be a little on the fence.

**[0:13:07]**

**AR:** Yeah. It was a long journey to get there. When we finally got the green light in 2017, we aired, we filmed the show in 2018 and then it aired in 2020. Behind the scenes is basically our parents yelling at us even more. They were not happy about this, but as immigrant parents, for the most part, they're there to support you. We weren't hurting anyone or harming anyone. So, towards the end, they actually ended up loving it. After the first season aired, they saw the impact that we made for the culture.

For me, my sole reason for wanting to be on Family Karma or have Family Karma was A, to see Indians on TV. B, for my own reasons, right, to start my business and launch my clothing line. Then we launched in 2020 the same week of the lockdown. Now, I've saved all my money from Tahari to launch this clothing line. No one's wearing dresses.

**[0:14:16]**

**FT:** But now.

**[0:14:18]**

**AR:** Yes.

**[0:14:18]**

**FT:** How did you navigate that pandemic as an entrepreneur?

**[0:14:23]**

**AR:** I am grateful that I was living with my parents. I don't know what I would have done without them. I was living with my parents and doing whatever I could, which is, I think, creating content, just making people laugh is what I've done my entire life. It's what I did to adapt moving at 10 from Jakarta, Indonesia to Miami, just talking and making people laugh has been my way of making people feel comfortable or relatable to me, because I was the only Indian in my school. I wasn't allowed to do much. I wasn't allowed to sleep over or talk on the phone with boys. I was limited in what I could do. So, in order to make friends, I would just make jokes and watching a lot of American television learning about comedy from a young age.

After being on Family Karma and just being funny, I also come from a funny family. I think that helps. My mom is hilarious. You got to have thick skin to be in our house. My grandfather is hilarious. Just being around that all the time. That's your way of getting through things. We don't really talk about the serious things. We don't have deep conversations. You add humor.

**[0:15:44]**

**FT:** Right. Right.

**[0:15:44]**

**AR:** To make things better. I brought that on the show. From the show, I got invited to perform at Caroline's on Broadway, which no longer exists.

**[0:15:57]**

**FT:** Really? I mean, what?

**[0:15:59]**

**AR:** Yeah. They couldn't pay the rent.

**[0:16:01]**

**FT:** Oh, no.

**[0:16:03]**

**AR:** Yeah.

**[0:16:03]**

**FT:** I performed there once, for like –

**[0:16:07]**

**AR:** It's a big deal.

**[0:16:08]**

**FT:** It's such a big deal. It was so special and so historic. Oh, I hope they bring it back.

**[0:16:12]**

**AR:** Yeah. I hope so, too. I performed there in 2022, November. Two weeks after getting married. I think there was so much going on in my life that I looked at it as just like a one and done fun opportunity. I didn't put too much focus on to it. Then from there, they invited me to perform at the Miami Improv, which is my home turf hometown. I performed in front of friends and family. I bombed. Those are people you want to impress the most, coming from your background, your culture, your parents bringing their friends. It's everyone in your community. From there, I really took it seriously. I had a tour from there. I've been traveling, touring the country. Next week, I'm doing Irvine, Oxnard, and San Jose. This took off on its own, but it was always in me.

**[0:17:13]**

**FT:** Yeah.

**[0:17:14]**

**AR:** It's the hardest thing I've ever done, because talking to you, it's easy, right? But being on a stage, you're the only one talking, no one's talking back to you.

**[0:17:27]**

**FT:** Then you have to make it – yeah. It's one of the hardest things to do. It's not like giving a keynote address, right, where you've got your three – where people aren't expecting to be necessarily entertained. This is an act. It's a show. You have memorized everything, not only the words, but how you're going to say them. The speed, and the cadence, and then you have to interact with the audience. Then you have to worry about so many things, so many things happening at the same time. I respect comedians so much. Tell me a little bit about the economics of comedy. I like to ask all the comedians who graced this show from Zarna Garg to Michelle Buteau. Margaret Cho has been on this show.

I am obsessed with talking about the behind the scenes of comedy, because for so long, it was male dominated. For so long, it was also a nighttime career, where now with social media, and so many other stages during the day, it has opened up the possibility for all people to participate, not just those who have the privilege of having their nights free, and can like get in a car and drive from one bar to the next across America, like that for me, when I learned that that was like the life, I was like, “That's not what I want to do.”

**[0:18:48]**

**AR:** No.

**[0:18:49]**

**FT:** But you can completely turn comedy into your own thing these days, but tell me a little bit about how you've been negotiating for yourself. Is there any money to be made at this point?

**[0:18:58]**

**AR:** Yeah. Being a noob, you're going to get like Wednesday night, Tuesday night, very rarely do I get a Saturday or a Friday. Even though I've been on this journey for 10 years from 2014 pitching Family Karma to next year, it'll be 2024. You still have to prove yourself, because it's an entirely new genre in entertainment. For me, it's been lucrative, because I get to perform in front of people, but I also have the show. It's people who love the show or have followed me on social media for 10 years, they are coming, but if you're a noob and no one knows who you are, you have to invest in marketing. Even those who do have a platform.

