



## **Prof R.K. Hebsur**

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Camera/Sound: Prof. KP Jayasankar

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Prof. R.K. Hebsur is former Deputy Director, TISS. He joined TISS in 1977 and was the Head, Department of Research Methodology. He retired in 1995. He has published extensively on research methodology, the Bombay riots and on social justice issues.



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Q: Prof. Hebsur, could you talk about your association with TISS. When did you first come to TISS...?

PH: In the first place I am most delighted to be here, to share my experiences of Tata Institute with you. And I'm also very happy and proud that your unit has undertaken this task. I had heard about Tata Institute when I began my career in Bombay as a Political Science lecturer. Some of my friends used to do a diploma course in labour welfare and they used to tell me about this institute. Then, after many years when Prof. Gore became chairman of the ICSSR with which I was connected, I got to know more about this institute. Then, when an advertisement appeared in the papers, I applied for the post of Reader in Research Methodology. When I joined the institute, I was in the department of Political Science, Punjab University, Chandigarh. I left Chandigarh and it was a very severe wrench for me. They treated me extremely well there, they gave me all the freedom to assemble the M.Phil Political Science as well as Research Methodology Syllabi as I liked and my entry into TISS was very smooth. 1977, June 23, I joined here. It was quite smooth and...Not only the members of the Dept. of Research Methodology, but also the other colleagues made me feel at home from day 1. I never felt that I was a stranger here and I took to the ethos of the institute quite easily. That is because; from the very beginning I have been a different kind of a Political scientist. I wasn't much interested in unicameral, bicameral, federal, unitary, presidential, parliamentary kind of Political Science. How politics affects inequalities and equalities, how politics is used to generate resources has been my favourite theme. Secondly, I went to the US, Washington DC University to do my PhD on a Fulbright scholarship. There also, it was not the



formal, legal approach to Political Science. It was down to earth power center orientation. I distinctly recollect one Prof. coming on the first day asking what are the powers of the American president. And I started saying the diplomatic powers and the executive powers. Nothing, they said. All that he can do and get away with. So that made me more oriented towards the real issues, political sociology, political economies.

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Thirdly, I was quite close to the people of...members of the Center for the Study of Developing Societies, whom you know very well. Ashis Nandi, for example. They were also studying issues like pro movement and pro poor and the Tata institute I found was interested in social issues. So, my entry was smooth and my work began in right earnest.

Q: How did the dept. contribute to intellectual thinking

PH: I understand that till 1975, research methodology like medical and psychiatric social work, etc. was also one of the options of social work. And on the basis of the recommendation of the Malcom Adisheshaya committee report, that specialization was discontinued. And the year I joined, I think the last batch of social research passed out. Then also at that time we had a good MA programme and I must admire Prof. Gore for introducing the time paper scheme conceptual before they go to the main thesis. But research methodology training wise, the full time PhD students and also the part time PhD students, our own colleagues, were asked to sit in the social work research methodology classes and get trained. So I thought it was not enough, so I introduced one RM 10 programme course which consisted essentially of reviews of methodologies



employed in a survey research as well as in a non survey research like case study based on aggregate data or social anthropology research. And unfortunately, I couldn't introduce any book in your area of semiotics. That went on very well but even then, the students were not able to critically review the theory that had been employed, the strength and weaknesses of the theory which showed through the strengths and weaknesses of the hypothesis of the research design itself. So this continued till I returned from my second trip to the US when I returned on a teacher Fulbright fellowship, 1982.

