



Mr. K.V. George

Interviewer: Ms. Shilpi Gulati

Camera/Sound: Ms. Divya Cowasji

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Mr. K.V. George joined TISS in 1965 and retired in 2001. He was Section Officer in charge of the Establishment Section. Subsequently, he worked on several TISS development projects, including development of the Rural Campus in Tuljapur

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School of Media and Cultural Studies

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Interviewer:

Thank you Mr. George for allowing us to do this interview with you. Since this is the Platinum Jubilee year we just wanted to take you down memory lane and ask you about your experiences at TISS. If you could tell us when was the first time you joined here and how did you come to TISS.

0:00:20.483

K.V.George:

I came on September 8th, 1965 and joined in a research, social research department as a stenographer and I have had opportunity to work with many people like Dr.Punekar, then Prof. Ramchandran, after that immediately I had to change to sociology because Dr. Gore, the Director started a project called "sociology of education". In that their aim was an all India based research and all over the state all important sociologists were involved in that and Dr. Suma Chitnis, you must be aware of, she was actually research assistant at that time.

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K.V.George:

Then she moved up as a research officer and later as head of department of sociology. But mainly I had at that time the opportunity to work with most of the faculty members, because faculty members themselves were very limited because we didn't have these kinds of arrangements. There was no even professor as such; they were all lecturers or maximum readers. At that time the only known person as professor was Dr. Gore. All



others were known as, Dr. Punekar, then Professor Ramchandran, they were all in the research department.

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K.V.George:

Those days it is not like now the schools..., it was, what you call specializations in different fields like medical and psychiatrist and social work, family and child welfare, criminology and correction administration, very limited. At that time even many of the units were not there, what you call women studies, otherwise child and youth research started very late. Even at that time in the beginning we had one what you call D-Type quarters that was known as training and development research unit.

What you know as IIPS now, what they were doing, population studies, basically our Institute was being used for that.

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K.V.George:

Even before, just before my coming, Dr. Rajya he was the director of that and he was staying in that directors bungalow because at that time early Dr. Wadia was our director. And he was not staying in the campus. So he used to stay in that building. By the time I came he vacated because IIPS got a separate place. So they moved out. But this campus, compared to this what you see was slightly larger. Because we had a very small narrow strip of road



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K.V.George:

Going to naval area what you call naval depot and things like that. One 352 bus will go in every half an hour till eight o'clock, after that, that also got stopped. Sometime you see some vehicle on the road it could only be a naval taxi, that was the time. And the entire area was all forest like. Barren land. Our Govandi side when you move you will see only marsh area, with water logging. Even there were occasions when people used to tell me okay why don't you buy some area. So one day I went and saw and found only the water. First of all I don't want to commit suicide I said, and came back.

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K.V.George:

But that land fetched after that whoever bought it, lakhs of rupees, crores of rupees they made. That was a time nobody was staying around. Even BARC colony what you call, that was a Janata Colony. All hutment dwellers were staying there. Later when the BARC got developed and turned their housing area what you call BARC colony got enlarged. Then at that time it was Indira Gandhi's time, that also got vacated and they moved to Cheetah camp. What you know now as a colony.

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K.V.George:



But that has no relevance for our area as such but when you look at our campus it didn't have this many trees also this was all like very tall growing grass and also rocks in some places because it is a hillside of BARC. Then after my coming first I was working with the as I told you research department then I moved to sociology of education unit project because Prof. Chitnis also was there and under her I worked. But I had the opportunity to also to work with a Director, Dr. Gore, because he used to come and sit with us even for project work at night when the project work was going on he also came.

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K.V.George:

And there are other research staff who would also be there. We would be working together. There was no difference as now, junior level clerk, otherwise research assistant, all were team work. But what I remember now those days that thrill and excitement we have that was quite different. Because mainly motivation, everybody has that motivation to work in that atmosphere. And Dr. Gore can himself; can I concentrate mainly of Dr. Gore? Yes, because I always not only admire him. I even had a feeling of worshipping like, know, he was an example for everything.

