



## Dr. Ramesh Jare

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Interviewer: Ms. Shilpi Gulati

Camera/Sound: Ms Divya Cowasji

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Q: when were you a student here?

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RJ: I was a student 1985-87. I studied in criminology and Correctional administration. After that, I joined a project called monitoring and evolution of Sardar Sarovar Project. That was in the Narmada project. The head was Prof. Dr. Parasuraman. And I worked there for 2 years and after 2 years I joined Tuljapur campus.

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Q: how was campus at that time what activities did students doing?

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It was not very crowded. That time we had very few students. Single students used to stay in one room. I had one single room. I stayed whole year in that room. 1st year of course there were four students.. multiseated room was there, those students were from different state. One student was from Nigeria and we used to enjoy during that time.



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We used to enjoy, in fact till late night we used to chit chat and move around. Of course we used to also get room service, whenever we used to get up late in the morning our Daya Bhai and Jamal Bhai used to provide us breakfast in the room. So it was very interesting and enjoyable life in hostel.

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Of course I had some problem in the class studying. Because of language. I came from rural area. I used to have some problem. But there were so many students and faculties who used to help me. It was actually ...it was very comfortably and everybody used to help us whenever we had some problem.

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What would be your memorable experience as a student?

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I can tell you two interesting incidences. you know in 1986 Institute day I sang a song in Marathi, that was the line is 'preethi che jul jul panni, varyache manjul gani' ofcourse it is a



famous song. Then everybody likes it. Of course those who understand Marathi they liked it so much.

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Next day everybody started recognizing me and whenever they see me they started singing that song. Particularly a person, Mr. Kulkarni he was working in accounts. He is no more now. But he immediately next day he bought the cassettes and he started learning the songs.

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And whenever he sees me in dining hall or wherever he started singing that song. So that was a very interesting experience I saw.

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Another was like you know one day that time Prof. R.N.Sharma was the warden so he came for the round in the night and some of our students were drinking alcohol and he entered on room and he saw one boy from Karnataka. and he just said 'what you are doing here' , so that boy he just saw him that Prof. R.N.Sharma is there he came out there was a bamboo stick there and he



took that bamboo stick and started running behind R.N.Sharma and R.N.Sharma was running 'aree isko pakdo pakdo pakdo'.

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And then he came up to this administration building and some people help him, they caught that boy and they said don't do and they took that stick from him. Of course next morning there was a huge meeting and that boy was restricted from the hostel. Of course after that he was also removed from the course. So these were 2 incidences. There were many incidences actually but these were the two I remember.

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Which teacher influenced you the most ... somebody you looked up to?

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Of course Armaity Desai's class I enjoyed, she used to teach us integrated social work practice. I was not a student of Prof. Parasuraman but I had worked with him during student life also. We did one research on water pollution in one of the sugar factory in Ahmednagar district.



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So he used to help me how to draft the research finding and how to draft the question, especially in research, he used to help us. Of course that time he influenced us because he was very informal and we were students from different colleges actually. So in the night, evening, whenever we used to find time, he used to give us time and then he influenced me during that time.

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Q: I wanted to know a little about the Latur earthquake I was told you were one of the first people to reach the spot?

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Yes. Of course I will tell you then. After my study I joined monitoring and evolution of Sardar Sarovar project to do monitoring and evolution of project affected people who are affected by this project. Of course they are all tribal and adivasi people of Dhuliya district. We did a survey of 33 villages and Parasuraman was head of that project. 2 years I have worked there, after 2 years I have joined Tuljapur campus. Tuljapur campus of course we had right from the beginning we have envisaged that this campus will be a campus, later on become an educational institution. But in the beginning we started it as a field action programme.



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We didn't have any predetermined any project or any programme as such. But we have been given the freedom that we should go there and find out what are the problem of the people we should take the experience. And on the basis of the experience you develop the project. Like that we have worked for 2 years in that area.

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Later on we began the, of course there was a drought in 1991 then the drought taught us many things. What is the need of the area? Water was the really problem in the area and people were using water mostly for sugarcane. In the villages, one side you see there is the sugarcane other side people don't have water for drinking purposes.

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So we saw this contradiction and started working on that. So we began water shed management in 1991, of course mini water shed area management programmes we have implemented around 10 villages. Later on we worked on Indo-German watershed management programme.

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Whole village we took and implemented in one complete village around 12000 hectares area we have covered in that watershed.