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we think in August 1982 I returned and in the same month, Dr. Armaity Desai became the Director. Her first assignment to me was to rewrite the entire set of M.Phil/PhD programme rules. Then I introduced in lieu of 9 papers the option of M.Phil program. I.e. they would do 6 paper plus on small research project and acquire, on way to a PhD degree and M.Phil degree. I introduced that. And I also introduced three courses in research methodology i.e. RM 1, essentially it was philosophy of social sciences including the development of scientific method, strength and the weaknesses, subjectivism then...Kuhn-Popper debate in which I am still interested, etc. and RM 2 was essentially research designs and questionnaire designs, data processing. RM 3 was essentially statistics. So all M.Phil/PhD students, part time or full time had to complete these requirements. This rule came into operation along with the new PhD rules in 1984. Jocularly I had kept that cyclostyled copy of the new PhD rules with me and whenever any doubt arose in the PhD section, I used to refer to it as the King James version of the new PhD program rules. Then it continued and any syllabus is just like, is only



suggestive. As and when new controversies arose, new books emerged and new critics of Karl Popper emerged, I would include them in the reading list and I'm very happy to say that even philosophy students from IIT, Bombay had a good deal of appreciation for the syllabus and the reading list I had assembled. One thing I must tell you because you are interested in this. I had studied subjectivism alright, but not to the extent that I wanted to. I would always invite Prof. Ramakant Sinare for lectures in subjectivism. Later on Milind Marshe. Milind Marshe has written a beautiful book in Marathi on deconstruction. In Marathi. So, that is how it stands. I think the outer shell still stands today. This is how I contributed to the department of Research Methodology. And after 83-84 when this came into force, all PhD students regardless of whom their supervisors were had to go through me. I had to certify PhD/M.Phil candidate so-and-so has completed all the requirements of RM and send it to Mr. Pannikar who was heading the PhD section at that time.

Q: There was no M.Phil program?

PH: No, there was no M.Phil programme.

Q: So...do you have any idea of how the PhD program. Itself was developing....?

PH: It did develop. It did give rise to some controversies. In any academic institutes there have to be differences of opinion. I am essentially a theory oriented, empirical theory oriented, and empirical theory testing, empirical theory falsifying person. I believe that knowledge grows that way and all PhD/M.Phil students had to present 3 papers in a seminar. I made that seminar very rigorous. Generally I don't think I missed any M.Phil/PhD seminar, that is they had to read 3 papers and also make a presentation of the



research proposal.

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I would be invariably present. Maybe it is my personality, maybe it is the tough RM language I used or maybe my upbringing in DC...I used to ask very searching questions. I distinctly recollect even today, my RM began in DC with Prof. Charles Rettenberg coming into the class and mispronouncing my name. Mr. Heeb-sir...what are the types of explanations in social research. Then I had to fumble through that, then I started reading Ernest Nagel very well. I would invariably present, sometimes this made the students nervous, but it is better for them to be nervous and try to overcome their diffidence in the presence of persons like me then let the seminars be ritualistic. I distinctly recollect when Mrs. Purnima Mane's student was reading a paper. So I was the first deputy director at that time. I quietly walked in and sat next to her. She was busy talking to somebody else on her left hand side, she saw and said, my god Dr. Hebsur is present, Shashikala, be careful, she said. So this went on. I think it was good. It put more life, more energy, more intellectual enthusiasm into the PhD program as well as the seminars. And also I presided over almost all the PhD/M.Phil viva voces in my capacity as deputy director except my own students, I would request Armaity Desai to preside over and I would always begin with very friendly comments. I would make the candidates feel at home. Look you have worked very hard, you have pestered me, you were so anxious to appear before the viva voce that you are asking me how soon your viva voce would be fixed, I have fixed as early as possible. I am sure you will do well. And then I would begin with the question, what made you invest your time, energy and youth into this particular problem, I would



begin like that. I think that had its effect, the level did go up.

Q: In terms of the dept. of RM, could you talk a little about the dept., how it contributed to various?

PH: Let me begin with one of the most important activities of the dept. of RM. We were the consultants on behalf of the ICSSR for almost any student from anywhere in India in regard to even tool construction into schedule construction. That involved even going into their theory, data processing and analysis. ICSSR used to allocate a certain amount for data processing to our dept. All that the students anywhere in the world, had to do was to send their application for data processing expenditure, countersigned by their guide with the seal of the university. We would pay them, even some daily allowance, travel expenses, plus 3-4000 of data analysis expenses. Sometimes I stretch the margin. I don't want to take the name, in the case of one of our colleagues who was stuck in difficulties, he had to reprocess the data again and again, I extended the margin to upto 12000. And I am very happy to say that at that time we used to spend 90% of the funds allotted to data processing by the entire, in the entire budget of the ICSSR. When our budget would be over, I would write to them. Without hesitation they would send because under one umbrella we could advise the students on research design, the questionnaire or tool design, the analysis design. We would get the analysis done and some of them wouldn't know in which direction the percentages should be drawn.