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K.V.George:

Simplicity, honesty, sincerity, everything. And I learnt more from him what you call because I had opportunity at that time, I had to buy certain items, and I will go to him and also for other matters. So he will say this you buy for official account, this you buy on



personal account. Like you know for a sample Ink, what you these days call parker ink for writing because in those days most of the things were written. So he will say okay, for office work you buy one parker ink, and you buy one personal.

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K.V.George:

I said why do you want to do that? He said 'No, that I will be keeping at home. I don't want institute account to pay for it.' So he will pay for that. Everything including pen, pencil anything he uses for personal work also he will consider as a personal matter, he will pay for that. From project work we moved out later because now I was working with them later I had to move to other departments because the project was mostly over after that there were other projects like you know social implication and things like that.

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K.V.George:

Though they wanted me there, the institute also wanted me to move to the department work. So that is how I got more opportunity to work with Prof. Ramachandran, and he was also my neighbour where I was staying in the campus. Because I moved to this campus in 1968. Before that I was staying outside. Prof. Ramachandran is another person, who was very specialised in research work. He was the man at that time, who brought, what you call the computer, in the sense there was no computer. It is only processing unit. So there will be some punching machines and processing that and putting it in that system like that.



0:08:10.683

K.V.George:

But he was an expert. He introduced and he was the man who initiated it mainly for research and computer related work at that time. So from there working in different departments, urban and community development, medical and psychiatry, I had the opportunity to work with Professor Banerjee, again with Prof. Mathew, then urban and rural community development there was a Prof. Kaikobad then Prof. Panwalkar. He was also the head of the department.

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K.V.George:

Then they left the institute. Then the main person at that time I got involved with was one criminology and correctional administration head Prof. Panakkal. He was also fascinated with all the plantation. As I have told you earlier we didn't have many trees except the trees on the road side. The line of trees leading to the hostel. All the remaining area had very tall grass growing. So, we could sell the grass at that time to the nearby *tabela*; one example is there was one area called Panjrapole here, Panjrapole is a place where cow shed where all cows were kept here and they used to come take our grass on some nominal charge. But at least we were happy that, that much grass was cut by them and removed. I also got interested in this because I was myself from a farmer family. So I also had an interest so I started working with him. And there



was another person who came later, one Mr. Amirali, but before coming I was also with him and we started digging pits in this area and in the process grass was also removed.

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K.V.George:

For that we used to take the help of beggars also. There is a Beggars Home, from there the inmates used to come and they work. Also we take some help from Children's Aid Society- there is some children's home. But small work, like caning chairs, and mopping, duster making all that was done here. So they also used to come and help us but there was again some problem with social activists getting involved, why you are making the children work, so we stopped that. Our interest was to help them. By doing these things they earn some money that will be given to them later.

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K.V.George:

Then we stopped, but beggars home also the people while coming there was a lot of problem. But in the beginning stage they all helped out including our students because for students there was no what you call at that time field work forum. So, on their field work day, some of them who can't go to the field they will work here and they will also help in digging and they had to dig a big pit sometimes you get big stones also from that, because they were all rocky sites. They also removed that. Many of the students at that time were not like you see youngsters now



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K.V.George:

They were all either deputed otherwise who had gone and joined somewhere from there they come. Specially in criminology and correctional administration, medical and psychiatric, family and child welfare, urban and rural community development board, some of them were deputed students that time. Because we also appreciate writing because by taking the deputed candidates we need not worry about their employment later stage. Because they will go back and join with a promotion, most of them.

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K.V.George:

So we didn't have like you know what we have the recruitment, campus recruitment, in those days. So they will complete the course and go back. And even you will see many of them coming from what you call charity organizations, or NGOs, including priests. Because in those days, priests mainly came because they also need not worry about employment. They will complete and go back and join the same seminary. That was the system at that time.

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Interviewer:

There were such a less number of students on the campus at that time, as compared to now. What was the environment like in the evenings. I mean what would students do, who lived on campus?

