



Dr. Lakshmi Lingam

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Place: TISS, Mumbai

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contributed to gender and equity mainstreaming activities of Government departments in a number of states in India. She was the General Secretary of the Indian Association for Women's Studies during the period 2000 -2002 and was a member of the Organizing Committee that hosted the International Women's Health Meeting in 2005 in New Delhi. For more details: <http://www.tiss.edu/lefttop/faculty-staff/Academics/>



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Q: What was your experience when you first came to TISS, how did you sort of respond to this campus, was it different from other places, how did you kind of settle in?

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LL: I came to this campus even before I joined as a faculty. I was doing my Master's degree in Andhra University and during my vacations I came to see this campus. So actually it was very quiet, and hardly any students around but I went around this quadrangle, this is, the quadrangle is my heart. You know I walked around the quadrangle and read all the notice boards and I knew it was a very vibrant place where lots of young people are writing about various things that are going around and they wanting to have a say on those issues, as well as mobilize themselves to, you know, debate on something etcetera. So I was thinking, you know, I would really want to come here. And the next place I went while I was on this visit to the Institute is I went to the dining hall and again I was very impressed by the building and the kind of structure that it had, and I had this typical chai but it was so nice. So I always thought I should come back and do my PHD here.

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LL (cont.): But it so happened that I joined for my PHD at IIT, but when I completed my PHD and submitted my thesis there were job openings here and I applied in Women's Studies and that was almost the first set of jobs opening up in Women's Studies. So I applied and I took the interview and I joined, so now it's over 22 years since I'm here. But I must say I'm very fascinated with the place even now; I feel the same way I felt on the first day, you know. Every



single day I look forward to coming to the Institute, I'm very excited about my classes, my students and all that. But I think the interesting part also is how you see the classroom as a teacher, the changing facets of the classroom also, you know. I think when I came and I began teaching, we used to have a bunch of just ten, twelve students and an optional paper with something like sixteen or twenty students is like a very popular course, you know. So my classrooms had that kind of number and people told me it was a very popular course.

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LL (cont.): And now we have very big numbers. So the kind of rapport that you had with students and the intimacy that you had were very different then from now. But I think the kind of discussions we had in the class then and the kind of discussions that we have now in the classroom I think tell us something about the changing, ongoing changing discourses in the public domain. As well as the, the configuration of the classroom. I think the fact that now you have students who come from various levels in society and also the fact that we implement the constitutional guidelines that are there in terms of reservations, I think does create very interesting, you know, configuration in the class. Therefore every single student is continuously challenged in terms of what their assumptions are. So while you as a teacher are trying to actually unfold all those issues, the fact that it's for them now a lived reality in the classroom as well as on the campus. Students I think have lot more challenging ways of engaging with, whether its caste issues or class issues, gender issues or even sexual orientation issues.

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LL (cont.): So I always find that quite interesting. The initial years of my career I think had a lot



more discussions around class issues, then it moved on to caste based issues and looking at gender within caste, and now I think it's much more about issues to do with gender and sexual orientation and, you know, perspectives and identity and all that a lot more. Though it does get challenged in its own way; sometimes some students in the class say that it's a very elite perspective, we need to still look at class issues and all. But the fact that they all pull it in all directions I think tells us about how it is a miniature kind of India, the classroom itself is a miniature part of this country. So I always enjoy those hidden grids in the class, you know, while what I teach or how we carry on discussion is one part of the story. What is it that's actually getting played out very subliminally is, I think is more interesting.

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LL (cont.): And I see that quite interesting, the way it's moving over a period of time.

Q: As a researcher and also as Dean of Research, could you kind of critically reflect on research within TISS, what kind of role it has served in, you know, the larger society, whatever kinds of shifts that have taken place over a period of time.

