



Prof Katy Gandevia

Interviewer: Ms. Shilpi Gulati

Camera/Sound: Ms. Divya Cowasji

Place: TISS, Mumbai

Keywords: Class of 1968-70, campus, Dr. Banerjee, Dr. Gore, field work, social work profession, specialisation, students, Ms. Mathew, rehabilitation work, psycho-social intervention, counselling practice

Prof. Katy Gandevia was at TISS in 1969 - 1971 as a student in the Department of Medical and Psychiatric Social Work. She joined as a Lecturer in the Department of Medical and Psychiatric Social Work in 1984 and have been at TISS since then - Currently as a Professor in the School of Social Work



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Q: How do you think the campus has changed?

KG: Greenery was something that struck me the most and I think that was one of the motivating factors in joining TISS because I thought that campus is so beautiful. We had only the main building, the staff quarters, two hostels and director's bungalow, dining hall. So one of the ways in which TISS has changed is it has lost a lot of its open spaces. In my specialization we had 12 and in the whole social work batch we were hardly about 60 students and there were about 40-50 students for PMIR which is right now for human resource management. In numbers we were less and in space we were more. That is the biggest change that I have seen.

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Q: You were telling us about the number of students on campus.

KG: The number student was much less and there was more open space. This is only as far as logistics is concerned. Academically also the Institute has gone far beyond what we were. Earlier there were only these two major degrees that were here later on many more got added. Today we have about 16 MA degrees in Tata Institute. Also the campus, when we talked of TISS it was only restricted to this remote corner of Mumbai; if we missed our college bus we were sure to be late for class, because there was very little transport to TISS. There was only one public bus. In that way a lot of things have changed. today we have so many more campuses and also one of the best things that has happened is that we have so many more faculty, the kind of academic stimulation that happens now... we have faculty from so many social sciences, we have faculty who come from various varied backgrounds from all over India so I think the enrichment in academic stimulation that happens is much more today that it was when we were students. I was here in 69-71 today is 2011.

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We had very few courses so our actual classes got over by me and in the afternoon we had a lot of time to talk to our field work supervisors or we had some extra classes to give us extra inputs. most of the time our classes got over at one and the whole afternoon we were free either to go back home or to go and sit in the library or one of the things I cherished the most is that I learned to play badminton when I was in TISS. I learnt to play table tennis in TISS so I spend some afternoons playing these games. I didn't play to win or anything, it's just that I wanted to learn some sports so I had good friends who taught me badminton and table tennis. That was my extracurricular activity and we took part in the sports in TISS. I took part in the Institute day celebrations where I remember I won the first prize along with my colleague in fancy dress. I became an old Parsi lady and my friend became a Parsi gentleman and we did a small skit on interactions between a Parsi couple. Old meaning middle aged. I wore a typical Parsi sari and she was wearing a typical coat which Parsi men wear.

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KG: Dr. Banerjee who used to be head of our specialization... at that time we had departments so it was medical and psychiatric social work department. She was the head of the medical and psychiatric social work department. A very senior, a very stern lady, but I think whatever values of social work I carry today I look back at her as the person who has influenced me most in the field of social work.



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DR. Gore we remember as a very soft spoken gentleman to the core. He had a lot of respect for students, but he was also a very good academician because he did his best to draw out the best from students. I remember because he was soft spoken, in his class we used to run to get the first row. If we didn't get the first row, we had to really strain hard to listen to his lectures.

we were a small group of 50-55 students of social work, still we had to concentrate very hard....he taught us social welfare administration. He was really soft so we had to run for the front seat in his class.

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IT was not intended mischief but it turned out like that. One day Dr. Banerjee had given us some... because we respected Dr. Banerjee so much it never ever struck us to play a prank on her. One day when she had given us some homework to do, actually it was not a part of our regular class, she used to take an extra class and in that extra class she told us she expected us to do something and come. I don't even remember what it was and next time when she had that extra class after 5 days she asked us if we had come prepared if we had come prepared, so most of us looked blankly at her. She said how many of you have not prepared along with the others I was one who raised my hand and she said all of those who have not prepared go away from my class. So there were only two students remaining in the class of twelve, ten had walked out of class. Dr. Mathew who was also in the centre later on that evening or next morning and she gave us a piece of her mind. She says how dare you walk out on Dr. Banerjee, nobody has ever walked out on Dr. Banerjee. How could you do that? We all were all very surprise. We all were very surprised... we really didn't want to be disrespectful to



her. We were so scared of her the minute she said all of you who have not prepared for my class go away we just walked out. It was not a prank that we played, but it really turned out like that.

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Probably the only prank that we played was when Dr. Banerjee used to accompany us to the Thane mental hospital, instead of getting off at Thane we used to get off at Mulund and walk through the ACC cement factory and enter the back gate [at that time Thane mental hospital had a back gate.] when we were walking through the asbestos factory, there used to be a small nallah and on that nallah there used to be stones so Dr. Mathew would lead the way and would say “no talking when you are crossing the nallah because I don’t want you to fall in the nallah and reach the hospital in wet clothes.” So we used to giggle and quietly follow her. When she was leading us and she tried to turn her face and scold us and say don’t talk she fell down. So we all started, then every time we went we would say “saas giri” she fell down. It was our common private joke. It wasn’t really a prank but we felt a thrill that the person who was scolding us and saying that you will fall down and none of us fell, she fell. That is one thing that we remember.