PH: I think from the day Gore became ICSSR chairman. I think it had been there, but



after I came there it picked up. It did pick up. What happens is routine statisticians or routine programmers are not able to analyse the social science data. They draw percentaging in a different way and students do not know how to interpret it. Secondly we were the research consultants for almost all of the major projects done here. And...I think our M.Phil program in RM also has contributed a good deal. Personally I have learnt a lot from Prof. Ramachandran. Sample size is taught in a routine way. How to calculate the sample size. That is, take the error, take the permissible margin, 0.05/0.01 and then assume some variance in the population and then square it and you get the sample size. But, when you start doing a tabular analysis, say 3 by 3, independent variable of age, young, middle age, elderly, voting; voting for BJP alliance, Congress alliance, Congress-NCP alliance and then the new party Maharashtra Navnirman Sena. Now this gives you 9 cells. And Prof. Ramachandran found out that if the mathematical formula for calculating sample size warranted a sample of only 90, that won't be enough for these 9 cells. Our requirement for a sturdy analysis is, in each cell there must be at least 15-20. So, for a robust analysis of each column, each age group, and compare them with other age groups, we needed a base of 60 per column, per value of the independent variable. So the sample size would go to 200 and so on. So the sample size, if you're using a regression correlation analysis, was small, for using the tabular analysis, had to be large then I also tried to introduce the analysis of aggregate data. My PhD thesis was based on aggregate data that is social mobilization, political development, inequalities and political violence in India. And I encouraged Prof. Vidya Rao to analyse the Tamil Nadu social welfare expenditure up to when the DMK came into power, during the congress regime and the DMK regime, main hypothesis being DMK being more grass



root oriented, more poor oriented, it must have spent much more. And that required a lot of deflation of expenditure in terms of cost of living. She had to take it to the base of 1962 or so. So she did all that...

Q: Could you talk a little more about Prof. Ramachandran, when he came and...

PH: Prof. Ramachandran was an intellectual giant and he, his specialization was survey design. He was the one who had mastered even the technical aspects of data processing at that time, before the desktop computers came into existence. We had to plug in one huge board, one for one variable and the other for the other variable, and those were the days of punch cards. And we had a counter sorter to take univariate distribution and pocket calculators; we used to take the percentages. Cross tabulation was difficult and he used to do that. He has an amazing talent and technical virtuosity to teach and also to work on the pre desktop computer data processing. As I told you he gave me insight into these problems. Thirdly, he was the one who implemented the ethos of the institute extremely well. I don't think anybody can undertake a survey of pavement dwellers in Bombay so successfully and as effectively as Prof. Ramachandran did. And later on he had some health problems alright, but his enthusiasm for the dept. did not diminish at all.

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In all data processing analysis, we run across, we come across one problem, the missing value. Either the respondent doesn't give the response to it, we code it as NR or usual code is 9 or 8, 8 is not applicable, 1 is no response. And also while punching the data



somebody might skip it. Or interviewer might make a mistake. Any number of things might happen in the field or in the punching room. So how to fill the missing value. Now if you eliminate the case altogether, for one question, one response is missing means eliminate the entire respondent or eliminate the whole question that is most dangerous, so this triggered intellectual curiosity on the part of Prof. R. Of course it had bothered all of us, but I was so busy with administration and I have an unusual capacity to invite work, very burdensome work that I couldn't address the problem. He wrote a book on missing values, it is fantastic. It is almost as good as the 18.5 SPSS, almost along the same lines. You can imagine the intellectual caliber of the person. Later on he wrote a good primer on survey design which I used for the orientation program. It is a primer, it is the...not like the Rosenberg Analysis and so on. His footprints on the dept. of RM are very deep and inerascable.