LL: I think initially when we were looking at doing research within this Institute; we did have grants from the Board of Research Studies. But obviously those grants were not considered to be very big, but so were the grants from elsewhere. The biggest grant would be a 50,000 grant that I had from ICSSR, like a very big grant while the Board of Research Studies grant was only 10,000. And even that I had to do a lot of explaining as to why 10,000, okay. So in terms of money, of course, what is ten then and what is ten now is a different matter, but what is, what are the areas that you are trying to explore then and what you're trying to explore now obviously tells at each point of time what are the concerns of the Institute.



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LL (cont.): And what are the interests that you come with to this Institute. So focus on migration was not a big thing at that point when I started looking at issues of migration and migrants into the city, and look at gender and migration in the city, you know. So these were the first things that I brought into the Institute. While several other research projects were much more- at that point- considered to be very contemporary in terms of policy related issues, etcetera. But Institute I think systematically had made attempts to bring in several new perspectives by bringing in several young people with areas that are not sufficiently explored. But there's been a period when we were doing lots of research in this Institute that were funded by external agencies and many of them were actually evaluation research or some kind of impact assessments or, you know, base line studies etcetera and these were big driven, well funded projects.

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LL (cont.): But I think seriously when the leadership in the Institute changed, there were questions about why are we doing this research because does it really produce new knowledge. If you're only looking at program related issues, or looking at programming, impacts of programs and we don't spiral up to actually, you know, talk back to existing body of literature or knowledge, then we're actually not contributing at all to the ongoing discourses of knowledge building. And the Institution is very well known for its policy work and for its policy research etcetera, but there are also several people who don't think that's really the primary contribution to knowledge, so there's definitely a hierarchy in terms of what is seen as research which contributes to knowledge and what is seen as something that contributes to policy. While we



know at this Institute when we say 'policy', we're not talking about doing policy as an arm of the State to, you know, work on people. We talk about policy from a perspective where we say how you make people's voices heard at the level of policy, or we talk about how do you amplify people's voices in order to rework policy. So how we look at policy research is very different from how it's understood outside.

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LL (cont.): But I think only in the recent past we seem to be really making that kind of dent, and we're making that kind of dent with a lot more- what do you call- clarity and also a lot more legitimacy. While I think for a long time several senior researchers also in this Institute had a sense of, you know, feeling that probably we're not really prime-time researchers, we do research which is not seen as really great theory building research. But I think while we have now several scholars in the Institute who do research that contributes to that kind of theory building, or at least contributes to those kinds of discussions in theory building. We have many people who are also a lot more conscious about what kind of policy research we do, and how we can actually generate new concepts or new ways of theorizing from there. So I think that kind of self-confidence as an Institute in terms of understanding research and its value for people and on behalf of people is a lot more clearer there, now.

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LL (cont.): And many research, I think the fact that Masters Degree students do good research here I think is also amazingly valuable. They go to terrains that very senior people can't really access. They have the grit, they are brave, they are bold, and they ask new questions. They also



don't have too many things, too many baggages, so I think that's really valuable. So I think for us the biggest challenge at this point of time is how do we put together all the research that young people do and really put it out in the public domain. Because otherwise papers and publishers, publications in journals, etcetera, have their own dynamics of politics. So very often young people's papers don't get accepted in journals unless they have a very senior faculty as a co-paper author, writer so on and so forth. So I think there's a real need to create alternative spaces for young people to publish their work, whether its online work or you know hard, published hard journals, whatever. I think that's an area we need to explore.

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LL (cont.): And I think we produce so much of research in this Institute. While a lot could be repetitive and for many people it's a way of learning the craft, but for many I think what they produce is really very new. If you were to just say, what is the work on transgender communities that has been done I think you can trace that research at least twenty years back, while others are looking at it now. So the perspectives might be different. If you were to look at sex workers now, you can trace in this Institution work that was done forty years back. Probably the perspectives were different, but.... So I think on every single issue of social significance, we can actually track what is the trajectory. And I think in this Diamond Jubilee year this is something we need to do.

Q: Repeat Platinum Jubilee year....

