

**Dr. Purnima Mane**

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Dr. Purnima Mane completed her MA in 1973 and Ph.D from TISS in 1984, specialising in Medical and Psychiatric social work and was a faculty member at the Institute from 1982 till 1994 when she joined the World Health Organisation. She is a distinguished diplomat, leader, manager, academician, social activist, author, and theatre artist, who has been a life-long champion of sexual and reproductive health and women's rights. She has held senior leadership positions at UNFPA, [UNAIDS](#), and [WHO](#), as well as the Global Fund and Population Council. She was deputy executive director of UNFPA and assistant secretary-general of the United Nations. At UNFPA she directed global policies and programmes on population and development. She is currently president and CEO of Pathfinder International, a US based organisation that works to improve the sexual and reproductive health of women, men and young people in developing countries.

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*Q: Why and how did you decide to join TISS as a student? And what were the experiences of your mother before you joined TISS?*

PM: Thank you for giving me this opportunity. TISS has a very long history in our family. My mother joined TISS in 1956 and I was five years old at that time. I used to come to TISS, I remember it was in the remote jungles almost of some place and participated in some of the cultural events when I was that young. There was a lot of attachment from my side. My mother was a student of child and family welfare but my mother Asha Bhende was very active in sports, in culture and she was the best student of the year. She was an all-rounder and her career really took off after TISS. For me, TISS meant something really really important. When I was doing Psychology in St. Xavier's College I knew I wanted to do Medical and Psychiatric Social Work. My mother kept asking why MPSW and why I was not doing Child and Family Welfare. I told her since you were there everybody associated the department with you and your success. I want to go somewhere else and try my hand there. Besides, I am doing Psychology.

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So I got interested in coming to MPSW. I still remember at that time I applied only for MPSW, something today the students would never do. Because today you apply for four or five things and hope for the best. I said, "No, I am not applying anywhere else. Not even Bombay University." I just went for MPSW. I remember the interview where I was completely drenched from top to bottom.

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*Q: You were talking about your interview...*

PM: I came for my interview and I was completely drenched. So I said that I don't know what I am going to say in the interview and this happened way back in 1971. I had just given my bachelors exam. But it was intimidating having all these 7-8 people, you having to do a written test and also a group discussion which was the format at that time. But I got in. I thoroughly enjoyed my two years that I was at TISS. I don't think that I was as outstanding as my mother but I was at least...I think I got the best

student award for MPSW, not the best student award for all-rounder. I was also very involved in cultural activities and other things. I think what I did in TISS as a masters student left a remarkable impression on me and really has influenced my career. Because after that I went on to do my M.Phil at TISS as well and also my PhD.

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*Q: Would you share any memories that you have of your student days?*

PM: Oh, gosh! Actually lots of them. I will be here forever if I begin to share them all. But I will begin with a few. I think what I remember most was Dr. Gore's classes. He wasn't one of the most scintillating teachers in terms of his style, he did not adopt any fancy ways of teaching but the content of his material was so exceptional that I remember I used to take down every single word which used to be very unusual for me. I also remember Dr. Gouri Rani Banerjee and I remember her analogies of telling us how to be a social worker, to be like a lotus where you float on the water. Though you are in the water you are not immersed in it. I have never forgotten some of the analogies that she used also from Sanskrit. Considering that social work as a profession came from the West, she was the one who had indigenized it.

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She enormously used her understanding, as she was a PhD in Sanskrit. She used her knowledge of Sanskrit and indigenous literature and gives us all these examples from Sanskrit literature and from Indian philosophy which I always found amazing. I was fortunate to have her for one year and then she retired. In the second year, it was Prof. Grace Mathew. We really worked with her in terms of when she took over as Head, because she had all this weight on her of Dr. Gouri Rani Banerjee. And yet, she did such a phenomenal job. She worked with Mary Lobo and all the others with her. We were a small department at that time. Now TISS is a huge place. We were, if I remember correctly, 15-16 students.

