
Dr. Amita Bhide

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My association began by the time I actually came in here as a student. I had completed my Bachelors in Social Work in Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work and at that point there were three options before me. First, joining some of the struggles I was associated with in my Bachelors days. Second, to do an advanced course which was called BMSW which was meant for students who had done only their bachelors in social work. The third was to apply in TISS. At that point in time one of my teachers in Nirmala Niketan advised me to actually apply to TISS because it would offer me something new as an institution.

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My initial days as a student I remember were not very comfortable because I used to find the field work here extremely staid, the students here coming from an altogether different class and not actually rooted in local realities. This bugged me a lot. The best part which I enjoyed about TISS studentship...I remember having three experiences. First, the entire thing of assignments and the tremendous scope that these assignments gave in order to explore new subjects, find out knowledge on your own and I really fell in love with the library. Secondly, my research experience where I got to explore another very challenging subject of nomadic and de-notified tribes and my guide was Dr. Parasuraman. The experience was indescribable. It was absolutely beautiful. Thirdly, while beginning our second year, Jambulpada had a huge flood and the disaster relief work that happened. I accompanied one of the batches during the Jambulpada floods.

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That was my first encounter that this institution can also do something live. These were the three experiences which I thoroughly not just enjoyed but which kind of reaffirmed my belief that this institution is something one can be with and be

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associated with. After my student days also I continued to be associated with TISS in a preliminary way, basically because the department from where I had graduated, Urban and Rural Community Development, was hoping to start a field action project and they had asked me to be a coordinator. In order to start that up and this was in the entire area of livelihoods which is something I had a liking for, which is how I stayed back.

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That project never happened, but in the mean time there was a need to guide certain students for field work instruction. I think going on the other side of the fence, not being a student and being a part of a teaching programme as an instructor and gradually as an assistant professor and a lecturer; I think all these days in Urban and Rural Community Development were experiments because we had two kinds of faculty members in the URCT department. One one hand, Mr. and Mrs. Panvalkar who were really senior and the other part was a whole host of us, young less experienced faculty members but who were all bursting with several ideas about wanting to do new things. I think from that point on it became - be the change you want to be. We were experimenting with a lot of things.

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We plunged into the adult literacy campaign, so that is something all of us contributed to tremendously. We were almost part of all the disaster relief activity which took place in the next five-six years or so. We tried to change the directions and placements of students which otherwise were divided into two groups. There were governmental organisations and there were civil society organisations which were typically doing welfare or broadly speaking development kind of work. We tried to expand that entire package to also include work which was movement oriented, struggle oriented, which was also trying to look at conflict as also an active arena of

development practice. That was very interesting.

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It also, therefore, gave us new opportunities to revisit the curriculum. I can't tell you the kind of freedom that one experiences. From that moment on, TISS became an extremely enjoyable place. In terms of pedagogical experiments, we initiated the field study trip within the school of social work programme. This field study trip was actually where we would teach certain components of course on field. There was a group of faculty, we were in an extremely challenging terrain working with sets of different organizations and where teaching was happening simultaneously and students could see their teachers also confronting each other, practitioners confronting faculty, faculty confronting practitioners all of us learning together, analyzing together. It was an absolutely beautiful teaching experience therefore which consolidated several of their learnings which happened through the two years.

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The other thing that really stands out for me is also our participation in the adult literacy programme. In 1986 we had the adult literacy programme and following which in 1990 the central government declared this campaign for adult literacy and which took things in a very different mode. Especially in this part of the city - M Ward, there was this organization called CORO. It didn't have the structure of an organization at that point in time but basically was an umbrella kind of a forum where different kinds of groups like corporates and individuals who wanted to do something. Everyone kind of got together and there was a simultaneous television programme that was happening called Akshardhara which also encouraged many of these adult learners and there were all of these campaign kind of teaching learning activities which were happening.

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We were all involved in that and I think being in that campaign exposed you to several things. One, the tremendous aspiration of several of the Dalit communities which were located over here in order to become literate and specially the struggle of the women. The kind of lives these women had. Two, in functional terms, one assumes that literacy does not matter when one is past certain stages of adulthood. It matters in admitting to a school where there are so many people who don't have birth certificates. It confronted you with a dynamic reservoir of things which all became different kind of challenges. To work through this was something that was very interesting.