0:12:59.047

K.V.George:

As I told you this area, entire area was like forest and dangerous, especially for girls to move out. But they also enjoyed, because most of them were very serious in their studies. They were committed in social work if they were even from other fields. They also look for opportunities to work for others. Even in the evening most of them, priests, they assemble other students and read bibles, otherwise any religious context which is not only Christian but also other religions. Because there was opportunity even for Buddhism, Hinduism, even Muslims, Islam, everything they discussed and combine everything to their, what you call, prayer hall in any of the room and sit there and do the things.

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K.V.George:

Students I think spent more of their time, leisure time meaningfully in those days compared to the present scenario I feel. Because they come with a critical objective, completing the course, also learn more to join their particular organization or some other place. But now I don't say that present students are useless they are also equally good but at the same time their main motive is to get a degree.



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K.V.George:

Many of them if you look now who come may be from an affluent group so job also is a second criteria. First is according to me is getting a degree that also with a Tata Institute brand getting if they want a job is not a difficult at all. So those days it wasn't like that most of them come either they are already employed otherwise they are senior level. Most of the students were like that, because they are deputed.

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Interviewer: So Sir, what was the student teacher relationship like at that time?

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K.V.George:

At a very personal level. Because now you may not be able to reach out to the teachers. In those days even after the studies hours you will see the students sitting in the cabin of the teachers and discussing even in group or individual because there was two three type of systems- one is group work, case work, in the case work you have to also discuss some matters. Sometimes personal there was nobody called as counselor in those days. So they used to discuss with the teachers, their respective teachers.

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K.V.George:



So I felt that their relation was very good even better than now, what you see. Mainly because their relation, discussion, all were focusing on the particular specialization. Because I have seen they didn't have what you call particular working hours or study time. Either they will be here, otherwise will be in library, or after library time they will be sitting, assembling on the porch or otherwise the quadrangle, or with the teachers. Otherwise they will be moving. I found that they were spending their time very meaningfully.

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K.V.George:

Also if they are social work group they will go to the service staff quarters area and try to meet the children and also their parents and see their well being they also believed in social work, whatever they studied, should start at home first. Then go forward to other places. If there is anybody falling sick there was no one like now we have except the warden, but all students go together otherwise, help each other, even they come to us, we also go. There was nothing like a, you know, it is so and so, we need not worry. Very good relation they maintained. and also according to me they spent their time very meaningfully, and they enjoyed the life. Sometime when they leave there will be very emotional scenes you will see them crying and weeping and embracing including along with the workers, service staff, otherwise, staff, because all had a personal touch. Because everyone knew each other including the students. The students were not considered as just students. We all felt... because I was also at that time at their age. But now also when I grew old I always felt that they all are my children. That kind of feeling.



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K.V.George:

So it was very pleasant. That is why I am still here I feel because I always had a fascination about helping people including the students. So, according to me they spent their time very meaningfully and they had ample opportunity, and they go for hiking trekking, and all to the BARC hills also, students. Many times we have to catch them because they are not supposed to go to that side because it will be dangerous, there will be snakes, and even sometimes some other kind of problem also we have to face. But they manage, somehow.

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Interviewer: Do you remember any mischief on campus, any anecdotes, any incidents about some students?

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K.V.George:

There were many but I won't talk about that because it must be confidential. I had many opportunity of facing such situations and sometime helping them. Sometime even stopping them from that particular stage. I go with the warden sometime because I was also the establishment in charge in the later stage. First I told you I was working with sociology, then with departments, and from 1972 I was in charge of establishment. That time there were not many people working here, so we had to take care of



everything including transport maintenance, welfare of the students or other activities. Giving all facilities to the students, as well as staff, and faculty, director's bungalow, and all other residential areas. So I felt that I am blessed by having, thus getting such opportunity to serve the people. So all students come sometime when they are facing problems and even ask how I can solve this. Even I give some techniques, and solution how you can go about it.