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Therefore the class spirit was very strong. We worked very closely with each other. Of course there were other teachers like Prof. Ramachandran, I have never forgotten his research methodology. It

stands me in good stead even today. J.C. Sharma who taught us statistics and R.D. Naik, all the teachers I think in TISS left their mark. As for field work, some of my field work supervisors became my mentors, my friends, some of them my colleagues, like Prof. Geeta Shah who was my first supervisor in Sion Hospital, LTMG Hospital. She later worked with me and of course developed the department of extra-mural studies. Phenomenally, a visionary woman who carried her students with her and became a very close friend. Unfortunately we lost her sometime ago. But she was another person who I remember very fondly. I used to remember the days we used to go to Thane Mental Hospital; I don't know what it's called today. That was a bit traumatic for me because I was not quite used to that environment. We realized that psychiatry at that time was at a very minimalistic level.

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We still had electric shock being given to patients which seemed to me extremely inhumane. But you had some very visionary psychiatrists who were trying to change the world for drug addicts. For example, Anand Nadkarni and many others. So we were very fortunate to be students at a time when things were starting to change, in the field of medical and psychiatric social work. When this field was coming into its own and it was being recognized as a discipline that really mattered and was needed.

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*Q: I think TISS has a unique interplay between theory and practice. How did it contribute to your own development?*

PM: I would say that is the most unique aspect of the social work curriculum. The fact that you are doing four days of classroom theory but you are also doing practicals, you are going to take this and you are going to apply. I think that stayed with me for life. I am not interested in any project, over the years, unless I know what is going to come out of it. I am not interested in doing research unless I know where it's going to be applied and how. I am not interested in any programme unless there is an application aspect to it. Learning while doing is of course, important. Learning those lessons, documenting those lessons is important. But if they stay on the shelf I have no interest in it. I think that's really affected my entire career as well. I remember the field work placements were very diverse.

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I was placed in the Child Guidance Clinic where later on I became faculty in charge. A very pioneering project because TISS was the first institute to establish a child guidance clinic. But by the time I was a student there were at least 6-8 child guidance clinics that had started. I am not so sure that all of them are around and thriving today. I think that speaks for the way TISS saw it in terms of an evolution, not just as a clinical model but also preventive, promotive of mental health of children. How that model evolved was pretty unique to TISS. I think it inspired others but I am not so sure what the status of the other child guide clinics was. I was also in the Psychiatric department of the J.J. Hospital and I worked with Oman Agarwal and I was very lucky. I had the best supervisors. Because I realized later on when I was placing students how fortunate I was to get the best of the best. I had Vineeta Chitale who was supervising me in a school. I had Nirmala Sardesai who also supervised me in a school setting - King George School. They were pioneers. They had really done wonderful work and inspired many students with them. So that model of learning and trying it out, applying it and working with a supervisor with whom you could discuss things. Because you don't necessarily make the connections yourself when you are a student. You need somebody with whom you need to discuss this.

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Those supervisory conferences, which I know, later on were taken seriously by all supervisors and students were to me were precious. Because my supervisor took them seriously and I began to realise the value of those notes that I had to write and submit to them and the discussions we had. Lot of the learning really took place in those sessions. Just as much as they took place in the classrooms.

*Q: What about the other experiences in the campus, since you were a small group?*

PM: Actually at that time we had the two hostels. We did not have many hostels that we do now. Nor did we have students living off-campus. Everybody who was residential lived on the campus. I lived close by, so I was considered one of the unlucky ones. I did not benefit from the residential aspect of the campus. I remember that you had to do two years fieldwork continuously to get your degree. Again

I don't know if it's the same now. At that time I asked to be placed in the hostel and they said, "But you live hop-skip and jump. You are right nearby. Why do you want to stay in the hostel?" and I said that it was the one aspect of TISS life I have never enjoyed. And that is to be in this community. It is a very tight-knit community. We had students falling in love. We had students breaking up. We had students who had emotional and mental problems. We had students who had serious health problems which had to be dealt with on an overnight basis. We had factions and groups but most of the time the factions were around social issues, differences on social issues. There was not a gang kind of environment that could be thought of in a student climate. It was around certain political issues. Being a social work institute we had students from around India who had come from an environment where they were very socially conscious. They really wanted to make a difference. At the same time we had the Personnel Management and Industrial Relations students who were seen as the ones who wanted to make a career. And the blend of the two was actually quite fascinating. To put them on the same campus.