Me, I don't even have a million followers. I'm still investing in Facebook ads, for example, for the event. You have to spend on advertising. You have to spend on your airfare to fly to the place. You have to spend on your hotel. At this stage in my life, I would not be doing it if it was not profitable at 49, because I can only now do things that give me an ROI. I can't do things that I'm losing money. I can't be in the red anymore. So, I would say, if you're going to do it, there are a lot of people that have, I'll say sponsors.

**[0:20:33]**

**FT:** Like athletes. Comedians get sponsors.

**[0:20:37]**

**AR:** Supporting them, maybe.

**[0:20:39]**

**FT:** Okay.

**[0:20:41]**

**AR:** Maybe people have money. A lot of people in comedy, I've discussed this with fellow millennial comedians are cosplaying as maybe poor in comedy, when they have a lot of money to support this machine. You need to have some savings if you're going to start this or someone helping you out financially, because you need to make an investment. Then me, in my case, I am selling enough tickets.

I'm open my deals, there are 80% of ticket sales. That was a deal. I did Carolines for free, by the way. First show. I was already in New York doing something else. It didn't matter. For my first show at the Miami Improv, my first real show was 80% of ticket sales. A lot of people don't talk about this. From then on, that was the standard. Then you see other venues, they're like, "Oh, well, it's 50% or this." Then I don't go there.

**[0:21:48]**

**FT:** Yeah. It's interesting, it's making me wonder if there's another episode and maybe you should do it, but like, what is the – who is the starving artist right now? At least in comedy? Are there any? No, right? It used to be that the starving artists could actually make the art and maybe even be successful. Along the way, maybe forego some meals and couch surf, but things are so expensive now to hear you talk about the economics, just like airfare and going in hotels and the marketing, right? Because now we live in a world where everything is so fragmented. You have to market on all the platforms just to get a few people to show up for your stuff. So, who can really be an artist without a financial framework or savings or anything these days, right? Like real, really.

**[0:22:40]**

**AR:** You need someone supporting you, because even, or you need to do it on the side, a side hustle, which is what I did for many years while working my full-time job. I had a whole other side hustle. I was selling things on Amazon for so many years. You have to do something else to supplement your passion. You know people say follow your passion, like yeah, if you have a –

**[0:23:06]**

**FT:** If you got money.

**[0:23:08]**

**AR:** Yeah. For me, it's something that I fund on my own.

**[0:23:15]**

**FT:** Yeah.

**[0:23:16]**

**AR:** Being a geriatric millennial. We've been on our own for so long. I'm also not risk averse. I don't have children. You're talking to someone who might be an outlier, because I quit my job and started my own business and went on reality TV. For me, it's more of a mindset. Mindset comes into play. Do you believe in yourself?

**[0:23:40]**

**FT:** Yeah. Well, I promised the listeners, we would travel back in time a little bit and you touched on your beginnings in Miami, Florida and the comedy that you leaned on to navigate, probably what was a lot of fear of rejection and fear of loneliness and fear of like, I don't know, so many fears. I was born here, but I also had the parents who were very loud Persian speaking and didn't let me do anything. Yeah. No sleepovers, no talking on the phone with boys, no eating sugary cereals. I couldn't even watch Punky Brewster, because my mom thought she was a bad influence.

What's your first memory of America, at least as far as like the capitalist culture or the economic culture, like I remember walking into school and the hot lunch kids and the kids who brought brown bags from home was an economic divider, believe it or not, because they made us sit separately in the lunchroom. A lot of the kids that were getting hot lunch at my school were getting it subsidized or they didn't have the mom who didn't work who could afford the time to

make them the peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with the crust cut off and the special note inside. You know what I mean?

Then also, you notice like, oh, the kids who brought lunch are also the kids that are, they have the new clothes and the new sneakers. It was just like an immediate realization that there is a difference in how people are financially in this world. I learned this at like eight years old, seven years old.

**[0:25:21]**

**AR:** Yeah. For me, it was similar to your experience, but in a different way. I actually was born in India and raised in Jakarta, Indonesia. I went to an international British school, a very preppy school. I had friends from all over the world, and I had a British accent. I came to America with a British accent. I remember asking to go to the toilet. The teacher looked at me and she was like, "It's restroom." It was just more of a cultural clash, more so.

**[0:25:58]**

**FT:** Yeah.

**[0:25:59]**

**AR:** Then I realized later in life, most of my life, I talk about this in my comedy show. I thought we were poor, but we were not poor by any means. We lived in a gated community and we had more than enough, but my parents were smart with their money. I don't even want to say frugal. We were only allowed to buy one pair of sneakers for the school year. We shared rooms, even though we had plenty of bedrooms. We would order one dessert and share amongst the five of us. We were a family of five, because that's healthy.

