



Dr C.A.K. Yesudian

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Camera/Sound: Ms. Shilpi Gulati

Date: Circa 2011

Place: TISS, Mumbai

Keywords: Ph.D programme, Unit for Urban Studies, Unit for Extra Mural Studies, Dr. Gore, Prof. Mathew, Dr. Armaity Desai, certificate course in Hospital Administration, Ford Foundation, Masters in Hospital Administration and Health Administration, School of Health Systems Studies, London School of Economics, collaboration, Alma Ata Declaration, community health, M.Ph in Social Epidemiology, M. Ph in Health Policy, Economics and Finance

Dr C. A. K. .Yesudian is Professor and Dean, School of Health System Studies. He did his M.A from Madras and Ph.D from TISS in 1978. He joined as faculty in 1979 in the Department of Extra-Mural Studies, taking over as its Head in the following year. He has been instrumental in the genesis of the School of Health Systems Studies which began as a Certificate Course in Hospital Administration on 1980.



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Q: To begin with, can you tell us how your association with TISS began?

Y: I came to TISS on August 1st, 1975 as the first batch of M. Phil scholars. But later, within six months, I shifted to the PhD programme and completed my PhD in 1978 and worked one year as a research officer in the unit for Urban Studies and later I was selected as a faculty. To be precise I was selected as a faculty on the 11th of June, 1979. So, from 1979 onwards till today (the interview was conducted in 2011) I am a faculty here.

Q: How was the atmosphere in the campus during your student days?

Y: Today the campus is more populated with few hundred faculty, staff and thousand-plus students. In those days, there were about 25 faculty members and 150 students. And also, there were just four PhD scholars. We had lot of privileges and respect in the campus, even among the students. And the campus was very different of course. Fewer buildings and only the old building was there which was built in 1954. There was much more greenery and lots of grass which grew six-feet high covering most of the areas. There were lots of snakes and other creatures. So it was much greener. Less people, with lot of space. That was the major difference. Today, of course it has grown so big. I could see in these 32 years the institute has changed to a very great extent in terms of programmes, infrastructure and facilities.

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Q: What did you teach when you joined as a faculty?

Y: Those days were there two categories of department in the institute. There were teaching department and there were research units. So I joined in the research unit in the unit for Urban Studies in 1979. So,



research units normally do research and teaching departments had social work specialisations and PMIR - Personnel Management and Industrial Relations. Those departments were only teaching. So, the unit for Urban Studies(that I was involved in) was involved in some World Bank project related to water supply and sewage project in Mumbai. But quickly I moved within a year to a new unit started called Unit for Extra Mural Studies. Which is now the Centre for Lifelong Learning, after we changed its name? So, in that department (Unit for External Studies) initially in 1980 there was a visiting professor. Dr. Gore was the director and Prof. K.N. Vaid, he was the Visiting Professor in that unit. I was in the Unit for Urban Studies but I was assisting him because he was for the first time trying to introduce evening programmes. There were no evening programmes then. He introduced the evening programme in Personnel Management and Hospital Management. I was devoting half of my time to the Unit for External Studies and half to the Unit for Urban Studies. Before that I used to assist Prof. Mathew because my M.A. was in Medical and Psychiatric Social Work. Prof. Mathew was the head of the MPSW. I think in 1979 when I joined she was the only faculty as Miss Marie Lobo left. I used to assist her and teach two courses there. There are faculty today here who were students at that time. I used to teach Medical and Psychiatric Social Work. Then started involving myself with Extra Mural Studies and Prof. Vaid in one year. So, I took over as the head. I had the great privilege of working only one year as a faculty and second year onwards I was the head of the department or the head of the school. So, almost 30 years I was always at the head of the unit, department or the school.

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Q: How was the experience of working with Prof. Gore?

Y: Prof. Gore was my teacher as he was my PhD guide. So 1975 onwards, I was his student. As a student, it was my great privilege because of his knowledge. Whatever analytical skill I have and looking things from a social perspective is completely because of him. The theoretical orientation he has given was...I cannot explain that much about what he has contributed. Then later, in 1979 I became



(his) faculty here. So he left in 1982, and Prof. Armaity Desai came in '82. Prof. Gore when I shifted as a faculty, he always considered me as a student only. It was a...I mean, from being a student then shifting as a faculty, those three years I always felt that not only Dr. Gore, but even people in the office had a problem of recognizing me as a faculty member. So, there is always little bit of friction. Dr. Gore, nobody questions him because he is...this thing...but he always considered me as a student. But other faculty, even office staff had a problem of seeing me as a faculty. In those days we were about 20-30 faculty members and my appointment came. Normally recruitment takes place once in five years and we were interviewed in Bombay House and not the institute. It's held in the boardroom of Tatas. That was the scene and so many of the staff members had problem recognising me as a faculty member. This used to be the early days of my faculty experience.

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Q: Could you tell us the need that led to the genesis of the programme?