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While some felt that they were influencing each other negatively most of the time they actually influenced each other positively. Because what happened was that the Personnel Management students began to become more socially conscious and the students of Social Work also became more savvy - how to survive in the corporate world. And how you could make a difference and bring Social Work departments and how to evolve them in industry. Now we have so many of them. That was just the beginning. Of course lots of marriages took place between Social Work and Personnel Management as well. I mean, literally marriages as well. The faculty also intermingled. Sometimes there was hostility. Between Social Work and Social Sciences and a little bit of rivalry between them as to who was getting more importance. I am sure it still remains.

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But I think it was healthy competition and rivalry. It was a competition for ensuring that ideas were adequately shared. That we learned from each other. Sometimes, they were over resources but most of the time they were over ideas and what should prevail. We always were privileged to have directors

who gave a lot of importance to students. A lot of importance to student welfare. I remember When Ms. Desai became the Director she created the post of student welfare... I don't even remember what the title was and I was the first person appointed as a faculty member. I did not know what my role was. I asked them what they wanted me to do. They told me to think what I wanted to do for the welfare of the students. Of course, working with the student council. But also in general working with all the issues you have observed as faculty. I remember thoroughly enjoying it. Having been a student, I already knew what some of the issues were. Some of the dilemmas that students face. Being youngsters at that time there are many decisions that young people have to take and very often they are rushed into these decisions.

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They feel alone. And being far from home they don't know whose advice to take. Being a faculty that kind of objective counseling was really appreciated. I remember the other day, a student called me up, just last week. The student reminded me of the dilemma that she had during her first time where she got admission elsewhere and she came to me for my advice. She said that the main thing she remembered is that I did not tell her what to do, but helped her to make the decision. And she made the decision to stay on in the course. I don't remember it. But obviously many of the faculty had that kind of influence because we were smaller and because students were at an age where they had to make life decisions - career, life-mate, where they wanted to stay, what they wanted to do or be. It was an influential time for all of us. Therefore our faculty meant a whole lot to us. That helped me as a faculty member to also serve the students better.

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PM: How we broke the rules... looking back I could say I was a good student but I was always a very defiant student. I would go and sit in the back row. I still remember sitting with my feet up... in class. I would be in the last row, last class. It used to be at that time between 12 - 1.

We would have dabbas being shared among us and the teachers would either see us and decide to ignore us or didn't see us. We would pass around each other's food eating. That was the first time the

concept of 'jootha' went out of the window because we would sometimes share an apple amongst us and anything, any food. Because we were just too hungry at that time. I still remember that. We also remember from field work we often straight went to a discotheque...Which was like two different worlds? The world of being in a slum in a cotton saree because at that time we had to wear a saree. Even salwar kameez was not allowed. We went straight into Slip Disc or Blowup or whatever the discotheques were at that time. We didn't feel that we were sort of treading two different worlds because we felt as young people that was okay and this was what we wanted to do as well. That wasn't of course what was breaking the rules. But breaking the rules was really what was in the hostel.

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I realized how many ways people found to cheat Mrs. Mathew, who was the hostel warden at that time. She was so smart. She would be sitting there in the lobby at one O'clock in the morning waiting for the students to come in having broken curfew. She always caught them. She would catch them and then she would make coffee for them. She had a blast with the students. They adored her even if they were petrified if she is going to catch them.