LL: Yeah, in this Platinum Jubilee year I think we should definitely try and actually track how these discourses have come about and what kind of research has this Institute done, what kind of research has this Institute done.



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LL (cont.): And in what ways are those perspectives changing. I think it'll be extremely important to look at that.

Q: I mean, in terms of the kinds of , methodologies that are employed or the kinds of questions that are asked, in terms of the linkages between theory and practice.... I mean, these areas do you see any sorts of shifts in any sort of way.....

LL: In terms of methodology I think earlier there was greater emphasis on quantitative research. Even now we feel that people have to do... if they have to do quantitative research, they do a good job of it, there's no issue about it. If people have very small samples and then try to deploy all kinds of statistics on that it becomes farcical. I think increasingly many more students are inclined and also more faculty are inclined to a lot of qualitative research and I think that gives space for exploring concepts differently.

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LL (cont.): Also exploring what people have to say much more, you know, with openness than with the quantitative methodology. So wherever we need to, you know, make a point based on our qualitative research and our observations from our qualitative research, I think then being able to design a large quantitative study would really make a substantial dent. For example, the recent research that Professor Parasuraman and Professor Rajratnam have done; they've looked at issues of agriculture growth and its link to issues of food security, and whether it automatically improves nutritional availability at the household level. So these kinds of things, no matter how much of qualitative research you do and say, it won't make any difference in the discourse on food security. Or anybody wants to look at whether economic growth or agriculture growth



automatically means prosperity for everyone. So you'd obviously need large scale studies.

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LL (cont.): So there's, I think, a lot more conscious way in which now we do research, as to what method we want to use where and why. And I think the growth of Cultural Studies and studies on sexuality, all that I think are also very new things that have come in recently which are very important. We tend to look at economic issues and completely dis-privilege and de-prioritise cultural issues, but cultural issues are very strongly embedded within these economic questions and vice versa. So to be able to explore those in tandem is extremely important, and I think those are the new clear patterns that are emerging. Also many more faculty are looking at budgets, you know. They're researchers who are looking, revisiting villages where studies were done earlier. So there is that kind of work going on.

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LL (cont.): And we also have strong research grants, internal grants to be able to support that kind of research. So where you're not likely to have external agencies commissioning research, we have internal grants which are very strong money. So the all proposals get peer reviewed, externally blindfolded and reviewed. And then faculty get grants based on that. So I think there is enormous scope for doing good research, and we are able to generate those kinds of internal grants for doing that research.

Q: Would you like to....

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Q: So, you know one thing that we could also talk about is the MPhil/PHD program and how that has developed in the last few years.

LL: I think the program has gone through revision several times already. So in 2006 when it was recast as a new program, I think that was the third round of revisions, as much as I know. Earlier we had a pre-doctoral part of the research, which was very elaborate, and then we had the doctoral program. Around 2006 what we've done is we revisited what were the problems with that kind of program and we've also noticed that students come in to do their PHD program but the duration that they take is very long. And then therefore we tried to look into where are the problems and then try to rework them by getting feedback both from research scholars as well as faculty members who guide students.

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LL (cont.): So we actually felt that the load of expectations that are there for pre-doctoral work actually saps off all the energy that is there for a young person; after that they're lost completely. So we then moved into a scenario where we have a two year MPhil program, and then after that students move onto a PHD program. So the fact that we moved to a taught program gave the entire program a different push altogether. So several students, immediately after their Masters degree, they come in for an interview and they also do their written exam and then they get selected to do the two year MPhil program, and thereafter they move into their PHD. And the PHD program is also pretty much benchmarked in terms of every year what are the expectations, and there is a body that does the monitoring of the performance of the student.

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LL (cont.): We also have a doctoral advisory committee; this wasn't there before. So over and above a guide you also have a team that's looking at how the student is performing. So I think now there's a very good word around, going on around about the program, so lots of people apply for our MPhil/PHD program and we have a big number- I think we have about 275 students at this point of time, MPhil and PHD put together. And we also don't make any distinction between part-timers and full-timers; we consider all of them as PHD students. Some of them may live on the campus and others may be outside so we may use the word 'off-campus students' just to make a distinction between students who stay on the campus and away. So the expectations that we have from each of them is the same, so we have no difference at all.