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In 1993 there was earthquake took place in Latur and surrounding villages we experienced tremors around 4 o'clock in the morning. All of us we gathered and we decided we must, we should start because till 7 o'clock we didn't know exactly where the place where earthquake took place is. Maybe the surrounding area it took place. Then morning 6 o'clock some people came from that area and then people started discussing about the earthquake took place in Latur and Killari area.

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Then immediately we took the institute vehicle. 4-5 colleagues we went to Sastur village that is one of the biggest villages after Killari. And we started seeing that, we didn't know what to do; there was so many places lot of debris people injured and lot of crowd also. Surrounding villages' people came just to see what happened to that place. And we also went there.

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Then we actually wanted to help people but where to begin we didn't know. When we saw that some of the people were under the debris, we tried to remove the debris. That is how we began the 1st day, and then the next 4-5 days there was a need of providing food. So we used to gather food from the surrounding area and provide the food to the people in Latur and surrounding areas. There were around 52 villages which were completely collapsed. Nothing remained there.

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Then of course till 6 six months period of relief was going on, so many national -international NGOss were involved. Because of so many NGOs there was also problem to co-ordinate their work. So government of Maharashtra and Latur collector requested TISS to help in co-ordination of NGOs. So I was deputed for co-ordination of NGOs work for about 1 year and we were also studying simultaneously. We used to organize meeting of NGOs.

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Find out what are their problems. problem was there were so many aids from different places and so many duplication of services like in one place we find number of trucks coming and just providing vessels. But in one place you don't find anything else. So we helped government and NGOs to co-ordinate that king of work.



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Then after 1 year, we started thinking of rehabilitation of those people. Then of course government of Maharashtra designed a policy. Before that with the help of other social work colleges we did comprehensive survey of 52 villages. These 52 villages which they used to call A category villages. This A category villages which is like, where every there is more than 5 deaths, that is considered an A category village.

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We did a comprehensive survey of 52 villages with the help of other social work colleges. This survey was going on for almost 20 years and we submitted the report to the government. Our whole campus, Mumbai campus, Tuljapur campus all the faculty, students everybody was involved, we did very big task in 20 days time so many other people also helped. Companies like TELCO they have provided us 4 big buses to take us from Tuljapur to earthquake affected area it is about 15 km distance.

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Every morning we used to work there. 20 days around 200 people did that survey. It was a big task, government also appreciated our work and when they were planning for the rehabilitation



programme, of course they have appreciated the TISS work which we did in relief and rehabilitation.

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Q: How would you say TISS responds to disasters, how is their work different from any body else's?

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Our uniqueness is we go systematically. we don't go emotionally and start working on this, but we study the problem and our strength is like help government, help NGOs and co-ordinate their work , give inputs in statistical aspects and co-ordination and planning and of course we are also ...people who are helping for human resource management like training.

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During that time lot of training was required during the rehabilitation people. Because when later on government of Maharashtra has appointed us as a community participation consultant. I was a team leader at that time. So during that time every village rehabilitation committee, so we have train all these committees.



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Apart from this training NGOs personnel and government who are working in that area.

So training was also one of the important aspects I say which is different from the other NGOs . Other thing is like you know while doing that we are not sitting aside and watching we are also getting involved in actual work, so a village called Rajegaon.

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Rajegoan was adopted by TATA companies, so they requested us to help in social aspect. How to design the house. How the house should be for the earthquake resistance and which can be culturally accepted by the people in that area.

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We gave them some models also we have conducted PRA exercise for mapping the village. Like you know in village we wanted to change the village structure. People were staying based on their caste, so we have made some modification. Can we mix up the people irrespective of their caste, can they come together and stay together.

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In some places in some families they are now staying together. And this PRA plan was accepted by the TATA companies when they were doing the village planning.

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Q: can you talk about how you started work at Tuljapur?

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We didn't have plan. But we were given freedom to study the area because it was right in the beginning it was well envisaged that we will start the BSW programme. But BSW programme should be based on the experience of the people, those who have worked there.

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Whole of our syllabus should be developed on the basis of the experience. That was a strategy we used there. That's why we have been given freedom to study the area, that's why initial stage we only started working with the issues of the people. Land issues were taken up, when we conducted meeting, many villages people raised, of course the issue of livelihood. But when you go deeper and started discussing more there were so many issues related to land and livelihood.