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PM: Miss Mathew used to catch students jumping over the wall, she was always there. That's the funny thing. I don't know how she did it. But she spent a lot of time with the students singing with them. Her main thing was singing. So she would join them in singing. I think the students loved her, hated her it was...it was quite a special relationship. I think otherwise I don't think we broke the rules in any other way. We often broke one rule that TISS had and that was on the 1st of January at that time India never had a holiday. So we were expected to be in class at 9 O' clock on the 1st of January. A couple of us went to Gore and said that this was ridiculous. We can't come on the first day because we wanted to celebrate the 31st at night. They said that you are from the School of Social Work...and you have to come on the 1st. And attendance was very strict at that time. We decided as a group to boycott the first class. That was a tough decision. We did not know what Dr. Gore would do.

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He didn't do anything. Later on, when I was a teacher students did not boycott it but in large masses you did not see students on the 1st. Of course, I used to say that I have to take the attendance but I would understand their situation of turning up for class. That's your choice...you lose a day of class. But I remember it was much tougher during our days. It was noted who was not in class.

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*Q: Anything about co-curricular activities?*

PM: When I was in Xavier's itself I was already active in theatre. My parents did theatre at that time and I had already started a theatre career. So it was kind of tough doing theatre as well as doing my masters. It became even tougher as I did my M.Phil Because I became more active. But I still remember I used to give my exams because at that time classes were only 9 to 1. So exams were 9 to 1. I would give my exam. At 1 O'clock, the car would be waiting outside for me, I would hop into the car and drive up to Pune with my dad and mother, do a show there in the night, study during the little breaks you had during the play. Either between the acts or your appearance on the stage. Then get into the car at 12 or 1 o'clock... sleep, whatever little sleep you could get and go for the 9 O'clock exam again. I have done that throughout the TISS days. We took it as a normal part of life. It did help that classes were only from 9 to 1. And afternoon was for other extra-curricular activities. We did a lot of them when we were students.

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There was some sport involved which I was not very active in. But I was more active in the dramatics, in dance because I used to dance as well. And we did lots of shows. The Institute day was a big thing. It's not as big it is now...but for us it was big. I had performed with my mother on Institute Day when I was a small child. So for me it meant something. And we would go through a lot of trouble to prepare it. Then after that I remember during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations I was put in charge with R.N. Sharma of some of the cultural activities. He was the chief and I was doing something else in terms of the cultural activities. One of the things we paid attention to was to pay attention to culture for

everybody. So we had classical singing... a very good performance. But we also had a tamasha which was challenged by some faculty and students asking how we could organise a tamasha in TISS. I fought back saying that our service staff are interested in dance and enjoying it. For them that's a celebration that they enjoy. I reasoned, why on earth we shouldn't have that. It was the most enjoyed event among everything we had. I think TISS always had a tradition of working very hard and playing very hard. Making sure you did both so that you were very well-rounded and you realized life was about working just as much as about having fun. Because that is what makes you a complete person.

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I think that was something we emphasized on the students. As the years went on the students also took it very seriously and started investing in it which was wonderful.

*Q: Would you share some experiences of being a PhD student and how it might have been different from being an M.A. student?*

PM: Oh yes! I mean for a while when I was in M.Phil student for example I was working as a Research Assistant in the Institute. When I became a full-time Ph.D. student it was a very different life. First of all, I must say that I was happy to be a PhD student because I had a small son. I gave birth to my second son just before my PhD viva. I think I was able to have two children and do my PhD only because I was a full-time student. I don't think it would have been easy if I had been a full-time teacher. So I finished my PhD and also gave me my two children. I think that was wonderful. What I liked about the PhD programme was that it was very different from the PhD programme of say, Bombay University. In Bombay University you had one guide who you met once in a while, when the guide had the time to meet you. Some guides gave you more guidance; others hardly gave you any guidance. You were pretty much on your own. The PhD programme in TISS... I was one of the first students to join the PhD programme when it was established. My mother is also a PhD student of TISS. When she was a PhD student Dr. Gore was experimenting with very many different ideas. How to create a PhD programme that would be more than the guide and the student. By the time I became a student it was more established. And we had to write nine papers. We had to present at least three of them to other

PhD students, faculty and defend them. And that was an extremely good experience. PhD students can be very hard on their peers.