Q: What kinds of research did the institute take up?

PH: I noticed one thing when I came here. There were, there was the Mrs. Suma Chitnis's....Research unit, sociology of education, Prof. Murthy's s urban studies, and two or three were in the offing. Now, almost all the research handled by TISS was sponsored and funded research. Sponsored by the UNICEF, Ms. Khandekar was there, ILO, Govt.. of India, Govt.. of Maharashtra, Bombay Municipal Corporation, occasionally the high court's mandated us to conduct a survey or a study. It was almost always sponsored. So those who could get sponsored research were considered to be very lucky. Now, take my own example. After coming here I was asked to do an all Maharashtra survey of Maharashtra police constables. It was not Political Science but I



built into it my Political Science angle. As I prepared my questionnaire for police constables, I sensed that the burden of work on the state reserve police force and district police was very heavy. This Thana police got away with lesser work, of course theirs is also arduous work, but there was no fixed time. The discontent was very high, so I built an angle of protest orientation. My first was the, in response to the government of India invitation, by the national police commission. My second project which I did along with Jude Hendricks and Dr. Jacob, I did one wrong, they continued, was at the invitation of Govt.. of India, ministry of education. That is evaluation of adult education program in Maharashtra. It gave me good insight into various things including the process of modernization. Third one which I consider my best research was at the instance of the Mandal commission. The Mandal commission asked me to study and ask me why the violent reaction and backlash against the introduction of reservation for OBCs was so severe in North India, UP and Bihar and was absent in the South Indian states. Their deadline was stiff, but I did manage it.

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Then...I was the member of a Govt. of Maharashtra committee which was constituted at the instance of Govt.. of India to study communalism in 3 MH towns, Thane Bhivandi and Malegaon, 1983. 84 actual riots broke out. It was entirely arranged by the home dept. of the Govt. of MH, but I kept my notes. That became very useful. Something interesting happened. 1984, the riots actually broke out in Bombay and Bhivandi and Dr. Armaity Desai asked me for a copy of that. I never got a copy. None of us got it. So I wrote to the Govt. of India afterwards, so it went into the black hole of the ministry. I reminded the



home dept., but the concerned additional secretary had moved on. So with my own notes, I prepared a 3 page draft. I distinctly recollect dictating it to Unnikrishnan and sent why the communal tension takes a long time to brew up and the various factors contributing to it and sent a note. Then my next project was of course at the instance of Justice Srikrishna who headed the commission to inquire into the communal violence in Bombay 1992-93. This is, I'm giving you the kinds of research projects I handled. Most of the research projects were sponsored funded projects including the famous Narmada project affected persons in the product of which Dr. Parasuraman has played such a major role.

Q: Could you talk a little more about the Srikrishna work that you did?

PH: As you know my PhD thesis itself was on political violence. Since then this subject of political violence has shadowed me. I couldn't get rid of it at all. By the time Justice Srikrishna appointed us, I hand one the Mandal commission report also. So I took as my colleagues Dr. Jacob Aikara sociologist and Chandan Sengupta and Dr. Sivaraj a very formidable demographer. And then Justice Srikrishna wanted me to tell him what were the social, political and economic factors which were responsible for such huge rioting. Such huge riots won't occur at the drop of a hat. The steel must build, the communal violence builds. So I employed 6 different theories of political violence to explain this. To give an example, as one of the great scholars, Asghar Ali engineer has studied, when the economic division of labour backs down and each community raids the other community's preserve, the potential of political violence is built up. Now, for example, in Bhivandi, the power looms were mostly in the hands of the minority community, of course in that city they are a majority. But the wholesale trade in yarn and purchasing the