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LL (cont.): So practically everyone is put through the same kind of grind. And what we've also done is instead of expecting students to come in and take classes here and beyond the campus, or come as frequently as possible, we've created a modular research methodology framework so every semester they come for a week, and that's the period when they through classes as well as go and meet with their guide and do all the necessary formalities that they have to do in terms of their PHD. So I feel that, you know, there's a lot more, you know responsiveness from students to this kind of rhythm and also there's more accountability now from their end. Because there's scope for just losing the sense of time when one is doing PHD and one is away from the campus. So now there, more people are working harder and, despite their jobs, putting time for their research and also submitting and picking up their degrees and all that.

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LL (cont.): So and then the demand for PHDs also has gone up over all; I mean the fact that there are several educational institutions that have come up in the past ten years, many private institutions that have come up, and all these institutions also have to follow the University Grants Commission recommendations about PHDs and all that. So the demand for PHDs has also gone up, and you know that academic jobs are considered to be the most stable. So they're very recession-proof, so most people want to pick PHDs and therefore TISS becomes quite a destination, people would like to come to TISS and take their degrees from here. And we are open to a lot of interdisciplinary work, so.... Unlike other universities that are very fixed in terms of their disciplinary background, we look at a wide variety of people and basically go by the strength of their proposal, go on the strength of what they come with in terms of their fieldwork experience or experiential, you know, experiential careers that they've had.

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LL (cont.): So very senior activists also come and do PHD, so we have... some of our research scholars are older than our guides here, you know. So I think that provides a lot of room for scholars also to interact with each other. And some of them also are advisors to other research scholars, so the way we tap people is different now.

Q: There's always been within this institute] at least for the last forty or fifty years, this kind of uneasy relationship between social work and social sciences that gets played out in various ways. Do you have any thoughts on this?

LL: I think when I was new to the Institute I used to hear it more, you know and I think.... There were many meetings where people drew these demarcations just to show that there is a difference.



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LL (cont.): I think the fact that now we've grown so big, I don't see that getting played out much, and I don't see any relevance of that at all. I think, I would think that while it's very, probably a very fundamental understanding or difference that some people think, I would think that some of the values that social work has brought into this institution still guide almost all our work, guide what we stand for. We may use very different words now, we may say human rights, or we might say people's voices or we may say equity, justice; we say many things, but to a large extent many of them have their roots in the social work's concerns for people. So to reiterate some difference and think that there's a fundamental gap and differences I think it was a favorite pastime earlier. I don't think we have that time now, we're all busy people. We have so many schools and so many new disciplines that have come in, so that so-called essential boundary difference is now gone.

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LL (cont.): And I think we have several new lines that we are drawing around us, so I think that's not so much an issue now. There might be people who would still differ from what I'm saying, but I don't see it. Yeah.

Q: Would you like to talk a little about the Hyderabad campus, you know, what have been the developments of that, what was the idea behind it, how it is... what are its future plans.

LL: Setting up this campus in Hyderabad is quite a challenge and I would say setting up a campus in South India is going to be a challenge, especially where, in a context where social sciences are on a decline. People don't value social sciences at all.



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LL (cont.): And a social science is seen as a residual discipline. If people can't get into Medicine, can't get into Engineering, then they take Social Sciences, so it's seen as a category that's pretty much residual and, you know, bottom of the heap. Given that kind of overall you know, image or overall impression that people have about social sciences, it's quite a challenge for us to actually set up a campus there and then say that social sciences is extremely important to make a difference. Because Andhra Pradesh also is one of the states within South India that has human development indicators that are not very good. So you have a scenario where the social development issues and the social sector issues are extremely important but social sciences as a discipline that can contribute to making changes there, improvements there is really non-existent or absolutely invisible, you know.