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So it was a tough seminar that you had to defend yourself. You also had to do statistics and I hated anything to do with math. I discovered that statistics was more applied and enjoyed it much more. I am very proud I got 99 out of 100. I never forgot. It was the only subject in terms of math that I have ever done well in because I hated maths. It was only because JC Sharma made it fun, he made it applied. It was like an open-book exam and we had peers we studied together with who were like Hazel D'Lima and we were young PhD students, Lina Kashyap... we had Medha Patkar. It was a wonderful batch. I remember Padma Velaskar. I still remember that batch. We did a lot of social activities as well... Getting together in each others' homes. Because we were in different phases. We were no longer M.A. students. Some of us were married, some of us had children. We had other responsibilities as well. But our faculty... we did not just benefit from one faculty. Because of the statistics teaching, because of the presentation of the seminars and eventually of course, the defence where you had to defend your thesis. It was a very grueling programme... in fact more gruelling I discovered than many other institutes. I actually said once to Armaity [Desai] that it was such a grueling programme that many students will not want to do PhD. Because they will want to go for an easy option. They would want to struggle.

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But I can tell you it was a PhD programme that really well-rounded. It gives you an experience that is really much more fulfilling and much more enriching than just you know... Writing a thesis and collecting your data and having that doctorate. I feel I deserved my PhD because they really made me slog for it. It was, to me very precious.

*Q: How was the transition as a faculty?*

PM: I had already joined in '81 when I had almost finished my PhD. I had joined as a faculty member in one of the units of TISS working for Prof. Suma Chitnis who was also my PhD guide, my master's research guide as well as my M.Phil guide. So I had worked with her long enough to know that I could

work with her. I thoroughly enjoyed it and learnt a lot from her. Grace Mathew... with all humility could be very straight-forward. She told me that I wasn't interested in social work as I kept moving from here and there. I felt very humiliated. We had no interactions for some years and then in '82 she came to me and said, "You know I am going to take my words back." That was humility to take them back. She said that I indeed was serious about what I wanted to do. She asked me if I wanted to apply for the lecturer's position in her department. That was a big shock to me.

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She said that it was competitive and the job wasn't being offered to me directly. She said that I would be a good candidate. I agreed. I did and that was the best decision that I made. I did hesitate because of the previous interaction with her but I think it was the best decision I took because I was really able to give back to the institute more fully. Because I was teaching... I taught casework after Miss Mathew left. I taught fieldwork supervision. I taught interpersonal communication as well as develop the branch that later on started teaching... I ensured that there was not just interpersonal but also much more. At that time it was called audio-visual communication. We made it much broader. All of that... Miss Mathew gave us a free hand. But I also got to supervise students. I went to locations where students were actually doing the work. I wasn't sitting in an academic institution, cut off from where their real actions. I was at the Children's home where I supervised students. I also supervised students at Aadhar which was the place for women who had suffered from domestic violence and they came for help and counselling. All of these places gave me the opportunity to keep honing my own skills because otherwise I would be cut off from where the action was.

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I got to do research of my own. In fact that is the place where I did research on AIDS in India at a time we did not even know whether there was AIDS in India. There were a few cases. And I got to work with USAID on writing a book, in fact with Shubadha Maitra on the socio-cultural context of HIV in India and what it would be like if at that time, AIDS became big. And that was long time, in '81 or something. We were still thinking about...It was '86...sorry... when AIDS would if it would become a

problem. Of course it became a big problem later on. We also had the opportunity to train. We worked with forest officers, police officers...you name it...people from all spheres of life in terms of training them on communication, training them on counseling, training them on HIV, training them on social work aspects. That's another different kind of skill you require when you are working with people who are already in senior positions.