cloth produced by the power looms was in the hands of the majority community. But then some members of the minority community took to trade and some members of the majority community also tried to set up their own units then this led to some amount of communal tension. So I examined the Bombay riots from ethnic division of labour being upset. then secondly from the sheer social mobilization, how social mobilization affects that is people from rural areas, small towns come to Bombay the migration increases and theory goes that these are all flotsams and jetsams and they are available for any kind of a radical call but my own research had proved that the rural to urban migrants are not at all radical prone. They are very happy to earn a livelihood. You do anything in Bombay, you do an honest 12 hours work, and you can fill your stomach. So they are not the people who will risk their lives and limbs. So I checked that angle. Then there is the famous Alexis de Tocqueville hypothesis. Revolutions do not occur when things are bad, revolutions occur when things are improving when the improvements come down. I tested it. I tested the growth of Bombay in terms of organized sector employment. And I found that organized sector employment was increasing very steadily from 1950 onwards. After 1980 organized sector employment comes down that is a steep decline. so, the people who were used to secure jobs, people who used to look forward to the 31st of the month to collect their salaries and go home, they felt insecure suddenly because the opportunities in the organized sector employment had shrunk, the textile industry in Bombay had gone worse, I don't know who the responsible person was, some people blame the mill owners themselves....so there is one theory which was attested by the data I had collected.

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secondly, there was this major problem of the decline of the center in Bombay. That is Bombay has produced some fine socialist leaders, social democratic leaders. they modeled themselves on the British labour party or the German social democratic party, S.M Joshi, N.G. Gore, Ms. Medha Patkar's father, Khanolkar of Hind Mazdoor Sabha, Dr. Pathak, these people led the liberal front of Bombay. And if the decline of the congress and the liberal front also declined and that gave political space for Shiv Sena and BJP communalism to occupy that space. So collapse of the liberal Bombay was one of the major reasons of the Bombay riots. For example, quite a few unions were controlled either by the communist parties and also congress and they all disappeared and union after union was acquired by the extremist parties that were one of the reasons which I have explained but I have demonstrated it through the analysis of assembly elections over time. I began with establishment of Maharashtra, 1960, assembly elections, corporation elections; I remember in gratitude even the Govt. of Maharashtra department of elections. I think 95 elections were being held at that time. Even before they released it to the press, they gave me a set of data which I analyzed.

Q: You were saying that by and large the research Institute did sponsor...

PH: this was a handicap. When a sponsor gives you say 1, 80,000 or so, or Justice Srikrishna, he didn't have much money he said so we spent from our own pocket and returned the rest of the money. The budget was only 36,000 Rupees. When people undertake sponsored research they get definite questions, definite objectives which you turn into research questions. The net result was we produced only univariate tables. bivariate tables you need explanation. That did handicap the conceptualization ability on



the part of our colleagues. So we were expected to conceptualize how poor people use their political resources and acquire social mobility and economic prosperity, social status, as for example the Nadars of Tamil Nadu have done, as for example again the Vanniyars of TN or the Mahars of MH have done. So they have entered into business, they have entered into various occupations so how social mobility improvement in social status is acquired through political means as an example. Now this was not conceptualized. How economic marginalization of the poor, of the tribals takes place and what are the reactions towards it. How the policies are formulated. From this point of view, the sponsored research was a handicap in the way of developing our conceptual skills. Unfortunately at that time some other fashion came into existence in PhD. When I was a member of the ICSSR, I wrote to them, I was not exactly a member, I was a member of the committee when Prof. Iqbal Narayan, formerly vice chancellor Banaras Hindu University became the member separately, he invited me. At his instance I wrote what is wrong with Indian PhD thesis, Indian PhD research program, PhD program or most of the research.

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I said one of the banes of Indian research is the review of literature. In the review of literature everything goes. I sited many examples. Sometimes, literature is reviewed chronologically, from 1956 to the present day. Sometimes alphabetically, nothing came out of the Review of Literature. It is sheer pedantry without any intellectual insight or development in any theoretical framework or at least an improvement on theoretical



framework. Nothing came. Even Review of Literature and Methodology. Now, we are supposed to improve on the research methodology of the early years. Now take my own example, political violence, my own PhD supervisor whose name I quoted from Washington DC, Charles Ruttenberg had operationalized political violence as any violent activity, destruction of property or harm to life and limb in which at least 4 persons are involved. I asked him how 4 persons, Kennedy has been shot dead by 1 person, that is political violence, that is not the way you define. And I defined it as an attack on a person not for looting; looting may take place, because of his linguistic, caste, religious background, so, even methodology requires improvement over the previous methodologies. I wrote and these things have harmed research not only in TISS but also all over India. So this I tried to overcome in my own way.