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I remember a lot of pranks that other students played on us. We had only two degrees PMIR and social work and a lot of our people in social work used to be day scholars. All day scholars, we used to bring our lunch and a lot of PMIR boys... that time very few girls in management but there were a lot of boys in management even if they



were day scholars never got their lunch and there were many times when... our library was very strict and there was no place to keep things in the library. Where our new administration is there, our library used to be there. There used to be a big shelf where we had to leave our books and everything, our bags and food outside. More than once when we come out our lunch boxes would be empty. So we used to really go without food because in those days not many of us had money to go out and eat. In the dining hall only those who were regular members could eat. So there was nowhere to eat those days. We used to argue with the gateman saying let us take our lunch boxes inside because somebody eats up our lunch and we don't have lunch. Probably whatever happened we found a note in our lunch box saying join us on the last table in the dining hall with your food. They didn't eat the food, on our lunch box they pinned this note and since then we made an agreement. We would join them for lunch in the dining hall but we will not eat our lunch, either we got extra food for them or we gave our lunch to them and we ate the dining hall lunch because students were very tired of eating dining hall food and they were yearning for home made food. So when I went home and told my mother I remember that after that the size of my lunch box increased. I used to carry a small box and later for the rest of the one and a half year I carried a bigger lunch box where there was enough food to share with our field work colleague and the PMIR boys and luckily they were the ones who then taught us... in return for food what do you think we should do for you? they said we can't do your homework for you because we are in a different degree so we said you play badminton and table tennis, we don't know how to play so teach us. So we had a barter system. They taught us how to play and we gave them home made food.

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Now food is easily available. There was no Subalakshmi when we were students. There was only this Vijay Punjab and we were warned by our teachers not to go there because only truck drivers went there. We really had no scope to eat and there were no banana carts waiting outside for us to go out and buy bananas. So when these boys realized that we were really being deprived they struck this deal with us.

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I have really good memories of my field work. We had two separate field placements one placement was for case work i.e. working with individuals and one was for going group work i.e. working with groups. Our field work days were Tuesdays and Fridays. So Tuesdays and Friday mornings I used to be in one place to be my individual work. In the first year I was at JJ hospital psychiatric department. I used to work with individual clients. So in the afternoons I went to Gamadia colony recreation centre which was at Tardeo to do my group work. There I was having two groups. On Tuesday I was working with children and on Friday I used to work with a group of women. That is how our field work was. In both the places, now it is forty years. Family welfare agency I am now a committee there. So I have kept my association with that organization. Unluckily the Gamadia colony recreational centre is not functioning as much as it used to 40 years ago. My supervisor later on went away to America, so once in a while I am in touch with her. In the second year I was placed with a hospital at Parel and I did both my individual work and group work in that hospital and my supervisor there was Mrs. Chitle who became a good friend and later on she joined TISS after retirement she was also my colleague. I am still in touch with Mrs.. Chitle We used to have our psychiatric seminar. Miss Mathew used to take us to the mental hospital, but at the end of two years I chose the Thane mental



hospital to do my block placement for two months. So I spent two months at the mental hospital working with individuals, taking groups there. My association with the mental hospital has still stayed. Probably because of my long association in the field of mental health I am the representative of the social work category under state mental health authority of Maharashtra. I work very closely with the superintendent of the Thane mental hospital because he is the coordinator of the state mental health body. So my association with mental hospitals has stayed in the last forty years. Each field work that I did has left a lasting impact on me and a lasting relation that I have built in the field of mental health.

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Q: Every time we speak of social work it's so much to do with theory and so much to do with what concepts you are learning in class and then you go to the field to apply those concepts. Do you think that students are able to translate the theoretical knowledge from the class into the field? Has it been able to bridge the gap?

KG; when we were students here, at a student level at least in the first year we used to always think that what we learn on a Monday, Wednesday and Thursday has no relevance to Tuesday and Friday when we went for fieldwork. At the end of the first year when we have our fieldwork evaluation.

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I do remember telling my supervisor that I still don't see any connection between

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what we learn in class and what we are doing in the field. Because in the field you are doing it more with experience, you try something, it does not work you try something else, but in the second year when we came, we had specialization courses where we learnt actually what was mental illness. Because in the first year I was doing field work but I wasn't so much... whatever knowledge of mental health I had from my psychology, I was using it, but because in the second year we had complete focus on our specialization. By the end of the third semester we started seeing a relation between what we learning in class and what we were doing on the field.

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At that point of time it started making sense. By the time I went to do my block field work, like I could confidently at the end of it say the concepts that I learnt in class I was able to use it in my field. Today the type of courses that we have, especially after the restructuring, where we have the foundation courses. I think that when I am supervising, even the first year students, and a lot of them I see trying to bridge this gap. Because the kind of background information and grounding they are getting is helping them to bridge this gap much faster than it happened in our time.