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Thirdly, there was a spate of malnutrition deaths in Melghat in 1998 and after this spate of childhood deaths, one of the things was...there were several students who were thinking we need to do something, we need to at least understand what this malnutrition issue is. We gathered some funds from people within the Institute and outside and a group of students and a group of faculty- all of us went to Melghat. We talked, we lived with several of the community, we split into different groups, stayed with different communities and one of the things we started understanding is what the outside world understands as malnutrition is something different and there is a problem. For them malnutrition is located in a different dynamic of a struggle for survival which the community itself is going through. This prompted us to take up a research project.

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This actually set up a beautiful circuit, you have research, you have teaching, you have all the components of formal academics, but when you have a live connection with the field you can build a give-and-take reaction which can be mutually beneficial

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and extremely enriching. It is one thing that brings complexity and that became like the character. That is one thing that has sustained me through whatever. I became a faculty member here in 1994 that is something that has sustained me throughout.

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You called me here to talk about my experiences in the urban development field and all the experiences I have talked of so far have all been in rural areas, disasters. Adult literacy has been one experience which was urban but all of these are tribal. This is also because as a department it had this tremendous scope. You are here, you are there, urban and rural and so there were all kinds of things you were involved in. As a part of it I also started realizing two things: After Mrs. Panvalkar resigned the teaching of urban development as a subject came to me.

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This urban development subject I began teaching but I really knew very little about this city that I had grown up in, this city that I loved and had already several interesting encounters with. Yet I had not really worked in the city. As I was teaching this subject I consciously began to pursue alternative modes of engagement with the city, began associating myself with certain organizations which were Committee for the Right to Housing, the other was YUVA, particularly in their urban development kind of component. As I began associating myself with these organizations and their activities I was one person who really liked learning from the field. Every time the field opens up new things for learning to you. The most frightening thing was the demolitions. In 1994 there was this huge spate of demolitions. Just as we have seen in 2002-2003 but in 1994 there was an international habitat conference which was being organized in Istanbul in 1996. In Mumbai there was a huge battle that was going on in Borivali National Park.

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At the same time in Daulat Nagar in Santacruz there was this demolition which really didn't get much publicity because it was not a long court battle, but actually a battle on field. Moving through both of these struggles, trying to bring some form of the dimension to what is happening during an eviction. The process of why there is a need for these kinds of brutal actions by the state against its own people. The understanding of the complexity of this entire issue of people who are being divided by datelines by communities the way in which housing rights struggles had mobilized them had become a strong entity within the civil society field. At the same time the entrance of the political society into slums as a terrain in an extremely strong manner. I think all of these agendas had started surfacing along at that point of time which kind of really sucked me and at this time, I feel, also began a struggle as to how to represent these kind of struggles, how to represent these kind of voices, how to bring in this entire striving for justice within the city to a much more visible platform.

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Because it is an urban development course with two credits, 30 hours, may be short field work kind of a thing, all of this started becoming too small. There was no scope within the way urban and rural communities' development was conceptualized. I think many of my colleagues were also going through similar dilemmas. If you would have see the structure of the URCD curriculum at that time it had a very interesting tension. It was located in this field of social work which itself was kind of... at one level it's a profession which has come in from the West trying to derive and create an independent Indian identity for itself... at the same time all the course titles therefore you want to maintain this independent identity. There is a whole bunch of courses, nearly half the course is straddled with these kinds of extremely basic inputs and there was the other part of the course where we were trying to do in URCD at least A-Z of development practices.

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Exposure to all kinds of sectors and all kinds of things: so one course on rural development, one course on urban development, one course on communal issues, one course on communication it was like one huge span... something on co-operatives... everything seemed important and everything seemed... “Hey we can’t do justice to this.” I think it is at this kind of a tension that we kept on grappling for a fair amount of years and there really didn't seem to be... how does one resolve it?

If one looks at the entire structure of the Institute at that point in time, you had research units and you had these two massive teaching programmes. On one side you had social work and other side personal management and industrial relations and that is it.