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LL (cont.): So there is definitely a space for the Institute to go and do something and make a dent and make a mark, but the challenge is how do you do it. So the by-line for TISS Hyderabad is 'Excellence with Relevance', you know, so you have to carve that relevance, and you also need to keep the excellence as a benchmark, so it's not any social science but definitely we would like to do high quality social sciences. So the way we are envisioning the campus also is one where we look at how we have academic programs in that state; what kind of academic programs are we looking at. Also in what ways do we want to relate to the state, and in what ways do we want to relate to civil society as well as, let's say, how we want to relate to social movements. And we found in many of our consultation meetings, people are really looking up to TISS to come in and



play quite a strong, taut leadership role.

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LL (cont.): Not to say that everything is non-existent and we are going to actually write on this blank slate, but I would say as an academic institution, there are many things going on but hardly any academic institutions play any active role of that kind of significance. I mean, I always would think that TISS has this unique location where it can talk to people and it can talk to the State, you know, whereas most of the others would have only one location. So going to Hyderabad and setting up this campus is basically to see how do you rejuvenate that space in a new location, and how do you mark your significance and bring in voices from the communities into the State discourse... I mean, basically for policy formulation, etcetera. And Andhra Pradesh has been one state that has been extremely neo-liberal, has literally been coming up with a range of Acts and policies that are not, one would say, very supportive of people or poor people for that matter.

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LL (cont.): So the need to do strong research, you know, to be able to argue on many fronts is extremely important. So we are looking at the institute as one that strengthens social sciences education; places a lot of emphasis on doing policy-oriented research; links up with communities to be able to actually develop broad spectrum training and education programs, as well as be a member along with the others in the civil society groups, platforms; and provide an avenue for groups to come and actually deliberate, discuss and conceptualize what they would like to do. So it's quite, to be quite a catalyst in that sense I would think; to be able to do a range of things as



well as do them differently. So we'll be looking forward to do it there. But the basic difference is the question that often is asked is; is it going to be a state-specific Institution.

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LL (cont.): So what we are saying is while it's going to be in Andhra Pradesh with an eye on the state, it's definitely a national institute. So the configuration of the students, the configuration of the faculty would still be of national level in the sense, they would come from various states of this country. But a lot of our work would happen on the state, so when you create a template of how university can do things differently than that could be a very demonstrated way in which one can say that other universities can also replicate. Otherwise most universities, what they fundamentally do is first construct a wall, you know, first of all occupy large campuses, build a very formidable wall around them and then people go and inhabit inside, and then teach about society while sitting there. So we're actually looking at a campus that probably can create a lot of porosity, physically and mentally, you know. So how do we actually do that is a challenge?

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LL (cont.): You need to see that communities claim the university. We somewhere claim communities, we keep going and talking to them, collect data, come back, and produce our reports but how do you do the other way around where communities can claim the university. Not in terms of you know, hiring our spaces but actually setting agendas as to what we do in our institution, you know, what research we do, what do we think is a priority for doing policy research, what should we teach in the classroom. So you may have a very strong self-help group leader who may come and teach in the class, so why not. You know, why only a person who



reads books and articles should teach in a class on what is empowerment and what is the self-help group movement, while you can actually have a community woman coming and talking about what it means to do that. So the idea is to see how you, how does one weave these ideas that we have into the campus, every aspect of the campus.

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Q: As someone who's sort of worked for many years in the area of Women's Studies, would you like... do you have any reflection on, sort of, the role that gender plays in research, or research on gender within TISS and shifts that have taken place in this.

LL: When I joined here, in fact... we continue to use of course women much more than we use gender, of late much more. Gender was not really a very acceptable category, lots of arguments used to take place where people thought it was a very divisive category. People also thought that it was a very funded category, because you can get grants if you do this. From there we had seen a shift where colleagues who didn't want to acknowledge gender actually used to put it in their title and try and say, yeah we also will talk to women.