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Also I will say that people differ. there were these two students who didn't walk out of class, we used to call them very brainy and both of them are very good friends of mine today so they were probably able to, when teachers asked in class, they were able to bridge it much earlier. Even today if I am supervising say eight students of first year, I might be able to see six of them being able to translate their theory into



practice. Two of them might take a little longer to do it.

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I don't see that as a gap of teaching only, I see that as a match of personality of the student, the capability of the student to assimilate and translate it, so it's a mix of both. Even in our time it wasn't that everybody didn't do it. Some of us took a little longer to do it and like today some students are able to do it much faster. The cynicism that exists today is very different than it was at our time. We just took it for granted that we had to learn theory and it was one of the aspects which we may not like but we have to do it, but today the students continuously question us. Why we must learn so much? Why we should do our FC courses, we aren't seeing that in our field. The cynicism and the questioning are very different than what happened at our time.

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Q: how do you think the work in the field of social worker, by a social worker has changed? How do you think the social work profession has changed over the last few years?

KG: I will tell you both the positives and the negatives. Because I think in TISS and many other known social work colleges in India, because we have maintained a balance between teaching and fieldwork there is a lot of emphasis given on fieldwork and most of us as faculty have given a lot of our time and energy in helping the agencies where we supervise to also grow. Probably that is why a lot of our students who pass out have gone back to all those organizations that they have done their field



work. Some or the other organization that they have done their fieldwork in.

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I forgot to tell you that one of the organizations that I did my field work in Samaritans in the second year, where I later on took up my job before coming here. So a lot of us, even a lot of our field work agencies where our students go want our students to come back and work. So the advantage is because we have been able to maintain a certain standard of teaching and supervision, the field work profession has grown. I don't think only TISS should take the credit for it. There are other very pro active schools of social work in India, but the sad part is that in the last two decades or so, a lot of social work schools have, I wouldn't say even grown, I will say - mushroomed. In Maharashtra itself there are so many schools that are not even recognized and a sad part is because we don't have a code of conduct which is recognized by an overall association.

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With many other countries of the world every social worker has to be accredited every few years, in India we don't have that. There is no central body which controls the growth of private social work colleges. I know that when students have done their BSWs apply to our Institute for MA programme and I ask them as a part of the interview, what is the kind of field work they have done, they say we have not done any field work, we have done field visits. I have been on interview panels on many NGOs where they are trying to employ social workers and when students from smaller unknown social work colleges apply even if it is a MSW degree and you ask



them what is your field work experience they will tell you about the ten visits that they have made or the ten observations they have made when a social worker has been interviewing somebody. They don't have even a simple opportunity to practice the methods that they have learnt - like working with individuals and working with groups.

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In that way the social work profession has got impetus from certain quarters, certain colleges and also there is a very great level of stagnation. There are two very clear cut levels of social workers that are available in the field today. I know I may be saying something people may not like, but at least with my forty years of work in the social work field this is one of my sad parts which I think somewhere something needs to be done.

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In a small city if there are seven colleges of social work, obviously there will not be enough settings to do field work. Then they will land up doing only field visits. The first time they are doing actual work with people is when they join an organization.

Q: When you say social worker who goes into the field, what is your opinion of the specialization of the social worker? Many believe that you should not just be a social worker specializing in criminology and justice or psychiatric and medical health, but you should be able to handle a holistic situation. What are your views on



specialization in social work?

KG: Since I have done a specialization myself, I have spent a majority part of my life teaching specialization in Tata Institute

I see its own value. There are certain fields where some extra knowledge, some extra input is essential. I am not saying Tata Institute should go back to the old specialization ways, but probably there should be a scope for students who already know, ok this is what I want to work in. also I think as social work professionals it is our responsibility to see that all areas in the fields should get enough people to work with them. I feel that that there has to be some kind of extra inputs even if it's not specialization, some extra inputs in particular areas where students are interested in going into. E.g. criminology or even mental health is a field, because I can tell you from my own experience. In the first year even though I came from psychology when I did not have enough inputs in psychiatry or in mental health my field work was really like tic tac toe. My supervisor was always there to help me out.

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once you start getting a more concentrated input in that field it is very helpful, but of course today the reality is that there are various kinds of organizations in the field where there are organizations maybe working specifically on mental health issues, but there are many community organizations today who are getting people, eg if somebody is having alcohol problem, or they may be seeing a lot of violence in the community, so they will need some kind of knowledge about all these issues. It is very necessary to have a generic kind of input may be for the first three semesters at least and those who want to probably get more knowledge in a particular area should have a facility to get an extra input in the fourth semester.

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Q: Since you are talking about students being able to specialize in the fourth semester, talking of your experience as a teacher, what is it that brought you back to TISS?

KG; There are two three things that got me back to TISS. When I was working in Samaritans I went on a Fulbright exchange programme to the United States. . There I realized that, we who have studied in India, we are no less than people who study over there. I worked very closely with social workers counselors over there and sometimes I found over there that the kind of work we do on the field is more varied and we face a lot more of challenges than social workers and counselors do over there.

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While I was there, the idea germinated in my mind that, what if I go into teaching? So when I came back to India, because I was continuously supervising students from Tata Institute in Samaritan,s I was always in touch with Tata Institute. Miss Mathew was the head of the department because by then Dr. Banerjee had retired. Then there were other people here whom I was in touch with. I started trying to investigate, is there a scope for me to teach over here, but at that point of time there was very little scope to get into TISS. So I was happy that at least I was a supervisor who contributed to students learning indirectly. I was enjoying that interaction very much.