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I think that transition for me was a very happy transition. I could also carry my experiences as a student, as a M.A. student, as PhD students as well as you know...the work that I had done outside. But of course with all of that my theatre activities took a back seat. As I went more and more into academics it became more and more difficult to do theatre but no regrets..I think my academic life made me quite happy.

*Q: Could you elaborate on the interface between research and training in social work, the indigenous knowledge base that needed to be developed?*

PM: I think that the Tatas when they founded the institute realised that though professional social work had originated in the West in many places... We needed professional social work in India and they actually sent people... they provided fellowships to send people abroad to get trained. People who had their skills, who had the interest. Dr. Gore, Dr. Gouri Rani Banerjee all of these people... Grace Mathew all of them they actually went later and got trained in social work.

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And because they had already had experience they were not raw. They were not fresh like us. They had already had some work experience. They could make the connections between how to apply this to the Indian context. I think that was the best thing they did. They didn't send totally raw people. They sent people with some work experience. When we were working in the Institute I think for us doing research was all about what are the policy and programmatic implications of this research. I think even for social science research units, the Institute always maintains that thrust. I think that was partly because TISS when it was given any such project was looked at an institution that could provide the

policy and programmatic implications that wouldn't do academic research just for the sake of doing research. Giving a project to TISS...you name it... by some donor... or USAID... or an Australian funding agency... The purpose of giving it to TISS was that TISS would come back with implications of what to do with that research in the field. That's what the special part of doing research at TISS was.

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I think that was maintained throughout whether it was you know in a social science research unit because we had 7-8 research units at the time that I was there. Child and Youth research, urban research... As we went on newer... Women's Studies and urban and rural was together first... then they split. So all of that was coming up because there was recognition that TISS could provide that perspective. Even the social scientists who came then... even though they did not have social work background would look at their research from that lens. I think that was what was so special about the research from TISS. I am assuming that tendency has continued because I know that many of the institutions that I work with now and the funders I work with now look to TISS for that kind of applied work. I remember at the Global Fund... They wanted TISS to take on the role of counseling and working with institutions that were given the grants for counseling. Because they felt that they would have the ability to not only teach counseling but to make sure the sustainability factor would be taken into consideration. All throughout when I was in TISS I felt that there was a great deal of pride in the fact that India had a lot to offer. It wasn't a kind of false pride; it wasn't a kind of trying to fight with the West. It was a kind of feeling that we do have a lot to offer. TISS maintained that reputation throughout. That's why today many students from abroad want to come and get their degrees here.

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That's why many institutions want to have alliances with TISS. That's why lots of organisations want TISS to do the research for them. I hope that's the tradition that TISS will continue rather than the tradition of many other places that became almost satellites of a foreign university. TISS was never a satellite of any university from abroad. That has what has been special about TISS.

*Q: What are the shifts and changes that took place in your professional discipline?*

PM: When I came to the institute and did MPSW, the focus was very much on the clinical model. So we were talking about medicine as in practiced in health settings which was mainly hospitals or health clinics or centres that were based in rural areas. Fully medically oriented, if I may say so. Very bio-medically oriented. The social aspect of it even though TISS tried to give it that spin and tried to bring... that interest was very difficult to bring out. Even in preventive medicine when we worked in hospitals in the social and preventive medicine even there the approach was extremely bio-medical. And I discovered that when I went to Johns Hopkins and did my Fulbright that how Johns Hopkins over the years had shifted that focus. I was much more comfortable there with their Public Health programme as a TISS student than probably a doctor would have been. Because it was very oriented on the social and cultural aspects of medicine and people's behavior. How people live, how people think. Rather than trying to impose medicine and what is good for the people from the outside to try and bring people's habits, behaviours from communities and work with the community in order for them to own that project.