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K.V.George:

So that way even now I maintain some good contact with students, old students, they even send greetings on new year, otherwise Christmas, or Diwali, like, even I also exchange, reciprocate, many of them have even reached such a high position like deans, other directors, or principals of places, even executives. But they also had offered me some position in their company and all that but I refused to go. I wanted to continue with the institute. Somehow I enjoyed my working here and I had fascination. Here I found something quite different and I had personal touch also because I am supposed to take care of their, what you call bungalows, and their gardens. So I go to their bungalows and even Dr. Gore's wife was also a social worker.

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K.V.George:



So both of them had an interest in helping people. He was never worried about their position and status conscious. He is a very simple person. And he talks less, but his silence always talks volumes.

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K.V.George:

His way of simplicity I would say, in his bungalow, now we have a new, but in those days students had shortage of funds. Resources were limited, so at that time of rainy season like in your hostel and all what you see every time is leakage. Monsoon time it is a horrible condition in the campus. So first we will be worried about his bungalow so we will try to do some monsoon treatment. So he will say stop, don't do anything here first you do for hostel. Then residential areas, then campus, all other places and last only you come here.

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K.V.George:

We say no, water is coming here, 'you don't worry we will manage with buckets'. So he will keep buckets and manage. That is how, because it only gives a message, this is what I say, he doesn't speak but his silence also speaks volumes. In the sense you have to take care of all this before you come. That means first he wants to give priority for other work. the same way, as a director he can demand all facility, all vehicle, driver and all. Institute had given him a car, but he knew driving so since he knew driving whenever he went for



personal matters, he will drive himself, for a stroll. Otherwise go with his wife, or something, he doesn't take driver from the institute.

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K.V.George:

When he goes for any official business he will inform in advance through his P.A. But these drivers are also humans. Sometimes they forget otherwise go late, he will not wait for that, he will immediately engage a taxi and go. But he doesn't complain. Driver will be very much worried that this has happened so next time onwards he will try to go in advance and wait there. But he never complained that why the driver did not come.

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K.V.George:

The same way I have found many occasions when he take a driver for personal... suppose he is going to attend a function, see he won't like to drive himself he takes a driver, at that time when he comes he will pay him. Actually he need not to pay because he is institute driver. But still he will make the payment. These kind of things were quite inspiring to see his attitude towards everything.

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K.V.George:

I would say Dr. Gore was believing in what you call small is always beautiful. I would say this is my feeling. So he wanted to restrict the growth of the institute and you see



whatever it is should be excellent. At the same time Dr. Armaity Desai wanted more expansion at the same time she was also working hard for mainly resources. Because earlier we had one problem in meeting our maintenance, because we were not actually with the government at that time. and later we became a deemed university, still we had limitations for flow of funds.

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K.V.George:

Then Dr. Armaity Desai came and she was a very hard working person at the same time in her time lot of development took place. More than that, all employees were benefited by her initiatives. All the dining hall boys were temporary, they were all casual, they came from children's home, otherwise beggars home and places like that. All of them were made permanent.

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K.V.George:

Even our institute casual workers were made permanent. And she fought with government and other sources and got everything regularized. She went for I would say even begging for sources, even with many Parsi families, that is how we got Naoroji campus. And there were two other buildings, bungalows in Bandra one of Mrs. Vakil another one of Mrs. Bharucha because of her direct contacts and influence. And many funds started flowing in including corporate funds in her time. And with that more expansion started.



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K.V.George:

Actually in 1985-86 we got 100 acres of land in Tuljapur, that is the time when Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was the prime minister and I think Mr. Sharad Pawar was chief minister of Maharashtra. Because of their initiative we got it. But we didn't have resources so we had to keep it like that for some time and some politicians actually wanted to force the government to take it back because TISS was not doing anything so why not take it back. Now you know all the success that has happened on that campus.

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K.V.George:

She is also you know a wonderful person and I would say I had an opportunity of working with Dr. Gore and his wife in a different way, but with Dr. Armaity Desai, she was also a person who loves everyone. Dr. Gore and his family also used to go and see all the children and the campus people and in distress they also help whatever way they can. But her style was quite different. Because Dr. Gore I told you was very silent, even what is happening on his side he will not worry. He will be just keeping his one track and go. But in her time it wasn't like that.