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The second idea that germinated when I was in the States was that I always wanted to

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learn. I found myself always coming to the library looking for new books, even when I was there I was in the city of Minnesota so this programme was affiliated to the university of Minnesota. So I used to go to their library, look at all the new books that used to come over there. An idea germinated in my mind that why don't I do my PhD now? So then when it came back to India these two things kept annoying me. I was enjoying my work in the field but I just felt that I need to go a little further.

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The UGC had a whole new plan where they opened up a lot of spaces for people to join as faculty. I applied, I got selected. So it fulfilled my yearning to give back something to the profession that I have learnt in my field. When I used to supervise my students I realized that they needed a lot more of practical inputs when I was invited from the field to give one or two lectures to the students, they always wanted more. I thought, now that I have worked for fourteen years now I must get back to teaching; also my grandfather was a teacher, my mother was a teacher, so that was always in my mind that some day if possible, I will also be a teacher.

Q: Once you joined as faculty how was it to come back to class on the other side?

KG: Frankly it took me sometime almost a year to get reconciled that now I was here as a faculty. One of the good things that happened was at that point of time was that we were still a much smaller Institute. DR. Desai arranged for an all faculty meeting and she introduced us and asked us to say a little bit about our self. So when I joined within first two or three months, I knew each and every faculty in Tata Institute and

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about which I feel very sad about now is that we only get a circular saying that so and so has joined and only if we make efforts to find out who that person is then we come to know them, especially now because the campuses are far apart and one is in Tuljapur, so that is something that I miss. What helped me to get assimilated into TISS as a faculty was this kind of informal interaction that happened.

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Also my head of the department Dr. Banerjee made it a point to take us around and sort of introduce us to everybody. She took us to not only faculty, she took us to the library introduced us to the library, requested the librarian to give us an orientation. Though I used to come on and of the library, I found that from our days from 71 when I passed out AND JOINED back in 84 in that span of 13-14 years the library had increased. It was really good to interact with them. Then she took us to the administration and introduced us to each and everyone and she told us if you need this you must go to the academic section, if you need this you must go to the personnel section. That kind of personal touch helped to get assimilated into the system of TISS.

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Getting back to teaching was something that really took me almost a year to do that. Also because Miss Mathew was very keen that I must take the first year to attend other people's classes so who ever I attended almost 3-4 peoples classes. She said you have worked in an NGO, you worked on one to one or you worked in small groups. Here you are going to teach a big class. She also suggested that maybe I should do a public speaking course. So I joined the Indo-American society where the teacher and



the students wanted to know why I was there. To the extent that on my final day, or the day before my final talk, two boys who were doing their management came to me and said you become sick tomorrow, please don't come. You already have a job our promotion depends on this. Please don't come tomorrow, if you come tomorrow you will get the first prize, , but I couldn't do that because I was asked by Dr. Banerjee to go and do that certificate.

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As I said we were still in awe of our teachers, because she was my teacher and now she was my colleague. I said I will come tomorrow, so they said if you come tomorrow, don't say properly, but I couldn't do that also. I said properly and I got the cup which I still cherish and I got certificate and Miss Mathew said now you are ready to teach. So then I got a class to teach from the following year. The initial little hiccups were there, later on I settled down and I don't regret my decision.

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Q: Any particular student you remember or any batch you remember?

KG: Ooh I remember quite a few students. Quite a few students are my friends and now that I am on facebook I have renewed relationships with students who were here ten years ago and when they see me on facebook... I know quite a lot of student where they are working, what they are doing, and how many children. Even students who I had unconsciously forgotten, now when they are on face book and they invite me to join I remember them.



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There are at least two three students who are still stuck out in my mind. Both because I had a very good time with them and also because I had a difficult time with them. There was one student union president who I remember very well. I was a dining hall chair person and he was the student union president. That year the two batches were really very difficult students. They created a lot of problems in the dining hall. As a dining hall chairperson I had to put my foot down for certain procedures, how long the dining hall would remain open, what would be the dining hall used for and as a student union when he contested the elections he had made promises that he will see that the dining hall remains open for 24 hours. He had made certain promises which were way beyond his own work. He would always come to me and say, see now I have got elected because of all this and now if you don't cooperate and don't allow me to do things my way, then the students are getting very angry with me. I had to put my foot down and I said no. dining hall is dining hall. Often there used to be this argument.

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When he passed out after about 3 years, when I was visiting my brothers in Pune in one of the restaurants, I heard somebody calling out my name. I was wondering how in Pune someone would call me maam so I looked around and that boy was coming towards me. He said well I saw you so often I think I must get back to you, I want to thank you. So I was also a little cynical and I said ooh... he said actually what you were doing there as a dining hall chairperson, I am doing in my company. Now I know what it is to be on the other side. He says whenever I take any decisions I think of you.