I have very healthy parents, like you said, we didn't have soda. We ate home food. I actually brought food from home, because spending lunch when he was, that's an expense. I had like Indian food and Asian food and fried rice at school. People would always want my lunch. It was very different –

**[0:27:02]**

**FT:** Oh, I'm so jealous of the fact that your lunch was a social magnet. My lunch is, oh, my gosh, the potato and parsley sandwiches that I would unravel from loud tin foil.

**[0:27:12]**

**AR:** I had tomato and mayo, because we were Indian vegetarian.

**[0:27:16]**

**FT:** That did not score me any points with the kids. By the way, in Worcester, Massachusetts, Worcester, the bathroom, the toilet is not even a restroom, it is the lab, the laboratory. The lab. Yeah, we had a lot of weird very, you know, very like New England terms for things like the bubbler for the water fountain. The lab, the lav. I don't know, like now I can think of a lab, I think of the Lava Leer microphone, but –

**[0:27:41]**

**AR:** Yeah. But yeah, things like that. I just, we didn't eat out every day. We didn't go to McDonald's.

**[0:27:50]**

**FT:** I'm sure you didn't go on beach vacations either, like we were not.

**[0:27:54]**

**AR:** Those were the things I assumed were wealthy or having wealth, like going to McDonald's, having new sneakers every other month. We didn't do those things, but now as an adult, I know we were wealthy and we had everything, but my parents wanted to teach me values and what it's like to have to work for things. We worked hard. We weren't allowed to watch TV. We had to

read. We know how to do everything. We're self-sufficient. My parents raised us well, maybe a little too well, because we're maybe too independent, too outspoken at times.

**[0:28:37]**

**FT:** No, there's no too in there. I think that's –

**[0:28:40]**

**AR:** To be quiet sometimes.

**[0:28:41]**

**FT:** It's all good. It's all good. I think – I love, I can't get enough, honestly, of stories like yours, where you were, it's such an interesting study, right? Our families, they come here, they risk so much to come to the United States. Really, to think about the leaps that they've taken. Yet, they come here and then it's no more chances, like we are not risking it anymore. The risk odometer is tapped out.

**[0:29:07]**

**AR:** Yes. I want to share with your listeners, just if anyone's wanting to start their business or trying to make a change, definitely make the decision if you're wise, like if you have a family of five to feed, maybe rethink realistically, but my dad, we moved here, because my dad was a CEO of a company and he was transferred to the Latin American divisions, which is why we moved to Miami, but at 43, my dad started his own business at 43.

**[0:29:38]**

**FT:** Wow. Yeah.

**[0:29:40]**

**AR:** I remember what it was like for him and those tough times where there's a lot of anxiety in the house and our lifestyle never changed. If anything, it got better. He did so much for us and we never missed meals or felt like anything was wrong. Although, we did sense the anxiety and the pressure, but life did not change. In fact, he did so well. If my dad can start his business at 43 and we were – I was like in high school, I think. Now, I started my business at 33. You can make those life decisions if you really want to go for it. We are only here once, I believe.

**[0:30:35]**

**FT:** I agree. I'm 43. That's really hitting home for me. I love these stories too of people who are in their 40s and 50s, starting something new and fresh and scary, but doing it anyway. Martha Stewart, I read her first book came out in when she was 41. \

**[0:30:54]**

**AR:** Wow. Vera Wang. She was 50.

**[0:30:57]**

**FT:** Wow. Yeah. Her first wedding dress. Incredible.

**[0:31:00]**

**AR:** We're manifesting sooner.

**[0:31:02]**

**FT:** Yes. Yes. I mean, but by the way, she had a rich dad. I'm just saying.

**[0:31:07]**

**AR:** Oh, okay.

**[0:31:08]**

**FT:** Yeah. Not no, I mean, she's super talented, too, but we should mention. I think it's important to give content.

**[0:31:13]**

**AR:** I mentioned that on the show. I was like, I don't want to be Vera Wang. I don't want to be 50 and like wealthy.

**[0:31:19]**

**FT:** It could happen just a little sooner, I mean – well, Anisha, it's been so nice to have some time with you. I really enjoyed your company. I know our audience got so much out of your stories, your insights. We're all rooting for you. Hope to have you back soon. Hope to see you in real life soon. Anisha Ramakrishna. Thank you.

**[0:31:41]**

**AR:** Thanks for having me.

[OUTRO]

**[0:31:44]**

**FT:** Thanks to Anisha Ramakrishna for joining us. You can learn more about her Bravo Show, Family Karma and her podcast Currently Cringing and all of her whereabouts for her comedy tour at anishacomedy.com. I'll see you back here on Wednesday. Remember, if you leave a review for our show on Apple podcasts, you may hear your name called on a Friday episode and you will receive a free 15-minute phone call with me. Looking forward to reading your review. Until then, I hope your day is so money.

[END]