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LL (cont.): And when they found that they're actually getting grants for doing it, then they say... it's a kind of instrumentality that has come in. But I think there have been a lot more shift and change that have happened now, and many of us who were teaching at that point in classrooms, we do see many of our students have moved on and have either made lot of, you know, dent outside or have come back as faculty, back to the Institute. So the classroom itself was a place of resistance earlier, and now you don't see that kind of resistance to gender. In fact, you might have



other issues about how do you bring in a multiple gender possibility. There's now a resistance where we are looking at, how do we look at gender beyond binaries. While talking about gender itself was an issue earlier, now you're saying how you look at multiple gendered sexualities, you know, so there are so many layers that are coming up, but I would still think that students are a lot more keyed in into understanding gender- especially in some programs, not all programs- compared to many faculties.

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LL (cont.): I think many faculty still need a lot more resolution on why they should take on gender. They could probably run their entire career not even worrying about gender, or simply say that's not my expertise, please go to so-and-so kind of thing. But I would say that tribe is much smaller, or at least politically quieter. They know that they can't get away now by saying I don't care about gender. And most of our programs also have gender based papers, many students do a lot more research on gender based issues, so there is a lot more openness. And this is one institute that actually has nurtured Women's Studies; we've completed more than 25 years in this Institute, whereas many institutions' Women's Studies is a very marginal program and hardly has any academic programs of their own, and depending on the colour of the political party in power in the state the Women's Studies program either stays or goes.

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LL (cont.): So they have that kind of difficulties, whereas here I think we have a demonstrated, you know, way forward as to how you actually integrate Women's Studies into university systems.



Q: How far would you say that- I mean, as a campus- TISS is sensitive to issues of gender relationships of power and how do they get played out? I mean in some senses TISS is different from a traditional university.

LL: Yeah.

Q: Do you have any reflections on that?

LL: What we tend to see in the Institute is a kind of an ongoing debate, because every two years you have a new bunch of students who come. So if the senior students are- what you say- senior students are there and conscious, and have figured why it's important to look at gender, then the juniors can understand what's going on.

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LL (cont.): But when you have one batch of students not accepting it, then you have... see that the resistance on the campus is high. So while there's so much of intermingling that happens on the campus, and there are more women on the campus than men, that doesn't mean that there's no gender power issue on the campus. Men may be a minority, but that doesn't mean that they're powerless at all. Or let's say how various institutional functionaries, how much of their consciousness is there on gender; all these are still questions. So while I think on the campus terms like, you know, zero tolerance to violence or at the inaugural, Director says that this is an institution that, you know, stands for gender equality and that we have zero tolerance to violence against women, or that there's a Gender Amity Committee and you can't get away misbehaving with women, and that we recognize all differences and diversity I think sends a signal to lots of young people who want to know what is this like, how is it different.



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LL (cont.): So definitely I think they get a very different input here, but I wouldn't think that it's a very cozy, comfortable situation, you know. And I don't think it should be like that, because only when there is that continuous conflict there's room for discussion and debate and resolution as to why you have to understand it differently. Otherwise it would become very gentle co-option, you know, and no resolution internally in your head, whereas the tensions that they have on the campus about clothing or dress code or timings, or whether women can smoke or consume alcohol, you know all those become arenas for them to continuously discuss and debate class and gender, and caste. And I think they also have issues of regional dimensions also, so I think it's quite a hub of activity. So I think it's different, but it's not so different.

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D: [...]

Q: As someone who's been in TISS for...more than twenty years, where do you see TISS moving in the future, you know, in the sort of larger, you know, context of a society that's globalised, globalizing, getting more corporatized.... I mean where is the larger horizon, within which we are located, any thoughts on where... how TISS is located within that larger horizon?

LL: Yeah. I think we have quite a difficult job on hand. We've never defined education as a commodity here, we've never looked at the institution as some place where we're going to make huge money educating young people, or doing research for agencies that want us to do research and fund us well so that we say what they want us to say.