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Since then that student is a very good friend of mine. Since 2-3 years we had no contact, now whenever he comes to TISS he looks me up. Even when my room was changed he asked people he comes and sees me. Last when he came he got his son with him and he said meet my teacher and then he is telling me don't tell him about the arguments we had. So the son is saying what happened, what happened?

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There are other students with whom I had very good relationships. Usually our field work students and our research students, because we work with them very closely. A lot of my field work students and my research students have still remained my friends. One of them is now in Pune. When I visit Pune, always either she comes and sees me or I go and see her. She is a good friend of mine now. Many other students, they are settled abroad so either they send me mails for New Year or when they come down to TISS. One thing about TISS is, even if they come down for a fortnight, they will definitely come to TISS once at least. I think that is the binding force that remains with them.

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Q: can you talk a little about Miss Mathew?

KG: Miss Mathew was a different person all together. Again I think Miss Mathew was in many ways, she had also inculcated Dr. Banerjee's values. A lot of us have



inculcated Dr. Banerjee values but Miss Mathew probably had inculcated more of Dr. Banerjee's values because she was very honest, very forth right. One thing about Dr. Banerjee and Miss Mathew is that they will call a spade a spade. Some of us have learnt to mask it. We will expect certain things but we will not be so brusque in saying things, but Miss Mathew was one who thought that you must not sugar coat things, you must say it frankly but she would only say things when she was convinced. Unlike many others who would just say things, Miss Mathew always thought and only when she thought it was necessary to say something she would put forth and she would make herself so clear and the way she put it there was no way to refute it because she had done her home work so well that there was no way you could not believe and say things that she thought was the right thing. She was my field work supervisor, and then she was my research guide for my MA. When I was in the field, because she was also in the field of mental health she was the faculty in charge of Samaritans so all along when I did field work supervision for students I was all along, in touch with her.

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Then I joined here, she became my colleague and because I had good learning experience with her, for my PhD when I came here I asked her if she would be my guide for PhD. With Dr. Banerjee, till she retired I was in touch with her continuously for many years. I joined in 84 she retired in 85. Even after that because she was writing the book on case work, because I teach case work. That time she used to talk to us more and she'll say I want to learn from you I am a student. She had that humility. She said now I am your student; tell me what the new trends in the field are. You supervise. Now you tell me what is happening in the field, I want to learn. In my



book I want to put things that are actually happening, I don't want to put things that happened in my age.

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She was a keen learner. She wanted to learn, she would say, can I come to your field work agency, would it be too much of an intrusion. So I remember I said her coming to at least two of my field work agencies. She would say ask your students, can I look at their recordings? I want to learn what is happening. It was sad that I couldn't complete my PHD under her. I completed my PhD but under another guide. She had at some point of time detachment of retina so she said I can't strain my eyes anymore. So it was my loss. Then she moved into the campus over here so we all used to go and visit her once in a while and we used to always celebrate her birthday over here. I remember the last birthday she celebrated the year before she died. People from our department we always go there, sit with her, somebody gets a cake, somebody gets things to eat. She used to always feel very bad that we are doing so much for her. Though it was nothing much for us, she always felt that we were doing too much for her.

Q: One of the other things TISS is known for is their rehabilitation work every time there are natural disasters or calamities in the country from Bhopal gas tragedy to Latur, starting from the partition actually. What has been your experience?

KG; the day I joined TISS in 1984 two days later there were some riots in Mumbai.

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My first assignment... my first two days I spent attending a conference that was happening TISS. Miss Mathew said join them. The third day Dr.Desai called some of us out who had come from the field saying in cheetah camp which is very close by there was a lot of rioting between the Hindus and the Muslims and there was lot of bloodshed and many were injured and the police had been very partial and beaten a lot of people from one community so there was a lot of anger and a lot of morchas were happening. TISS had sent 5-6 of us to Cheetah Camp. I began my career in TISS with disaster relief. we spent about one week.... we had a job to identify people who were injured and people who needed some kind of medical help. Nair hospital runs an outreach programme in Cheetah Camp; the doctors from there came to Cheetah Camp tended to people. They were so scared; they thought that even if they went to the dispensary the police would beat them up. They were lying at home with some home medicines, leaves just wrapped up. We had to identify people; because they were so scared to come out that we had to take the doctors to their house. So this kind of work we did.

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We had to make an inventory of people who were affected. A lot of material was damaged. A lot of women that time in this community did a lot of machine work. In these riots a lot of the machines were destroyed. So lots of women were saying our livelihood is gone. So we had to make a list of what people had lost and then follow up on some of the people in the Sion hospital or KEM hospital. I began my career over here like that.