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There were whole hosts of people and faculty who wanted to contribute to teaching, but couldn't. Teaching was no component of their programme. On the other hand we were trying to bring them and pull them into the programme which was something that they never desired. One was the classical examples of this is called rural camp which I coordinated for about 8 years and those 8 years have been like a journey of ever increasing frustrations because the way it was conceptualised earlier was this unimaginable kind of immaculate planning at one level. You would have 4-5 student groups not more than 20 -25 students in one group accompanied by two faculty members, one male and one female, one junior one senior, one from a research unit, one from a social work teaching department.

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So doing all of these combinations, from social work teaching department means we would at least get a certain amount of them, but with respect to getting faculty

members from research units, it became like a huge struggle and obviously because for them it used to be... we are not teaching any course, there is no credit, they seem to be getting from a rural camp. You are moving away from this campus for 10-12 days and being with the students 24x7 is not a joke and not in very easy conditions and most importantly how does it matter? It does not link to their work mandate.

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There were all kinds of experiments ranging from creating rosters to implementing those rosters to getting directives and missives from the Director's office and whatever. I am just kind of using this... this was the kind of struggles it had come up to and it was high time that we came through this. In that sense I think when we came to the restructuring moment. It has done well and the kind of things it has accomplished, it's been tremendous. I think the social work programme in all senses and just my experience with URCD itself, URCD has given me a whole lot and I think this entire wide exposure, entire spectrum of issues, spectrum of things to be done, it would have not been possible unless URCD was there.

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I also am full of appreciation of the fact of the kind of perspective it lends you and also the kind of scope to make a change to really experiment was given to us. But at the same time one also realises the social work programme itself is kind of structured in a particular way and within society social work has particular names labels, social reality and the need for social response was also growing much more complex and that is what one was realising and which is why I said, all of us were grappling with the fact that whatever you are experiencing is to be condensed within a two credits, thirty hour course and nothing seems to be doing justice to what your experience is and what is actually being taught. So that link which was envisaged in some initial parts as an organic link between practice and research, that organic link was being

threatened.

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I think restructuring has given us an opportunity to recreate that organic link, uncover and explore the growing complexities of social practice. Today one is realizing that almost all aspects of life are being modified in many ways and which is what I think ... especially dealing with even groups who are vulnerable, who are marginalized. It is not okay to deal with only particular forms of marginalization and that to only the micro forms of marginalization. There is a need for many more comprehensive strategies to emerge. I think if one is locating the several programmes within TISS, I locate it within this kind of a changing context of the world also and the changing context of practice.

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In some ways I think all of us are rooted in social work, our roots are there. At the same time one also wants to link these roots to more institutionalised forms of discrimination, operation, exploitation and I think that is something that is very interesting. I think I have myself also grown in this entire journey because many of my earlier field experiences it was all practice at the same time I also realised one is doing very little reflection and one is getting very little time in all of this continuous teaching, inputting kind of business, where we ourselves are also growing, we get into a groove in doing this teaching. I think the restructuring has also given us that space, besides teaching you also reflect, you also write, you also research and that you contribute to this world in also the more conventional academic ways besides the non academic ways. I think both of these are critical. In terms of relating a value framework to this, to me as a person it had grown to such an extent this thing of practice that I noticed this only when we applied for the India China institute in 2002 and I had to submit my CV.

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I had taken my entire being at TISS so much for granted that I had never ever prepared a CV. I wrote in application forms but never prepared a CV and in writing that CV, obviously the most gaping thing at you was the aspect of publications and at the initial part of my being in TISS was about, you are not wise, you need to learn so much more, you need to see so much more. “People who write, people who research, people who publish are people who have fallen from heaven.” You need to get there before you actually do these things. That was the spirit with which one had got engaged into so many things. It was in doing this fellowship I encountered two things about myself that, “Hey, you actually know things and there are many people who think from their discipline, they know things about their disciplines but you seem to be knowing things which connect so many of these disciplines together and yet you are not known, you are not known because you have not written.”

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You have never written because you have never felt wise, but all of these people have written and I think it was very interesting coming to that realization and coming to also a point of confidence that one could write. That what one was thinking had some merit perhaps or could have some merit, that first of all whether there is some merit or not, one needs to write consciously also is expressing a certain kind of interest and I think it was a huge aspect. The second thing... I think the fact that the School of Habitat Studies took place, has also in many ways have been a dream come true. And dream not from a personal ambition point of view but also... I spoke to you earlier about these two struggles, Sanjay Gandhi National Park and Daulat Nagar and in both of these places following up with... there have been many more cases of eviction where I have been part of peoples' tribunals etc. I am not even getting into these. The first two experiences and encounters were themselves extremely disturbing for me.