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K.V.George:

She will be looking around and even stop and talk to you even whoever come on her way. And even ask their well being and also sometime shout at them, that also happened. One



example I tell you once I was also with her for discussing and because she was going for some programme or conference so I wanted to discuss with her before going so I was accompanying her. In the way there were two students they were moving in an uncomfortable, what you say, not a decent way. So she ran towards them and stopped them and asked them what are you people doing. You have to maintain a decorum of the campus this is not the way to behave. In future if I see I will rusticate you. After that I found change in the entire students in their movements. But she used to give full freedom to the students and even she will go and attend all the functions students are arranging.

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K.V.George:

She is a person who encourages the students to have activities and join them but in the joining there was also reason because she wants to know if they are behaving well. Then she also knows yes they need some freedom so after some time she will go away that is how she was. She encouraged students... also into the staff club, even union, in her time even union were troublesome. In Dr. Gore's time he didn't have problem of managing the employees, because employees were very timid type I would say not a very aggressive... and by the time he was going because he didn't I could not say give much for the employees as such because he always believed in spend as less as possible... it is public money. Should not abuse it or misuse it like that. But in Dr. Armaity's time I would not say if she did that. She also realized that what is being given here is much less as compared to what is in the outer world. So she fought for that, got things sanctioned and many development activities took place including the benefits to the employees.



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K.V.George:

She introduced many facilities like welfare activities, welfare facilities, including day care centre, welfare fund for employees, even many gifts. After certain years now you know there are many facilities been given after completing certain number of years.

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K.V.George:

She considered even including her servants, not as servants. Even including me I found I used to go to their house, when I go I had a practice of going and removing my shoes and all when I enter. So she and even including her father used to say you wear your shoes and come, because my house is not so clean for you to keep your shoes out, like that. Because they always give respect to all. Also treat them equal. Because that may be the culture the Parsis usually have, its possible that is the reason.

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K.V.George:

Dr. Desai had many servants at her home to take care of her father, mother, but all of them were not only well paid, but also give them provident fund and even some kind of saving and also keep some money for their account. Even now also they are treated as their own children. When she was here I was always going to her



bungalow and taking care of matters. so I had a great occasion and not only that I had also opportunity to know more from the PA's of Dr. Gore and Dr. Armaity Desai because their secretaries were also very close to me. So I knew how things were.

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Interviewer:

Sir you spoke about students and functions students used to do, the cultural activities on campus, will you tell us a little about what used to happen?

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K.V.George:

In Dr. Gore's time because the students group was little, a mature group, I would say, elderly group, and there were not much celebration as such but by the time she came, she also encouraged the students and there was a programme for everything. but she didn't want any kind of you know religious activities to have much more dominance. Otherwise all including like Parsi New Year, or Onam otherwise Diwali or Ganesh Chathoorthi, including, in her time we started having a Ganapthi statue, being a, Ganesh utsav time immersed and all that.

0:35:59.120K.V.George:

She used to give us give maximum facilities for the people who are participating otherwise for immersion while taking including she will come out and all the students will go and there was fund given, collection and all, for regularizing she used to tell keep



the fund in the institution to control and whatever money they want let them take otherwise where ever possible give money. Even Onam time also she will come for sharing.

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K.V.George:

Even Parsi festival, sometimes she also spent money from her pocket and gave. Yes, even midnight mass, even those days, for Christmas, she will be there. More than anything her commitment and her concern about the students and the faculty I would say. We had Bombay riots, you remember most of the killing and all had taken place and a particular minority were mainly focused. At that time we used to give special protection to the particular families and also move at night as all students, faculty, and residents groups in rotation group by group, batch by batch, will move including her.

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K.V.George:

She will be in every group. At least to begin with, and see they are moving around with torch and light and all, because you know some people may come attacking so we wanted to be vigilant. That is the time, she, I don't know how much strength she had to face because you know if I am in one group after that I will be completely tired. But she had quite good energy and moved around and took care of things. She wanted to protect our students and staff members. Even at that time the vehicles were not going out, but still she used to go out and see things. What is happening.