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then the Bhopal tragedy came, but at that point of time I could not go because my mother in-law was at the hospital so I requested.... by the time I joined TISS, Dr. Desai was the



Director. When I was a student Dr. Gore was there, but by that time he had retired and Dr. Desai had joined. I requested Dr. Desai saying my mother in-law is in hospital I can't go then she made me do work here. then I was heading one of the committees here that was kind of the backup committee where we used to collect a lot of material, data we used to put together, I used to make interview schedules. Physically I was not there; I did the back office kind of work for them. Later on many other tragedies that came, I participated when the Tuljapur earthquake happened. I was one of the first teams that went there. I have also seen the burning of the bodies. Myself and Mrs. Chitle whom I was talking about, we were posted in Sholapur to look after all the injured victims. Because we were from the medical and psychiatric ward we were put there. We were doing work with them. Many families were separated, so we trained the students of the school of social work in Sholapur to do a quick assessment of people in the hospital. They went around saying I don't know where my child is, I am very worried; I didn't know where my husband is. So we took down all the details and in the evening when we went to the headquarters we exchanged this information. If one team was looking for to say Killari so all of us who had information from Killari would say these are the people from Killari who are there. the team took the team to Killari the next day and they said they will bring back saying this lady's son is safe he is being looked after by the neighbors, her husband is in the hospital in Usmanabad. So we did that kind of work. We were there almost for three weeks. That year we extended into the vacation. No complaint. Not a single student or faculty complained that we had to extend our session into the vacation. It was like our campus that was hit. I have participated in that.

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When the Gujarat earthquake came we also went there. I was stationed at Bhuj so I did a lot of work with people in the camps in Bhuj. Daytime we went into areas catching up



with people in camps. At night we used to work on the computers, put the work together. We were staying in a dilapidated house where the doors also could not close. I remember some of us who were working on the computers at night used to tell our colleagues in the tents in the big maidan if another earthquake comes at least see if we are safe, if we are inside please pull us out. So every night we slept with that fear and there were tremors for quite some time. We were told that if tremors continued for more than five minutes get out of the house. We survived and came back. The resilience I have learnt that people have is something phenomenal. You feel your problems are nothing. We only crib about things when actually people have...

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When the riots happened somehow the Institute did not want to get into the Gujarat riots rehabilitation work. Some of us were very angry that this was also a calamity. This was also a man made calamity. If we can go to Bhopal we should go to Gujarat, but then at that point of time it was thought it would be too political to do work in Gujarat. As luck would have it we were given a project. Before that, World Bank gave us a project for the rehabilitation of the earthquake affected. Because I was there for earthquake I went for this follow up programme which was a year down the line so I got sort of a long period of disaster management. Also in Tuljapur, because my student did a study on women who were affected by . Out of my own interest I went back to Killari. I followed up on most of the women who were from Killari in Sholapur hospital. Sometimes you do it officially because TISS wants you to do it; sometimes you do it because you want to do it. This Killari thing I did on my own. when I was in Ahmadabad, we were collecting data, not only Ahmadabad, where ever riots had taken place right up to Palampur, from Palampur to Baroda we were doing this study so I had an occasion to go there for at least six to nine months.

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though we were doing a study, because I have been in counseling for many times, most of my people would say "he is very upset, zara baat karo na us se" in my own capacity as a person who felt that something needed to be done I did a lot of individual work also group work with them. Then came the Bombay riots 93, there also... I used to sit at KEM hospital and when people injured would come in, I would interact with them. When the tsunami came, myself with three people were sent to Sri Lanka. OXFAM wanted people who were experienced in disaster work to come to Sri Lanka; we were involved in training teachers and government officials what it is. My area has always been psycho social interventions, what psychological factors do you look at and how do you intervene in that area. I was there for almost three weeks without language.

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Q: During these natural disasters, apart from the rehabilitation work, supplies, registration, finding out where people are the tragedy also affects them a lot psychologically. You being a specialist in the field what does psycho-social help entail during a natural disaster.

KG: first of all seeing that it is not only giving them money or giving them food to eat is enough. Food you will get, money you will get because people will come and give that, but to take care that their psychological scars don't remain forever. There were people who would get up from sleep, there were people who couldn't sleep at all or people who were very scared that earthquake will come or people were very sad because there were many families where three children. Some had died and the woman was paralyzed waist



down because of the stones that fell on her and she said I don't want to live anymore, please show me a way to kill myself because I don't have children. my husband is alive, I am paralyzed, I can't live with my husband anymore, he will bring in another woman, he will get married again. So dealing with these psychological traumas that people are getting through, only telling her not to worry is not enough. Psycho-social intervention cannot be done only alone. In psycho-social intervention we call it an umbrella of interventions. A lot of times when the woman was in the hospital, the whole family was in the hospital, they did not get counted that they lost their house, so their names didn't figure in rehabilitation package. People who came to distribute did not reach the hospitals and they got left out.

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Psycho-social intervention means bringing all these things under one umbrella. Trying to see that their psychological needs are met, also trying to see that their physical needs are met also follow them up over a period of time. Referral is a very important aspect because you are not going to be there. You are not going to be their support forever and ever. You will move out at some point of time, so finding somebody from the family, community who can give them that kind of psychological support was very necessary. So what we mainly we think is that, you can do it but also you must develop a support system and that is why we a lot of training programmes for various stake holders in the community. Eg saying yeh toh langdi ho gayi. What impact will that have on that person? Helping them to understand the psychological impact of a disaster on a human being also no labeling them. Very often I have seen that doctors rush to the area, including psychiatrists and somebody who says I am not able to sleep, prescribe them medication. We have seen in Bhopal disaster that people remain on that medication for the rest of their



life. De-psychatrising the illness is something we concentrate on in psycho-social intervention.