Y: The genesis was the beginning of a certificate evening programme in Hospital Administration in 1980. The reason for that programme was because in those days hospitals were managed by the top physicians or top surgeons. They managed by virtue of their superior knowledge in medicine. Normally people obeyed them. That scenario was slowly changing. I think...Jaslok Hospital had a strike in late 70s. Workers felt that doctors having simple medical qualifications cannot manage hospitals but they also need some managerial skills. So, Dr. Vrindavani, who was the director Jaslok Hospital and Prof. Vaidu, who was visiting professor here had this discussion. So he brought that proposal to start Hospital Administration evening programme. It started in 1980(academic year) and there was overwhelming response for that. Very senior people attended and also senior people came and audited the course. For example, Mrs. Lalita Hinduja, who was the trustee of Hinduja Hospitals, used to attend certain management courses including my course. It was a unique experience for me because at that time I was 30 years old. My students were 40-plus. So they are at least 15 years older than me. It was a learning



experience for me because Hospital Management was not an academic programme elsewhere and it was considered as a medical specialty and here it was considered a management specialty. With my management knowledge I could learn a lot from them by the application part of it, from students. So it was a very interactive session in those days. That was the beginning. Then in 1985, we did an evaluation of the certificate programme. We went back to the alumni and asked them whether this is adequate. They said it's wonderful but it's not adequate. We need much more exposure. As a result of which we introduced the diploma programme in Hospital Administration in 1986, which is still going on. It's a one-year programme in the evening for working administrators. Simultaneously, since 1986 we have also been involved in research. We did few studies in urban health, health of the urban poor for WHO. Then we did a base line survey for the World Bank under India Population Project 5 for the city of Mumbai and later on for Navi Mumbai. This training experience and research experience led us or rather attracted the Ford Foundation. So we started interacting with Ford Foundation, that time headed by Dr. Saroj Pachauri. She showed lot of interest in bringing in health as a separate discipline into the institute. They gave us a generous funding in 1989. In 1989, the separate department of health services was set up. That was a real landmark, moving from Extra Mural studies where hospital administration and personnel management both were there. I shifted to the department of Health Services Studies. Lot of credit goes to Prof. Armaity Desai as she was the director. When she joined in '82 she was a bit skeptical because she was a strong social-work person. She was wondering what was hospital administration. But very quickly she understood what it is. She also interacted with the students. Then she pushed me very hard for setting up this department. In '89 we set up this department with the Ford Foundation fund and it took four years for us to develop the Masters programme in Hospital Administration and Master of Health Administration, both the programmes. By that time the need also changed because corporate hospitals had come up and also all the major hospitals were looking for young managers whereas we had substantially trained those who are already managers in hospitals. In '93 we had a small batch of 15 students which includes me think 8 or 9 Hospital Administration and 6



or 7 Health Administration full-time students. That was a real experiment and fortunately the students were very good and they had lot of initiative. So, even today most of them are in very good positions. And two batches we admitted only alternate year. So one batch passed out and new batch came. Then we started admitting them in regular basis. So this MHA (Master of Hospital/Health Administration) was going on all these years till the restructuring of the institute. And that is the time... I mean during restructuring I was not here...I was in Geneva with WHO. So, I think Dr. Shalini Bharat was the dean. That is the time the MPH programme started coming into the school. In 2006, the Department of Health Services Studies changed into the School of Health Systems Studies. The number of faculty increased and the Department of Health Services Studies plus the faculty who worked in other research units also came. So there are more than 12 faculty members. We introduced this MPH in Social Epidemiology in 2007 or something. Then we introduced in 2010 MPH in Health Policy, Economics and Finance. We have now two MHA programmes and two MPH programmes and the Diploma in Hospital Administration programme in the evening. The school today has 15 faculty members...actually 17 positions...2 positions vacant and also involved in lot of research and collaboration. This, in a nutshell, is the history of the development of the Health Systems Studies in the institute.

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Q: Would you please tell us in detail about the research that is happening in the institute?

Y: We have an MOU with the London School of Economics, what they call LSE Health. Under that we have joint publications mainly in areas like maternal and child health, HIV AIDS and also health financing. This is the fifth year. Their review was done which was quite positive and the MPH in Health Policy was introduced with their collaboration. Their faculty members were teaching here. In addition another area is on the human resource management or what you call the health workforce issues...that are the important things like shortage of doctors, shortage of nurses. This is one major area...we have an UNFPA project where we looked at the shortage of doctors in Maharashtra



government system. Then...we are also into financing of health services. We are looking at inclusive financing health care and this is supported by a lot project by European Commission which we have just started. We are looking at how various financing, taxation, health insurance and how it is inclusive of the poor or exclusive of the poor...those who are really in the need of that. These are our main areas. Especially on equity in health, that is one of the very important areas we are working with. In addition, we are also working on urban health...health of the urban poor. That is also our focus.

Q: What do you see as the way forward for the school?