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Today of course, this is standard practice. But at that time it was not. That evolution has happened over a period of time and when I was a student all my placements all of them were in clinical settings. With Armaity [Desai] coming in the community approach was much stronger. Even though TISS had a community development department it had nothing to do with health. It was considered like separate. So what they did in Apnalaya or the organizations that they worked in was very different from what the MPSW students did. That was influenced by the teachers who had been trained in the West...mind you...that had brought that in. But Armaity despite having her training in the West had much more of community orientation. Or maybe in Chicago where she was trained that was the approach.

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As more and more teachers came in of different streams... I should say from non-TISS backgrounds where we started getting teachers from other universities of social work and social sciences, TISS moved very rapidly to the community health model. Vimla Nadkarni always believed in it because she

came from Nirmala Niketan. She brought that philosophy in. Others brought it in a very strong way. Around the world it's all about global health now. Global health always looks at health from a community perspective. Much less on the institutional perspective, much more from a community... and communities, meaning communities of much more the social work kind of community... not the broad global health community that you tend to see. That understanding is very strong in global health now.

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It serves me very very well. But I also had to move from my training in clinical to the community to the global health model. I realised that there were learnings all along but that eventually we really had to be much more community centric than being institution-centric.

*Q: What was the biggest contribution of TISS to social work/social sciences over the past 75 years?*

PM: TISS was the pioneer in social work education. It really paved the way for other schools of social work. TISS didn't create satellite schools of social work. At least not in the beginning for sure. It allowed everyone to build their own model. Delhi school had their own way of being and all the other schools had their own way of functioning. But what TISS did was provided some kind of space where different ideas could come together. It provided best practice, models of moving along. Some of the things I can mention.

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The field action projects which were very unique to TISS. There were a few in the beginning - child guidance clinics and the rural campus which has now taken on its own life in that sense. But now you have many more. So the whole idea of having field action projects became something that TISS started. The idea of having different diverse programmes of education which didn't happen...it had a degree in social work and a degree in personnel management which it was when I was a student. Now you have so many programmes...different disciplines...different streams and the idea of those streams is in some way they are all contributing towards social development. That's really what the thinking I think is. As well as the learnings that the students have from each other is what is unique. On one campus to bring

all these different schools together and get all these students to interact and teachers teaching across...in some ways their disciplines...across schools...I think that's a very rich environment. And that's something that's also been unique about TISS. TISS also had at the helm of affairs very inspiring leadership.

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Very unique kinds of leadership. Both social scientists as well as social workers moving in a sense from them. But all of whom had the same kind of goals to make... To contribute towards development and to make TISS grow in a way that would help India's development. I left India 17 years ago. Where India is today is way ahead in terms of even my life as a student...how it evolved over 17 years...it's like tripled in terms of growth...in terms of everything. The kind of expertise that we have... the kind of world leadership that we occupy. So in that sense I would say TISS is no longer a school of social work. TISS is a school of learning. It's a place of learning where different ideas can come together and people can learn from each other. That's what I hope TISS will continue to be. Yes, of course being a social worker I am very proud it started as a school of social work. But I am also proud that it has just not remained that. It's important to be a school of social work but it's important to be a bit more. To give a little bit more to other disciplines. That's I think what TISS has done, which is remarkable.

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*Q: What has been your experience after you left TISS?*

PM: When I left TISS it was to join the World Health Organisation to work in its social and behavioral research wing. So I left as a result of the research that I had done at TISS on AIDS. Very early years of AIDS in India. It was very pioneering work. I worked with several colleagues - Vinita Chitale, Shubadha Maitra, Vimla Nadkari - we did quite a lot of work in the dark. We didn't know where this was headed. We did not know what AIDS was. We had never seen an AIDS patient. And yet we had to prepare counseling modules. So we had to go out and learn a lot. And that learning was what was appreciated. After my Fulbright, that's when I got my offer from WHO. Since then it has been a long journey. It has been 18 years since TISS. I never thought of moving out. Once I moved out I moved

along. I moved five different times I think in these last 17 years working for the World Health Organisation, for the United Nations AIDS Programme twice to two different countries. Our work for Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria. I have worked for the UNFPA and the Population Council and now I am going to work for the Pathfinders International. So I have nearly been in many different institutions and I have always felt my training in TISS has what has benefited me in terms of being able to survive and being able to thrive in these different worlds.