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Anybody who loses everything in life is going to lose sleep. People are going to be scared. When we have been doing our computer work we have run out leaving our computers and luggage into the open when the tremors have started. How can we blame other when they say they are scared of tremors? "Scared of tremors, take this medication." that is something we have been particular and we give this kind of messages saying do not medicalize a problem. Let people learn how to cope with it. Killari was full of illegal liquor on the seventh day after the earthquake. People came saying yeh thoda pee lo gam bhol jaoge. We had a tough time getting these people out of those places because they are just making people dependent on something rather than learning to cope with the problem. I can talk for hours on that. Another three tapes will go.

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That is my favorite area. When we were restructuring, they asked us if you want to change our affiliations and many of my colleagues said there is a disaster management coming up, you are not thinking of going there. So then I asked and they said we can have a second affiliation. Social work that is my primary love so I will stay with that, but my second affiliation is with the disaster management centre. When they had the psycho-social intervention training I used to be a faculty member.



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Q: You along with TISS have been a part of so many rehabilitation works....

KG: Even the last Taj, I would like to say a little about that when the Bombay terrorist attack took place, Taj is also a Tata group. The chairman we want people to intervene because there is so much of trauma. So we did work in Taj for almost six weeks. First we did de-briefing sessions with each and every employee of Taj. we got 32 counselors, social work counselors from Mumbai with one phone call, who just came without expecting any remuneration. They just came. They said give us the slots you want us to come. People have given up their private practice and come. People have taken leave and come, so once TISS gets involved in things we are not only able to give it but also draw people. Many times people have said, field work agencies say take up to your disaster management we want to come, we want to do something. So we had all those in mind. So when this Taj happened we called all of them. Most of them came. Then we did this de-briefing session with people. People just needed time to talk of all the anguish they feel, of all the trouble they have faced then all those people who were caught inside and gone through the trauma of seeing their colleague being shot, seeing their colleagues trying to save someone else and being caught. In one week we finished that de-briefing with all the 3000 staff of Taj and then we went and did one full month of intense intervention of people who were caught there. One of the good things is that Taj has a counselor there. Probably Taj is one of the few hotels in the whole world where an employee can go or even a visitor to the hotel who needs some kind of person to talk to can go there. I think that is the impact Tata Institute leaves on people. I am very happy that I was involved for this long, 6week intervention with people.

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Q: How is the intervention of TISS in rehabilitation work any different or what is so unique about TISS's work especially when national disasters happen?

KG: Many of the interventions that TISS has done, the government considers TISS as a objective body so they want to do the initial evaluation of the injured or the losses that people have suffered. They think that TISS is a non governmental body that will give a very objective assessment of the situation. The second most thing TISS is known for is the psycho-social intervention that we are able to provide over a period of time. We cannot be there forever, but our principle has been that we will not only go and touch something and come away like most of the other people do. So after each we take some long term thing e.g. our current centre for community organization and development practice which used to be urban and rural community development stayed in that area and did a rehabilitation project where people were involved in designing their own homes. We didn't come away from the Gujarat earthquake, we undertook the follow-up study. In Orissa the floods had happened we took up some kind of intervention over there. The USP of TISS is that we don't just go and do what the government asks us to do and come back. We find our own funds; of course Tata trust is very benevolent and always helps us out where we do some kind of follow-up work also.

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After the Mumbai terror attack, there is still follow-up work that is going on with the people. The Tatas gave some money where TISS has a project where they are still following up with people who were shot at VT station. Everybody who was injured has been located. Tatas have tried to get jobs for people who were not injured at Taj but at the station. That way TISS believes that you don't go as a visitor and come out.

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Q: Since you have been involved in so much counseling practice, can you tell us how that idea generated?

KG; around 98, Dr. Desai requested me to join a small group where we were trying to see if we could get a counselor to come over here. I was not involved in the selection of that counselor but she used to come twice a week on a Friday afternoon and she used to sit in the medical room, which is one of the faculty rooms now. I think where Dr. Anil Kumar sits was the medical room and since then it was like students and staff it was too much in an open space. At that time there was too much secrecy. people didn't want to be seen going inside so people wanted to come in off office hours or not in the tea break because people would see them going and then slowly, as the strength of Tata Institute grew we got at some point of time, in 2002 we decided that we will have more than one part time counselor . We felt that only coming on a Friday is not enough. We had three counselors coming who came on twice a week basis, so Monday to Saturday was covered. When the new construction happened we have a separate counseling room since 2007 or 2008. Once these three more people joined, now we have a full time counselor . All this is because as we progressed we realized that there is a lot more that the counselors could do. Now, apart from meeting students and staff who have one to one problems the counseling centre does a lot of promotive work. There are a lot of workshops that are arranged. Before the exams, we have stress management workshops, time management workshops.

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Now we have these kinds of workshops training programmes, one counselor is on the

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job placement of the students. She is involved in preparing students for job interviews and things like that specially.. it's not like only intervention when people have a problem. We have a lot of other activities. Also, the counseling centre now this is the third year we are trying it, we have peer supporters, where we have a process through which students are oriented to what is counseling, right in the beginning. The director on the first day itself says that these are the support services. Counseling centre is a support service, medical centre is also a support service. So they are told that this support service is available and the counselors give a detailed orientation as to what the counseling centre does.