Y: We have these four programmes and also this doctorate programme in Health Systems Studies. These programmes have stabilized quite well. We have a new curriculum which integrates in the first semester all the four programmes and then bifurcate into the specializations. We are now focusing on developing our research areas. There is ample scope for developing research. We have these four centres in the school. One is the Centre for Health and Social Science, second is the Centre for Health Policy Planning and Management third is the Centre for Public Health and Centre for Hospital Management. I think these centers will now develop and identify their areas of research and they are already working on a strategic paper for each centre. Except the Centre for Hospital Management where we are short of faculty (the 2 positions that are vacant) the other three centers are actively pursuing the research. In addition to that we feel now that the Diploma in Hospital Administration programme, we have virtually trained all the senior people in and around the city. And also now the Diploma programmes have proliferated into many places. In all these MBA colleges and institutes of local self government and Garware institute. So we feel that we should move ahead from this into an Executive MHA programme for working people. And we are having different options, looking at conducting programmes in the weekend or going online. And depends on the kind of educational technology the institute is going to develop I suppose...with video conferencing and other technologies available we may go for that kind of a MHA. So the Hospital Administration programme has lot of



scope to expand further and maybe the centers that are now coming up in the campuses of Hyderabad and Guwahati are waiting and seeing what are the areas where we can participate there and introduce our programmes. This is the short term way of looking at it. Maybe my younger colleagues they have a much longer vision.

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Q: If we could back track a little...I was told that the Institute of Health Systems Studies or the focus on health was one of the first such initiatives taken by TISS. What was the need for such concentrated work on health at that time?

Y: One of the needs, of course, as I said is the need for hospital managers in the hospital field. And in the health field, health was always considered as medical field and they are two different things. That is, medicine is for the sick and health is for the...I mean...you are talking about health which is a very different concept. For the first time there was especially since the Alma Ata Declaration where WHO declared 'Health for All'. That talked lot about community participation.I mean if you look at the document it is more or less like a social work document. Looking for community mobilization and community participation and India being a signatory we adopted a health policy in 1983 which was basically an approach towards primary health care. And it is totally a community based approach using volunteers in remote areas for delivering health services. So the health system for the first time at that time in the late 70s and early 80s started looking beyond medicine as an approach to improve the health status of the people. And there are lot of stalwarts like Dr. Arole and many others. They were doctors who came out and said that these aspects are more important. So, in that sense social science and social work approaches gained lot of recognition. But there were no such universities ready to work in this field. But we had the advantage of being a social work institution for many years already working in the field in community mobilization and other things and also doing research in these areas. So that was

the background where always TISS was in an advantageous position to enter into this field and today it is...like WHO also looks at and talks about social determinants of health. So in that sense the social science/social work has gained much more importance in terms of improving the health of the people, not treating the disease. WHO looks for health, not for disease basically.

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Q: Whenever we try to ask someone senior who has been in TISS we get varied answers...whether social sciences and social work have been able to work together and the plan that Prof. Gore with establishing the research units, the vision of social sciences that he envisaged. Has the gap been bridged?

Y: The olden days, I would say at the starting of research units Dr. Gore planned it out. Social work was taught borrowed from the American model and there is no Indian base or concept of social work. Starting the research units in that perspective to bring in lot of Indian material, literature into the social work. Actually what had happened was that the faculty in the research units was social sciences faculty and social work departments had social work faculty. In that sense there was a great divide that took place at that time between the units and the departments. Sometimes in the faculty meetings we had lively or heated arguments about who is much more conceptually clear, what is academic, whether social work is academic or if social science is much more theoretical and academic and all sorts of discussions that used to take place. Today that divide has gone with the research units going away. . I think it started happening during Dr. Desai's period itself but in today's context social work has several units that are doing lot of research. Especially in the health side that I know...HIV AIDS and related diseases are major areas of research. So now research is in-built into social work and built into social science or development studies research. So it is now much more integrated I would say that is research and teaching compared to those days when units and departments existed.



Q: The institute is in its Platinum Jubilee year. Where would envision the institute in the next decades, where would you like to see it going?

Y: I think since Dr. Parasuraman became the director the movement was very fast. We are trying to grasp the change and we have settled down with all these things. I think the new campuses that are in the early stage...we are looking for more development there and also the institute moving from this status of deemed university to some other status as director says, institutes of innovation or institute of national importance like All India Institute of Medical Sciences(AIIMS) and NIMHANS. So we should move quickly towards a different status which takes us to an institute of excellence or national importance. Then we should establish our campuses like the one in Tuljapur, Hyderabad or Guwahati. Maybe we should have more campuses, more national institutes. And also, I feel that it is time that the institute as far as research is concerned, should move globally. If you see the European institutions and American institutions they are not that great but they reach out into the developing world. Like in Africa suppose there is lot of areas for research and maybe field action that we can do in African countries. With our experience we are much better than them but we need a strategy to move beyond this country or at least to neighboring countries like in Afghanistan, where we had some contacts. We need much more contacts maybe like other Western universities we should start research centres in Africa and our research should be moved globally. That would be the future, I think.

Q: What would be your message to TISS?

Y: (Laughs) What great message can I give? We should just learn from what we have done and we should move globally at this stage. We should not restrict ourselves to any campus that we have. I think that is our important future.

(Ends)