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K.V.George:

I am not an expert in these matters, let me tell you, I am a small person, but I felt always Dr. Gore and if it's compared with Dr.Armaity Desai, they were both really good pillars of this institute. There were other people who came later, but now the present director we need not to say now you all know about that. I don't want to get into that because you know, but in between two persons came like Mukherjee and R.R. Singh, they had been here only for a short period, so they could not do much.

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K.V.George:

But these two were there and in that time I would say according to me Dr. Gore was I would say an academician rather than an administrator, whereas, Dr. Armaity Desai was both I would say academician and administrator, but I would say more administrator. Because in Dr. Gore's time there was no reason for him to get involved, he always believed that administration means registrar and others will take care of it, so sign the paper. That is okay.

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K.V.George:

Whereas she will look into everything, including spellings and grammar of letters and ask



us retype or redo. This type of computer and all came now, before that it was all on typewriters. But she used to write letters herself because she had her own ideas.

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Interviewer:

Sir, I wanted to ask towards the end, you have been here since the 60's and the institute will complete its 75 years. So you have seen the last 30-40 years...

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K.V.George:

In the 46 years from 1972 I am very much involved in the administration. As an all rounder I had opportunity to work with all, also take care of, be a part of developmental activities. After retirement, I continued to be here. In fact they wanted me to continue in this institute itself for 2-3 more years, about 2 and a half years I continued here only. Then I left the institute, but still I was interested in working and also institute was keen on so they wanted me to come back.

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K.V.George:

But I told them I don't want to be in the institute here again anymore. Then they said why not go to Tuljapur. So on that I was also keen on working for the institute then I went there and there we completed work of 25 buildings, that's also over now, after that I wanted to quit, then Professor Parasuraman, with his kindness he said no, why not you be



here. In fact I wanted to go, I said no, I don't want to be in the old campus because people who worked with me are all gone.

0:42:34.767

K.V.George:

I felt I should not be a part of this anymore because you know others should get opportunity to do their work. Some of them were working with me or under my control but they are all doing a wonderful job, I should not be any kind of hassle for that then he said no, take care of that campus and see its facilities and maintenance and other matters. So I am there in that campus.

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Translator:

Sir, I wanted to ask you, it's been so many years, what keeps you still in TISS?

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K.V.George:

Mainly I would say, for me I would see, because all the plants, mainly I am a horticulturist, I have done a small course on that. I was also I told you, I was a farmer. I got opportunity to work with Professor Panakkal from that time with other people like Amir Ali and other people who are experts in the garden. So I got a fascination of plantation, even in Tuljapur ,we were doing that. More than 2007 plants were planted



in my time. When you go there you will see the difference. It will be more wooded and with greenery, otherwise it was barren land. So I had a fascination and also people are loving type. I wanted to give my maximum service to the people. At the same time, people are also nice to me. You know, friendly and maybe because of our social work approach and friendliness, people are open and you get opportunity to serve. So I continue to be here but I don't know so long god helped me to be fit otherwise, fine. I am glad the institute is going well.

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K.V.George:

And we have resources and funds flowing in and also there is every opportunity to grow further. So now you know there is one more, under Lakshmi Lingam, our Hyderabad project also is doing well. Tuljapur also, and other places, everywhere thing are doing well, going well.

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Interviewer:

Sir, what, in the Platinum jubilee year, what message would you like to give to TISS.

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K.V.George:

Earlier, mainly this is known as a social work institution, rather than social science though we have written Tata Institute of Social Sciences, mainly originated from Social



work. So still I feel we should be focusing on that, you be in any field but social work is a main focus. And do the service without expecting anything and our system should not be only preaching because we are an institution who are training and teaching but we should also practice. Because that is what I would say my message is in a humble way.

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K.V.George:

You should be the example first, because I always believed in that. You be example to others, then automatically things will fall into place, everybody will become alright, the entire country also. That is the one message I would say, try to be more.