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Of course dowry harassment. 2 major issues we took up, caste and gender. When we started working on land people those who are dalit, their land was in the hands of rich people. So we had tenancy act and land ceiling act, under that act so many problems were there, so many lands was not titled under the proper person's name. So we took up these cases.

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When we took up the land issues, there was lot of support from the poor and dalit people. But there was also opposition from the rich people and landed people. They didn't want us to work on these issues.

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So they said if you are a social worker then you should work on education, health issues, provide them some employment. Why you are taking up these issues.

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But people were interested in these issues. We used to work with organized women. When we started that time self help group was not the core issue, that time other issues were more



important like child marriage, then alcoholism, wife beating. Lot of atrocities against women, so we worked on those issues in the initial stage

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After 2-3 years we started organizing women on self help groups. And then in each village we used to have SHGs . We have 500 SHGs in that area till now. We used to conduct lot of training for them. As far as livelihood is concerned, employment guarantee scheme (EGS), which is now Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, earlier in Maharashtra it was EGS.

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So many problems about corruption. Whenever there was a delay in payment we used to take out a morcha to the Tehsil karyalaya or collector's karayala. So those kinds of issues we took up in the beginning. Because we said we will not go with a fixed programme we will work on the issues people raise in the villages.

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As I said earlier the situation taught us in 1991 there was a big drought in the area. Drinking water was the first major problem, then water for agriculture and food. But then that was also time when 2 villages water shed programme management was successful in Maharashtra. RaleganShinde and Aadgaon.

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So one can say that 1985-1995 was the decade of water shed management programme. During that time we also used to organize different meetings and different workshops and discuss about water shed programme.

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When the drought took place we thought that we should also implement water shed development programme. We approached certain organizations, Tata Trust, they have helped us and we implemented micro water shed development programmes.

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After water shed programme. 4- 5 years we thought we should work on water shed. But later on we ourselves realized that just getting water is not sufficient, using water preciously and



equitably is important. As I said the water was there in some villages but people were growing sugarcane.

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Those who are landless, poor people didn't have water for drinking. This is a very big controversy if you see that one acre of sugarcane consumes the water which can provide, which is equivalent to water for drinking for whole year. For whole year that water can be sufficient.

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So that kind of awareness we told people. Don't fight it but see whether sugarcane is important or jowar is important. Food is important or sugar. 'sakhar ki bhakar' that is what the slogan was, we took the panni yatra in Osmanabad district in 60-70 villages each village we used to take, whole day we used to sing song, poster exhibition. Some experts we invited to discuss the issues on water.

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Then we started taking about sustainable agriculture, first the water shed development, then through water shed you create water, then we realized water should be used equitably. Then the



agricultural practices which are going on there we saw that there is lot of chemical fertilizer is used, lot of pesticides are used. All the seeds are brought from the market. This makes the farmer poor.

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In short period there is an increase in production, but in long period this is not sustainable. It spoils the soil. This kind of awareness we started there. Then this idea of sustainable agriculture. everything should be created in the farm. Of course compost you can create there then your own shit can be used. You can use the water judiciously.

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These entire thing we started discussing people said we used to do this earlier. But after the green revolution we have changed our agriculture practices. And few farmers maybe not more than 10% they have become rich in the village but the other 90% farmers have lost their agricultural practices they do not have any sufficient water and are facing lot of problems. That's why we worked on water shed management and not the sustainable agriculture programme is going on in 10 villages and farmers are getting very good result from these practices

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Q: what relationship does Tuljapur campus have with the surrounding communities?

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When we started the work there, there were 4 of us we were unmarried. We used to go to the villages. We used to go in the morning, afternoon, evening till 12 o clock in the night. We used to conduct lot of meetings. Somehow people started coming together, coming together, in this whole process the local leadership and rich people felt a threat.

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Whenever these poor women they used to come they used to discuss their daily wages. How much do you get? They said 10 rupees. I said cities they get this much money how come you get less, then they used to start discussing the daily wages, they also discussed about the farmer those who are employing them

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They used to talk of human rights. Some people, these landlords, rich people, the casteist people, they did not like us, but the poor people they used to like us. But they were not opposing us.



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Once there was a big morcha on the EGS issue and around 1000 people were there and the political leader started discussion about who has organized so many people in this taluka in this district. Never before we saw this kind of big morcha, then this MLA came there and he said what the problem is. They said we are not getting our wages for last 3 months. He said why you didn't come to me, they said Sir you are not there, 'aap to kabhi waha rahete nahi', 'tumi ita kadi rahatach nahi, tumala kadhi betayche'.