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That's how they stand out in my mind much more than perhaps other encounters.

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The realisation which had come in that you need to think of a response to demolitions that is not just reactive and that you are operating in a world that is not going to listen to you. In 2002 we had made several efforts to even have press conferences, to say that demolitions are not justified, they are a wastage of public resources and they are a deprivation of human rights. We experienced that there was not a single member of the press who was willing to listen to this. Our press conferences would just be to empty halls. With these kinds of experiences, when the press is not coming, one could say that this is corporate interest being ruled. But at the same time it is also when you talk to common people, they are seeing these slum dwellers and these issues as also pitched against their own interest. So obviously there is that kind of a construction that has also happened. Not just through media but through perhaps the players of policies.

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What were the real issues? Is this nature of demolitions, is this nature of evictions different from the evictions that happened in Janta Nagar in 1970's or what happened in Bombay when Bombay was actually being formed. Dharavi was formed or earlier when people were pushed to Shivaji Nagar. These were the questions that I had started exploring. The other part which I had started exploring was if one decided to be proactive and not reactive, what is it that one needs to do? What kind of policy, what are the options that one offers? It is thinking and linking through these one also comes up with a concept that one needs to have a much more comprehensive orientation to human settlements where people are at the centre of all the discussions related to habitats. We need to think of habitat, where all different sectors, water, sanitation, housing, thinking about the economic betterment, thinking about the

environment all of these things actually need to go hand in hand.

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I really appreciate the Institute took this initiative; it is an extremely brave initiative because several of the planning schools in this country have tried to grapple with this integrated vision of habitats and failed at it. They have a competency at doing it whereas at TISS; we only had a tradition of urban studies that also largely urban sociology and nothing else to back it up. At the same time it is this Institute which pioneers an effort to bring multiple disciplines together to think of this kind of initiative to cut across disciplines. I really feel that the kind of visioning that must have happened at that stage... and I was very glad to be part of that small team, though I was not been part of the initial visioning of it, but right from the beginning I am a part of this team which has pioneered habitat. That is how I expressed an interest to join the School of Habitat Studies and I feel that one has come a long way. If one has been tracing this, is one still feeling a link to social work? I do feel a very strong link to social work. It is something that has really rooted me.

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The first things that come to your mind, the first instinct is actually what can be done. That is something that social work has given me. At the same time I also feel privileged that one has been able to take this beyond, to think about what can be done not only at your own immediate level, but also to think at a more strategic level, more comprehensive terms, more proactive terms.

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Q: You had mentioned earlier that right from your student days you were involved in several disaster rehabilitation activities, if you could speak a little more in detail, in

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your student days as well as after you came back to TISS

AB: I was talking about struggles earlier; I have been a part of the Narmada Bachao movement. I have also been associated with the Shramjivi Sanghatana in Thane which works primarily with the issue of bonded laborers and rural laborers and issues related to their wages, their lands being taken away and their land alienation issues. Associated not in an advisory way but I have stayed in villages, I have helped to mobilise communities, I have experimented with all kinds of things right from running schools myself, to being a part of dance troupes and cultural troupes, to joining morchas, to just doing documentation work, recording cases, panchnamas of bonded laborers who have been freed...this is something which I have been a part of. This took on a more organized advocacy initiative called Samarthan which also I was a part of. In Samarthan again, I helped them to consolidate themselves institutionally.

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Again in response to issues related to education as a right, there is a bill around that so one got exposed to a different dimension of, you want to argue for something but how does that become an actuality, what are the dynamics that surround the making of a policy. In terms of disaster management and relief activities as I said in my student days here I was a part of the team which went to Jambulpada - most interesting experience and several facets of it. At one level it was an entire devastation that the flood has caused, devastation that immobilizes people. One day you were comfortable in your own life or maybe struggling through life but you had dignity in terms of your own assets. The next day a disaster converts you into literal beggars. Jambulpada was a whole experience of so many impressions I have as a student. We were students doing manual work, feeling great, because we are doing manual work. We were digging, breaking so that houses would come to foundation level, they had been half swept away, getting hurt in the process and we have the family members whose house

we are helping to come to their foundation level, they themselves running for relief material. The impressions of how these relief materials get distributed and the entire disorganization around them... where people would gather clothes in all kinds of states and would throw them away from trucks and there is a mad scramble for those things that is being thrown from those trucks... there is no dignity in that giving, there is no dignity in that helping and no dignity in that receiving either. So it is something that is extremely disturbing.

