



Mr. N.R. Palve

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Camera/Sound: Divya Cowasji

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Mr. N.R. Palve is a retired gardener from TISS. He joined the Institute in 1974 and retired in 1999.



SG: Sir, begin by introducing yourself, and tell us when you came here...

NRP: I am N.R. Palve. I worked as a daily wage labourer in 1967 here. In 1974, I became a permanent employee. In those days, our daily wage was Rs. 2 a day. After that, it increased to Rs. 2.50. After 2.50, it increased to Rs. 3. When I became a permanent employee, my monthly salary was Rs. 50. It was the basic income at the time. Around the time, 200-225 was the usual salary. We were happy even with that much. The entire campus was like a jungle, with the tall grass. We used to work there.....at the time we used to work for Sir JJ Panakal. He was a very nice man. He really guided us. From that time, we used to work with people who were from Baker Home-----and children of—Chiddar (Cheshire) Homes-----

We helped them and taught them as well. Here, when there was a conference or a meeting, they needed me more. Now, I run a shop as well, but not at that time. Then we all used to do this work, bring in flower pots and decorate the place. And all these plants here are all what I have grown. Panakal Sir used to call for me whenever plants were needed. He used to take us there, and we would bring the plants back. Since the plants and trees, it has gotten cooler here. It used to be very hot. It was a complete jungle, no plants. The Director M.S. Gore was a divine gentleman. He was a very nice man. Workers would go straight to his office without looking around and wandering. All the workers were intimidated by him. You would not find a single man in the veranda. We used to give him that much respect. If he found any garbage or piece of paper, he used to pick it up himself and throw it into the dust bin. There was Mr. George also. And he also guided us a lot, he was very nice.

SG: Sir please tell us about how your role here, the kind of work you did, kept changing...

NRP: Initially here, I even had to dig a 4*4 hole. We dug 4 such holes. After that, being a daily wage worker, I even worked as a peon, and has hostel attendant, then painting machine, I even helped with psycho testing. But JJ Panakal gave me work in the garden. I wanted to work in the garden. My father used to work with NN Wadia in Khandala. Since then, when I was a little boy, I've known gardening. There we used to grow seasonal



flowers, here, not so much. The flowers from Khandala used to come here, to Napean Sea road, everyday. But yes, things used to happen.

SG: Sir, you told us that there weren't any plants or trees here...so what was the campus like?

NRP: Then there was just grass. The plants were all wild plants. Panakal Sir planted very good trees and plants, and it brought the temperature down. There weren't too many flowering plants. Nothing happened to the trees when they became big.

SG: How long did it take to grow these plants? How long did that work go on for?

NRP: These trees that are here, they took 7 to 8 years to grow really large. There's Cassia, acacia, raintree and _____ we planted 60 forest trees. All along the area, 60 in number, jackfruit trees. All over , from the directors bungalow..and onwards.

SG: The fruits from the jackfruit trees, they sell them in college...

NRP: Is that right?

SG: Tell us what was Chembur-Deonar like?

NRP: Deonar, the area, there was nothing. The wall that we have now didn't exist. It was a wire-mesh _____ at that time. And the road was not very wide, and the Devi's idol was where the temple now is and the road was very small, narrow road. We were scared to come here. The road was very small.



SG: So where did you live?

NRP: I lived in Deonar Municipal Colony. We came here in '62, soon after I got married.

SG: Could you please tell us more about Gore Sir. You've probably seen Gore Sir, Armaity Desai...

NRP: Yes, all of them....

SG: How did our college change under these different directors?

NRP: When Gore Sir was here, the college didn't have enough funds, and it ran on just what was possible. By the time Armaity Desai came in, they had accumulated some funds. The UGC, government had given some money, Naval Tata provided some money, and the college began to improve. Since Armaity Desai. When Gore Sir was Director, there wasn't much progress. But he was a very nice man. Godlike man... And after that Mukherjee Sir came in. And at that time Parashuram, he was a student. And Prof. Ramchandran, Kurchetkar, KG Desai, RD Naik, who were all professors, he was in their department.

SG: Today we have lots of faculty, over 500-800 students, back then there were a lot less right? What was the campus like?

NRP: At that time, there were fewer professors and students. There were about 200-250 students, not more. Family Child Welfare, Medical Dept., JJ Panakal's CC and The Personnel Management Dept, they all just had 2-4 professors, that's all. And there were 10-15 students in each dept. at that time. _Ms Mathew here was in charge of the medical dept. and KG Desai was in charge of the Personnel management dept. Kurchetkar Sir and Kaikobad Sir was also here. He was very nice. Ramchandra Sir was very nice too. He was the best of them all. Parashuram Sir used to work with RD Naik.



SG: Do you know Hebsur Sir as well?

NRP: Of course I do, he just came. Hebsur Sir, KD Sikka, who has retired now. Singh Sir...after JJ Panakal left, Singh Sir came, right? RD Singh.

SG: Sir, tell us if you interacted with the students.

NRP: Yes. When we would go somewhere to work, then Panakal's student would come with us to help us. Lots of students worked hard with us.

SG: Sir, so you never lived on campus?

NRP: No, I never lived on campus. But I have spent most of my time on campus ever since I came here. Even during Ganpati visarjan, I would do it with Panakal Sir, Gore Sir...

SG: It seems like people on campus live like a family...

NRP: Yes, it's just like a family here. There were no differences between any of us, whether it was the Director, the Registrar, the worker. Workers used to sit on a chair next to the director and drink tea, there were no differences. When there were parties and dinners, we used to sit together and eat, there were no differences.

SG: Sir, how long have you worked here for?

NRP: From 74 to 99 as a permanent employee. And as a daily wage worker, from '67.



SG: So you retired in '99?

NRP: Yes.

SG: Did you come here after that?

NRP: Yes, of course. I came here all the time. My son is here right. He likes the work here. The Tata institute is like a family. The work was very good. All the workers here, whoever it is, they all call me *Maama*. It was like a family. And Santosh now has completed 24-25 years here I think..yes, it is that much. _____

D: Coming to campus after so many years, how do you feel?

NRP: It feels good. It's developed a lot, and it has improved a lot. In our time, there wasn't much improvement. The garden is nice, _the garden and the buildings___ and it has really improved.

SG: Sir, Raj Kapoor's house is right behind us right?

NRP: Yes, when we would go to the canteen to drink tea we used to see them, Raj Kapoor, Rishi Kapoor, Randhir Kapoor. And even they didn't treat us differently, they used to come here. When their daughter got married, they came through here.

SG: Through the campus?

NRP: Yes...

SG: Tell us about it.



NRP: It was their daughter's wedding. They came in from that gate, through the canteen to go out. They were also very nice.

SG: So did students from here go for the wedding?

NRP: Yes, the students went. We can see everything from the canteen, and even from the ladies hostel. They were nice people.

SG: Sir, you've worked here for so many years, is there something that you remember, something that you will never forget, an unforgettable memory?

NRP: How can I forget anything. _____ I like it a lot here.

SG: The Institute began in '36 and it's been 75 years. What do you think it's going to be like in the years to come.

NRP: I think it's good and I think it's going to stay good. The students are good, the professors are good, the workers are good.

SG: Sir, this tree in the middle is a Mango tree. It's dried up now right, when was it planted?

NRP: It was here first, when we came here, it was there, it was a small plant. And everything happens here, to give degrees. Everything happened here. When guests would come, I used to make the flower pots...if you look at the photos you'll know how many there were and what it looked like...