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Then once the students are little settled they are told about this concept of peer mentoring, peer support. Students apply and each student has to fill out a form and based on the form each student is interviewed by one of the counselors and the various kinds of activities that peer are supposed to be doing. One is befriending students. Also getting involved in other kind of activities like planning games, workshops, and conferences. Based on what their capability is we choose them accordingly. One of the major events that the peer supports arrange is a mela.

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Last two years we have a theme of celebrating. We just call it celebrating. Last year was celebrating life because last year just before this happened there were lots of student suicides in Maharashtra and especially in Mumbai. Whenever a suicide happens everybody gets a little unnerved so the students decided that they would like



to freak out. They say we want to freak out. We'll celebrate life. Institute gives a lot of support financial and logistic support and we hold a one evening programme and lots of games are there, lots of innovate games the students involve, then you can suggest what music you want to hear, you can sing along if you want. At the end of it there is a half hour reserve for dancing. We get food. A bhel puri stall is there. Ice cream stall is here. A typical college festival kind of atmosphere happens. Just before the exams we do this, they call it stress buster.

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Two months ago now we employed a full time counselor even in the rural campus otherwise our counselors, myself sometimes used to go to the rural campus. Whenever there is an emergency they'll call so we will run to the rural campus to help out, but now we have a full time counselor there and this counseling centre will directly report to the director. he takes a lot of interest in our work and more than once he has said good you'll be there otherwise students come and bother me about their personal problems now at least they know where to go so I can concentrate on other things.

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We held a contest last year to give an Indian name to the counseling centre, but the students were not very innovative they gave usual names like Chaitanya and Kamal and things like that. Which actually fit into the ethos of the counseling centre so we are still on a look out for a proper name for the counseling centre? Now the counselor who was appointed was an ad hoc counselor for three years. Now a permanent post is



advertised. Now the counselor will... it will be a UGC sanctioned post. We are now going to document our counseling... centre can operate in a university system. As I said many... two three colleges have approached us wanting to know what we are doing, how does our counseling centre work, how does one start a counseling centre.

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A lot of other organizations like the Shipping Corporation of India. When the pirates hijacked they approached us, wanting to know how to deal with the situation with families. When at Tata Power some burst happened, one of the centers in Gujarat they approached the counseling centre. Though we are not able to go there and provide the services that we provided at the Taj. All the counselors of our Tata Institute and other counselors were involved over there. Everybody now thinks they are equipped in handling these kinds of calamities.

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May be in future let's see, there are preliminary discussions about how we can make this a... once a full time counselors comes, because so many outsiders are asking us. Ex students keep in touch with our counselors. Sometimes when they have problems they call up long distance and counselors say isn't there a counselor in your city, but they say you have helped us in the past we want you to help us now. So hopefully we will be able to expand our counseling services once the fulltime counselor is there. A permanent one. Let us see.



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Q: Your ideas of TISS and how you think TISS will grow in a few years or a decade from now.

KG: I'll first start with social work then I'll go ahead. With this three four years of restructuring and running the programme, I'm also the programme co-coordinator of social work and we have seen that even though we made our courses generic, this a big lacunae we find now that because of the economic demands in the field and also the kind of orientation students come every year we have a request that I want to work in this particular field. The kind of teaching we are getting, we are not getting thoroughly equipped. There is this demand that you please equip us in this particular field. In criminology field or mental health field or in community work so social work I visualize in a few years from now the school of social work will also have MA programmes.

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Our centre is starting a new dual degree programme in mental health next semester. Same way many other centers are working on their own MA programmes. I see that in the next five or seven years school of social work offers right now only two MA programmes. One in social work and one in social work in disability management. In future I visualize that there will be many more social work programmes. There might still remain a generic social work programme for many people who are not yet decide what they want to do, but for people who come decided what they want to do there will be smaller groups with MA in a specific field. That's how I look at it.



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Secondly, I think now that in my 28 years in Tata Institute I have seen three more campuses coming up. I visualize in the next few years we might have a campus in most of the major cities of India. We have reached Guwahati, Hyderabad may be we will reach Delhi, Bangalore, places in the north and something in Gujarat too; this is how I would like our Institute to grow.

With all our international collaborations that is happening, I don't think the day is far when we will have a campus in some foreign university also. We are already doing close work with LSE. A lot of other social work universities all over... their students are coming here we are going there. Now it is at that level, but I do think that at some point of time we will have... I'm sure we will have a campus in some of the universities abroad.

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Also one of the other dreams I have is that someday students belonging to one school can opt for courses from another school. Very often our students come to us and say, oh there is this interesting course in disaster management can't we do that course or there is an interesting course, my roommate is in media and culture and she talks about this course cant I do that course? So I think TISS will have to cross list courses across and I think that will be the true essence of TISS.

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Q: Do you wish to say anything to TISS?

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KG: I think I am too small a person to give any message to TISS, but probably in our Indian term if I say, I will say “lage raho”. Keep on expanding and keep up the values that we have held on to. I think that is what makes us unique. I don’t know if it is part of what you are asking me, but I will say having been a student of TISS and working in TISS and working in social work, I feel very content that my journey in this world has been enriched by my association with Tata Institute.