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At a third level, the entire effort in organizing health care and the issues related to that, and how a simple thing like organizing it into a more accessible, friendlier kind of a place helps to relieve some of these anxieties. How things such as talking to people and listening to their stories is such a critical component of their entire healing process of getting over the kind of things the disaster has brought to them - Jambulpada was several things. I wouldn't be able to say about the way in which the entire disaster relief was organised because I didn't understand much at that time.

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The next big encounter was Latur - The earthquake in Latur. I was there for nearly a month. I was part of a team which was doing panchnamas. Panchnamas actually meant meeting all the households of particular village and getting the record of all their losses, what were their assets were etc. calculating that loss. It was almost like recounting a whole lost story. It was very bad because the difference between a flood and an earthquake is very clear. The flood has swept off things; there are puddles of water bringing disease on its way. The earthquake was even more shocking because while the entire village was in rubble where fields were standing. My biggest memory in Latur is this: you have standing fields of sunflowers, they were all bright and shiny and everywhere it was like this - It was harvest season. You had villages which had

been converted to rubble, sad stories everywhere. It is like two different, contrasts all together. At the same time also a thing that life goes on.

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The entire Latur earthquake work continued because the scale was huge. It was not just one village it was not two but 50-60 villages in Latur and Osmanabad which had been affected. TISS itself, being a part of the massive study - these panchnamas, was a small part. The entire rehabilitation project that happened thereafter - the learning from that for all of it was huge. Disaster relief I think is learning for you in several ways. It exposes to you so many levels of the human character - the spirit to go on, the spirit to exploit, the spirit to live and still come out strong, the spirit to help and in all its contradictions I think, at its most base level, human character confronts you. It confronts you with what administration can do and what it cannot do. How they co-ordinate, how they do not co-ordinate, the entire politics of relief and how people try to take mileage out of this entire effort. What sustains... because we were part of this massive rehabilitation project for three years... what works, what does not work.

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How much help is necessary and what is the right time to move away. What things can you control and what you cannot control - the entirely political nature of participation of people. Thinking and talking about community participation in entirely apolitical terms and the kinds of turns and shapes given to it when they are actualized through an institutionalised or a state turf was extremely interesting - especially these kinds of crucial decisions. Latur, I remember, was my first exposure to the politics of land and housing also in rural areas. In terms of learning related to thinking about habitat, because one was recreating habitats there, huge habitats, we have created I think a huge disaster in the making, where people may not die due to an earthquake but I'm sure one has completely changed the character of what once was

rural and converted into a urban colonised kind of a habitat. It was something huge.

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The next is Orissa and in Orissa again I was there for three weeks or so. Orissa was the site of a huge cyclonic flood. One entire district had been affected. The most disturbing encounter here was that, the most severely affected people were the Bengali people living on the several of the islands around the shore and they were not actually being reached by the administration. I think TISS students were here for a period of one and a half month in different batches and because we had begun to organize even our interventions well, we could see different parts of the process, we could contribute very concretely to the entire relief process. Eg. The first batch did the task of scoping, assessing what are the possible modes of intervention. The second batch which I coordinated and which was there for about 3 weeks... we basically participated in relief assessment and need assessment in many of the islands and also trying to give ideas for what could happen next.

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The batch which followed actually took up this thing of needs assessment and preparing development plans for each of these islands and in all of this I remember the first batch started its interaction with its extremely active additional collector called Mr. Jha. He was apprehensive what a student lead effort could actually do. He was extremely suspicious of urban people coming into a disaster prone area and them trying to create more difficulties rather than help out the administration. Very testing towards me too. He asked me if I could come along with him, he was doing a tour of some of the islands and I said fine. And we just walked and walked. I think we must have walked roughly 30-35 km on that day just moving through different islands. By the end of that day he began to see and it was not just me I had another 7-8 students with me besides the other students moving in other teams. By the end of this three

week period Mr. Jha was with us.