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LL (cont.): So we steadfastly maintained a lot of our own self-esteem and very high levels of autonomy, and we must definitely thank the government or Ministry for Education, human resource development or UGC to facilitate that kind of autonomy that we have. So if we were to continue maintaining that kind of autonomy, you know, I think... there's definitely a need to see how we retain that in, against all the challenges that are there. And future is going to be more difficult, I would think, in terms of funding for higher education, so retaining the significance of higher education, retaining the significance of higher education, retaining the significance of research for sound policy making as well as being able to generate funds of our own without compromising on our positions or values is something that we need to really work strategically. So we need to continuously see who could be our partners in all this. So even if they are, let's say, private players we need to see who among them are closer to the values that we believe in and how do we partner with them.

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LL (cont.): So that kind of linkage is something we can't ignore, we need to work on those linkages. And I also think the, the demand for resources, the demand for natural resources and the unsettling of people who are dependent on these resources is going to become even more graver in the future. So how do we stick out our neck, you know, to keep saying what we are saying now is important, it's going to be a challenge and we need to do that more. I would also think that the existing inequalities that we have, it's still going to be a long time before all those get resolved so therefore the need to identify the factors that can actually reverse those inequalities, I think we need to do greater work on that. We're good in terms of analysis to say what those factors are and how they work, and what they do to people; but what is it that needs



to be done to bring about change, how social transformation can actually take place.

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LL (cont.): I think we need to place greater emphasis on that so we can have, we can think of a future, a foreseeable future where change is possible. And I think the large majority of young people need to be engaged with, and we give high quality education- but this is an oasis So we need to see how do we blossom and grow and have many more institutions, either under the same name or many new names but definitely do this good job across the country, and in locations where no other institutions go, we should be able to go and do that work. So engaging young people, you know, reiterating their skill sets, strengthening their self-esteem, all these are extremely important for the nation that can otherwise lose its hope. And I also have a lot concern about the artisan and the handloom weavers and artisan communities. The opening of the markets actually meant that there's a complete loss of their location, loss of their skills, and we don't seem to be doing enough to strengthen those skills.

0:24:58.814

LL (cont.): So how do we actually go about working to strengthen those skills, strengthen the self-esteem of those communities, dignity of those communities? At the same time see that they are not so-called 'protected' from everything and they don't have any relevance in the contemporary times, but they can play both these out well. We should be able to see how we play those important roles to improve their relevance as well as strengthen their traditional skills. So I think there are many more areas that we've not adequately explored which we have to in the coming years.



Q: Is there anything you'd like to say as like a sound bite....

LL: [laughs]

Q: ...on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee.

0:25:47.565

LL: [laughs] ... on the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee.

Q: A message to TISS?

LL: [laughs] I could say maybe many and you can see what sounds better, I don't know. I would strongly feel that this is a defining moment for us, and as an institution we need to reflect on what it that we could achieve in these 75 years and is there a way of doing it in a shorter time in the coming years. And how do we actually dictate agenda rather than doing a lot of fire-fighting. I think these are very important things that we should do in this year.

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LL: Yeah. It's more about how do you reflect on the past, learn from the past to inform your future and this kind of, how we inform the future should also help us determine how we go about doing our work in the future. Probably, there are many avenues we have not even explored, and this we can only do if we can listen to communities more than what we do now. While as an institution we have a lot more connections with the community, we have not explored ways as to how the communities can set agenda for us, so if we can get communities to set agendas for us, if we can get faculty to actually go and stay with communities for some time on sabbatical. They go on sabbatical and stay in communities, come back to teach in the classroom, I think we would have lot more windows that open in the minds of faculty members.



0:27:53.923

LL (cont.): Often we look at sabbatical as one where we go abroad or you know you are around but you don't have teaching responsibility. But I think sabbatical period should be one where we do a Bharat Yatra; go and live in some remotest village, or go and live in some urban slum, that's the kind of grounding we must go through. So I think the Platinum Jubilee year should be a year for us to ground ourselves, to reflect on the past to inform our future.