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TISS in spite of being India-focused also exposed us to global challenges and what happened internationally. We had some of the best teachers. We had some of the best learning. We learnt to ask the question 'Why?' I still remember as a teacher what I loved most was that the students kept me on my toes. To never take anything as they got as true. So everything that someone said the question would be why is it so. Why does it have to be so? And not otherwise? I asked why we could not do things differently. And the students demanded that we explained this. We had some of the most challenging students ever... Some of them doing brilliant work today having gone on way ahead of any of us. I think it was those students who kept us on our toes. And kept us able to survive in a world where you have to be constantly challenged and to be challenged yourself. I think that's really what has helped me to reach the level that I have reached.

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Also of course gives me great pride when I go to the UN now... somebody walks up to me and says, "Madam, I am a TISS student. I am working in this place...UNICEF and here and there." Our students are everywhere. So it's a matter of great pride that they are able to survive the international world as well as in India where our students are doing such a good job. I don't know what more I can say.

*Q: If you had to say something to TISS, what would it be?*

PM: I think the only thing that I would say TISS is, like an old-timer who is always harping on about the good old days, I would say only one thing is that...TISS has grown exponentially. Rapid growth is marvelous but it often does not give you time to think about whether the growth is in the right

direction...is the growth in the right areas...is the growth too much...what is it costing us. There is a cost to everything; especially growth is always a cost. The cost has to be worth the benefits and I am sure that that's why the institute has grown. This is the best time to pause and talk to faculty, students, and beneficiaries of TISS...in terms what the next 25 years is going to be like. Because you have to start thinking for the next 25 years from now. What is the best of the last 75 years? Some of it was okay then it's not for the next twenty five years...so let it go.

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Some of it was good... what would you do about it. One of the things I would point out not as a criticism... I hear repeatedly from the students and that could be because of the size that the faculty interaction that they had before... they really feel that is gone now. They are pretty much on their own if they were internationally. It's like my children, when they were students abroad they said that they were pretty much on their own. Our teachers are there but you have to reach out to them. We don't feel that they are easy to get to. They are not as accessible. What are the modalities for example in which faculty could be more accessible to students? What are the modalities by which some areas can be strengthened and maybe, not necessarily grow at the rapid rate at which TISS has grown at in order to focus on these. Again TISS may find that that growth was actually has had more benefits than cost but an analysis of that can happen and a major evaluation needs to happen not to spend a lot of money on it.

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But to bring together the pro bono services of students, past faculty, past students, past beneficiaries to do that kind of major evaluation. Because TISS is one of the places that have been very transparent about what where it stands. Why not be transparent now in its 75th year? But I would also encourage TISS to continue to maintain the spirit of openness it has. That spirit of openness, that spirit of social development being at the core of everything is really at the heart of TISS' growth. I hope that the spirit will be maintained. I know that Parasuraman, who was a colleague of mine when I was teaching at the Institute, has done a phenomenal job for the institute. I hope he will also spend some time on this



aspect. I am sure he is already doing that. This is just my tuppence as I am not here all the time and I don't know everything.

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The other thing I may add is that as a past faculty member, as a past student I feel very cut off from what is happening in TISS. We have the web and we expect everybody to get on the web and catch up. Not everybody can or does. I would hope that TISS would find ways to reach out to its old students, old teachers in order to keep them abreast how TISS is growing, what TISS is doing. Some format whereby you can engage your energies, their strengths and their enthusiasm because nobody has lost their enthusiasm in TISS.