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He was extremely impressed with the students work. I think these kinds of opportunities are also opportunities to also demonstrate the relevance of something that one is studying, doing so it is the relevance of the institution, the relevance of the teaching programme and because the students are also seeing faculty along with them and living with them and taking decisions. Every night we had these meetings which would go on for 2-3 hours, where we are discussing the kind of experiences that they have had. We used to engage in reflection, what to do what would be the next course of action? Plan out for the next day and this went on for all these days.

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I still have some of the students who write to us. For them, the most memorable experience has been this experience in Orissa. Basically what I realize is - there are different ways in which our studentship makes sense to us and we will not remember all parts of it and definitely the courses are not something we will remember, but these are experiences that mould you for life. I really feel that TISS has been so embracing of these opportunities. Not that there should be disasters that we get these opportunities, but it has been so embracing of these opportunities is something that is extremely vital, extremely critical. I think we should keep on doing so.

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Q: What have been some of the challenges on the field that TISS has learnt from?

AB: In Jambulpada I was a part of the 2nd or 3rd batch of students, I went again in another batch. Basically there were two things which were interesting in Jambulpada that we responded. We were there. We in fact already had a field action project there. At the same time one also sensed that there was this tension that because we are there,

relief would come to us. A huge struggle in Jambulpada because there were also other faculty members who didn't have official field action projects, but they were also involved in interventions in Raigad district.

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In Jambulpada, the administration was also very lax and I think the state administrations have learnt over a period of time. This is what I have seen in all these three instances. There was hardly any response from the administration. What are we doing? We are basically just absorbing all the relief and while it may be good for Jambulpada, if one is taking into account that there are 40 other villages in Raigad that are affected what happens? The implications of these? So this was one tension which also erupted as conflict in Jambulpada itself.

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A second tension which I realize in Jambulpada is at one level you have students and the student energy which is coming. Student energy which has formal curricular needs. They have to come in short batches 5-7 days. They want to do something concrete. What are the tasks you are doing? Removing mud, taking things away. On the other hand is this going to be sustainable? What is the impact that this has on people? As I told you people are further immobilized into inaction. I remember my experience as four of us students were digging away and the family whose house we are digging was sitting nearby and they are having their meals and we are foregoing our meals, saying this is disaster we cannot think of ordinary things like food. There are these two different mental sets which are playing and it's a struggle.

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It was very interesting that even at that point in time when we started realising also that we need also to channelise our energies to other things e.g. talking to people,

getting them to begin this kind of a healing process, expressing their sorrows which brings them back from numbness to also taking action over these things. The third thing I would say tension in Jambulpada which became evident was again flood. Villages in the plains were destroyed but the indirect impact of this was actually faced by the tribals who were living in the hills. In terms of asset loss the tribals didn't face a loss. They actually had very few assets to begin with. On the other hand their livelihood was all being supported by these farms in Jambulpada in the plain villages.

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That livelihood is lost. They have nothing to eat. They have nothing to eat because the source from where they ate is destroyed. How does one reach out to these dimensions? Also ensure that relief reaches out to those segments for which the impact of disaster is not very well recorded. They are not direct impacts in that sense. It's like a more indirect impact. These I think were clearly some of the challenges here. In Latur it was like several other factors that added to the challenges. One, the scale was huge. One was talking about two districts Latur and Osmanabad large parts of which were affected and if you could count the number of villages- it goes to well over 100. The second thing was the complexity of the traditional building style had actually proved itself unfeasible. The local houses were built of stone and on the roof they used sheets on which they loaded stones. The basic cause of all this destruction was considered to be this kind of construction.

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In a situation where something traditional is not working, there is obviously a need to bring in something new. If one wants to bring out something sustainable. What is sustainable was another question all together. Latur brought in this huge avalanche of all kinds of stake holders who wanted to reconstruct habitats. If you wanted to reconstruct, you needed huge sums of money, huge sums of money then we had the

World Bank coming in, we had the Maharashtra government coming in, a bunch of donors coming in. The word NGO which became so popular and everyone talking about peoples participation so there were almost 100-120 NGOs operating in Latur at that point in time and this is something which has continued to persist. You don't see many of them now, many of them are fly by night operators, so that itself becomes another part of the challenge: which initiatives does one consider genuine? Which initiatives are involved? Which initiatives should not be involved? The shades of ideology which come in the agendas which come in with all this kind of relief, the co-ordination among all these actors to ensure that relief gets spared equally.