Q: Thank you.

LL: Yes, yes.

....The film ends here..

0:00:01.364

LL: About whom I would like to say?

Q: Is there any- you don't have to answer this- I mean, there are some [?] who have passed on, or who have retired, or.... Are there any memories you have of....?

LL: I have extremely, I must say, lovely memories of Professor Suma Chitnis as my first boss and Dr Armaity Desai as our first... my first Director. I have such amazing experiences, you know. I've always grown up with very strong women like my mother and my grandmother, my aunts, so... my guide, so coming to this institute to have a boss who's a woman and whose Director is a woman was like for me a very nice experience of reiteration of women's power, you know. And Suma Chitnis was one who always believed it's important to bring young people who come with new ideas, so even if I went to her hesitantly with some idea she used to just tell me; don't worry about anything, just think think think! You know and she'd say write write write!



You know, that kind of thing.

0:01:08.927

LL (cont.): And a very non-hierarchical person, my experience has been very non-hierarchical, she's a very non-hierarchical person, and my experience of the institution also is mediated thus, you know. I always felt as a young person in this institute that I never seen hierarchy. I always felt this is one place where you can walk around, talk to people, get your work done, and do your work. There's enough for everyone to do as much as they want. So even in terms of, I think, work ethic or politics of the workplace I would think this is place where things are absolutely probably at the zero level, you know. At least I have never felt that it's a very political place, it's a difficult place, things don't work here, let me look for another job; that kind of feeling I never got. So if it has a work ethic where things move and everybody wants things to be done and people are always having a range of things that they have to work on or complete, I don't think anyone has that kind of time to trample on other's feet.

0:02:12.093

LL (cont.): So my experience has been one where, you know, how do you give space for others to flourish. So I try to do that as much as possible now as a boss or as a guide, or even as a mother. How do you actually provide spaces for people to flourish while you provide the enabling environment. And also Professor Parasuraman, when I joined this Institute was a Reader, so I always went to speak to him about what I was doing, or if I had any queries as to how to think about something, I always went to him. So I always felt that he always reached out very well and having him as the Director now again I think just gives that momentum to the



entire Institution, where that culture is again, you know, it's come back to reaffirm itself. That culture of being able to be secure and nourish others and see that everybody flourishes, I think that's a very good culture.

0:03:17.242

LL (cont.): It came back again after he's come, and I think that's the best thing for the Institute. So, I like that much.

Q: Would you like to say something about the physical environment of TISS because as a campus we are different from other urban campuses and that environment.... [?]

LL: You know most universities, when I go I get so troubled with their very grotesque looking boards, Vice Chancellor or Head of the Department, big print boards and all, and they have this carpeted flooring and attendants sitting outside to just make sure that you can't enter inside. So I find those spaces extremely intimidating, you know, and compared to that in this campus, there's nothing really very intimidating about the physical space or the way it's organized, the way offices are organized. You often find students are dancing on the corridor outside the Director's office.

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LL (cont.): You find students are everywhere working, dancing, doing their workshops, so the... having these corridors, having these quadrangles as spaces I think are very defining elements of this Institution. So when you have buildings which are like boxes without those kinds of corridors, then I think young people are always told that this is not your place, so they have to enter the classroom, exit, hang around in the canteen and go. Whereas here I think it's a very



inviting place. While overall our number of buildings is going up, but I still think there's a way where people keep coming back to certain places which are warm and nice. We still have maintained the green patch, as many trees as possible. So I think it's always a few degrees lower here compared to the rest of the city. So I, in fact I enjoy my weekdays when I... on the weekend I feel very warm and hot at home.

0:05:17.727

LL (cont.): So when I come to work on Monday, I say thank God it's a Monday. People might say thank God it's a Friday, but for me it's thank God it's a Monday, you know. Coming to this work, being busy with your own things is exciting. Okay. Yeah, thanks.