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Then he got very angry. he asked them who is your leader, they said 'ramesh bhau, ram bhau, this hema tai'. Then they got very angry, next day he raised a question in assembly in Mumbai. 'TISS boys and girls go to villages and instigate the people'. Next day the Maharashtra Times daily he gave a very big article which was favoring us. The title of the article was 'Potshol kasha sathi' , 'why there is a stomach ache?'

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The local people again started abusing the MLA, ' they are doing very good work, why this MLA is not supporting' he should support them, instead he is opposing them'.



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But right from the beginning we keep the distance from the political people, we used to work with the poor people, dalit and women. We have very good relationship with the ordinary people. But of course as I said this ordinary people they, and Marathdwada has a history it is a feudal region, it was under Nizam. and so in comparison to other parts of Maharashtra it was under Britishers. Some of the developments from other parts of the country and Maharashtra that was not taking place there.

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For example education. Nizam has not allowed educational institutions to start some schools there. So that kind of social backwardness is there in Marathwada and that why we say that Marathwada is 200 years backwards than any other parts of Maharashtra.

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And that's why when we talk of the support it is like a mixed support. The 10 % people they will not support us, but the 90% people they really come in contact and support us. Because we have implemented many projects, health projects, educations, water shed projects, agriculture projects.



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In different aspects we have worked in the area. I must tell you then what happened. Till 2004 we were working on field action programme. After that we have become an educational institution. We started the BSW course. In the beginning, 6-7 people we have been asked to teach in the class, we did not remain as a social worker or development workers. But there was no 2nd generation in the campus to carry on the work in the Tuljapur campus.

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I find that after 2004, I find there is a gap because there is not much work in the villages; our course is going on BSW course is going on very well. But I find there is a gap between the people and the institute. After 2004, because there is no 2nd generation and not many projects have started after 2004.

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Can you talk about the BSW course, what is the vision?

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BSW programme which began in 2004, it was envisaged that this help to create a cadre to work in the grassroots level. and that is why Dr. Armaity Desai's her vision was, to select the people, students from backward region like Marathwada, Vidharba, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, UttarPradesh. These students who study there they should go back to their places and work there. So when ever class 3 people, gramsevaks at that level these students should go and work there and work with the people, they should also work with the government.

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Because if you see the task of gramsevak it is lot of community organization. Which they are not trained today, they are trained in agriculture universities, but they are not trained. But their basic job is to organize people. Dr. Desai used to say that BSW it should be bridge course after that the students should go to their villages. She even says that they need not even work, or do a job in NGOs. They should go contest the elections, become a sarpanch and organize the people.

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So that was a vision in the beginning. After 3-4 batches we observe that student do not go back. They wanted to take up further study. 90% student they have applied for post graduation either in TISS, Nirmala Niketan. Karve, wherever they find. but they wanted to take up a further education.



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Because the course itself when we teach them, it motivates them to take up further study. Whether it is a compliment or take it as a positive or negative I do not know, but it does not make them to work in the field but it motivates them to take further studies.

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Now we have completed 7 batches, everybody wants to do further studies. We are also now focusing that if they want to take it is their choice. It is not necessary that you came from the village; you should go and work in the village. If they want to work in the urban area or in the policy level or take further studies, they should have choice and that is what now we are considering.

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Since last one year we have started MSW programme in rural development. This will be the 2nd year. Now we are thinking about integrated MA programme. So next year onwards 2012 we will start integrated MA programmed. This is a very short period but a number of things we are experimenting in Tuljapur and simultaneously in Hyderabad and Guwahati.



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Q: Tuljapur campus is very unique for the rural development work that it does how you see it developing in the next 10 years.

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I think it has lot of potential. In the country itself people are talking of rural development and that will be the focus of the whole country in the next year. Tuljapur campus we are going towards developing a number of different courses like MA, MPHIL, PHD and lot of students will come there. We are also thinking about developing very challenging academic programmes, we should not lose touch with the people, so, simultaneously this year onwards we have started a number of field action programmes. So that our students can get benefit of doing their field work there.

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In fact our Director is thinking about, we should have education right from the Montessori in the campus, because Osmanabad is one of the backward districts in the state of Maharashtra and that is because of education. Education is the main cause. There is no quality education there so we should give this example to the district administration there, how good education could be given in the area.



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So our focus is academic at the same time and we will try to experiments in the field action in the villages as a part of field action programmes.