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Challenges of relief are immense and I would say asset loss and one most disturbing incident that I remember.

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I was talking about these dimensions which often get ignored. I was sitting for a panchnama in one of the places and there were these old women who were talking to me and they were extremely upset over the fact that.... the practice over there was, especially where the people had smaller houses, married couples would sleep inside the house and the older people and children would sleep outside. Very young children slept along with their mothers inside the house. When the earthquake happened many of the old people were spared while the married couples and some of the very young ones were actually who bore the brunt of the casualties. In this particular house the son died and the youngest child also died. There were two more children who were sleeping with their Dadi outside the house, they got spared. This Dadi could hear a faint voice coming from under the rubble, it was her daughter in-law. So she first lent her hand but realised that her son is dead, so upset with all of this that, she tried to take another piece of stone and put the daughter in law back in. How can my son die and this woman be alive was her entire thing.

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This is extremely difficult to take in. you are seeing these kinds of people and you are still calculating their asset loss as if nothing... It is very difficult to maintain neutrality. As I said a disaster brings in all of these shades of character as much. You had so many men who got re-married because all their children had died. So this thing that, to sustain I need to have someone of my own, so get married and reproduce quickly. All of these instincts were also brought in by the disaster. Dealing with this whole thing is something. I feel here TISS had learnt what it can do best and which would be the most strategically relevant is to do a loss assessment and in Latur we did this first. In Jambulpada our thing was doing all of these things. Relief, manual things and we were not experts in this. Neither did we know what we were breaking, was that the correct thing to break not, neither were we capable of eight hours of manual labor.

One day for the romance of it, think its fine, but it is very difficult to sustain.

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Novices doing these kinds of things at the same time one is doing things. Something one is capable of doing well and contributing systematically. I think that is something that we really did well in Latur. A challenge obviously here is assessing what kind of loss? What is meant by loss? Quantifying that loss and all kinds and ranges of loss. Obviously here the thing is also, what do you rely on? In a situation like an earthquake, your house is thrown into rubble. You are not able to demarcate your four walls. In Marathwada most of the villages are closed villages so you have houses which are attached to each other. You are not able to distinguish your four walls from your neighbour's four walls.

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What about other livelihood loss? Goats, cattle where do we show them? Supposed someone says 40 or 100 or 2 or 3 is that the word one is relying upon? There are all of these kinds of challenges. There are multiple claimants to a house. The minute people sense that there is going to be some kind of a relief package a comprehensive loss package you have several of the stakeholders who are not in the village who also come back. So relatives who live in the city, now there is an asset which is going to be built so they come back. Do they have some share? What about people whose assets are not destroyed? Does one compensate them? If you look at some of the Dalit households or if you look at some of the Dhangar households they were all houses which were made of *kaccha* materials. Now here the loss of life had not happened and the earthquake did not break, but their livelihoods are such that they deserve compensation. I think there is a historical injustice with which they are living. So how does one make do justice to them?

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All these questions... i think even doing a survey in these kinds of circumstances throws several challenges not just for the designer of the survey, but I would say at all levels there are decisions that are being taken. They are by the surveyors or the students themselves each of who operates within their own mode of thinking and how does one do justice. All of these decisions are being taken care of at all levels and the way they will be played out is in the way the policy unfolds. One has to be continuously aware of the ethics of all of this. I think it is a huge aspect and challenge by itself.

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In Latur another thing was, we learnt to work with the administration that was something that was extremely interesting and I would say a growing experience. We had a faculty member from the institute who also worked with the district administration for well over a year after that. I think there was learning on our part and I think there was learning on the part of the system which also learnt to address disasters in a comprehensive way, but in a very unsustainable way. Very unsustainable.

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I think in Orissa our growth was one that we learnt to work with administration. We learnt to work with civil society. We learnt to first assess for ourselves, what are the strategic modes of intervention. I think we have learnt from each of these and I think the culmination that all of this perhaps in the formation of the JTCDM is something I see as very desirable. Pulling together so many of these experiences and the learning from these together.