Q:....theory tends to be uncentric...development of theory....

PH: I quoted the theory of Alexis de Tocqueville, the old regime and the revolution. So he burst quite a few myths associated with the French revolution including that of a famous English poet Carlisle that is at the time of the French revolution, 3/4ths of the Parisians were eating third rate potatoes. Now, these theories are Eurocentric alright or western centric, but there is such a thing as a hard reality ahead of us. Now if a theory of revolution developed by Tocqueville, a theory of political participation developed by Almond and Verba or some such thing, if this doesn't capture the Indian reality, we are duty bound and ....bound to develop our own Indian theories. Can I take an example? I had made a readymade theory of the backlash of the forward castes against the reservation orders. This violence has not taken place in the 1960s in the US when



President Johnson introduced the Affirmative Action Program. So I had to assemble my own theory here. So I assembled my own theory of backlash or assembled backlash against OBC reservation orders drawing from the game theory. You can hit me provided you are assured that I can't hit back, I am too weak to hit back at you. so the forward castes in UP and Bihar after the Ramnaresh Yadav and Karpoori Thakur order, they felt sufficiently powerful and they knew that the backward classes were divided. So they could strike at the order or make, attack public property and bring public life to a halt because they had the power to do it. Now, I had to develop a theory of the strength of the backward classes. It is nowhere available. It is not available in the west. Caste system is peculiar to us. in fact one of the American senators when this problem of affirmative action came in America, used to say I think for north Carolina or south Carolina, he used to say very soon we will be like India where 60% of the jobs and educational seats will be reserved. So I had to develop the strength of the backward class movement reading from M.S Rao, but they give only a suggestion. I developed a theory that where the backward classes are united, including the SCs and the STs, where the ideology of BCs runs deep, there the forward castes cannot strike. So such ideology was missing in UP and Bihar. So, this is in response to your questions about theories we draw/borrow from abroad. They are Eurocentric but our facts are facts. If they cannot explain our facts they have to be discarded even completely rejected and we have to develop our own.

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Q: .....and its contribution to knowledge in social sciences in the Indian context...

PH: Well I have not gone through each and every report which has been submitted. But



I'm quite sure that a good deal of research done at the request at the sponsoring agencies has affected the policy formation in a big way. Of course based on the report of the Narmada valley project affected people, the Supreme Court took various decisions and both the Govt. of MH and the Govt. of Gujarat were alert to taking action about the rehabilitation of the project affected people. In terms of contribution to policy, to some extent we have made...but I don't know. Let me recapitulate about the police commission. I discovered that in the Armoured Police the unity amongst themselves was very high, the hatred of the superiors was extreme and according to me this amounted to a situation fraught with mutiny. Then I went after sending the report I went to Prof. Gore and I drew his attention to that particular table. Then he said, Dr. Hebsur, why don't you do one thing. Prepare a letter, draft it to Secretary Narasimhan, IPS of the National Police Commission headed by Dharmavira. The situation is extremely bad in the armoured police wing, particularly the light armed .....and I drafted the letter, he approved it, situation is fraught with unity...he amended the word fraught, then he sent it...nothing happened. 1984, a few years after police rebellion took place in Worli. So...sometimes they are overlooked. See, I had also drawn attention to one thing. The rate of failure of the children, of the police constables in the school was awful. So they were a very dejected lot...

Q: could you talk about.....student teacher relationship

PH: My colleagues and I taught RM to all the specializations to all of social work. To PM and IR also. Now it is called HRD or some such thing and also to the evening, that public health hospital administration courses. So if you were to go by the student's acquaintance



with my name and face, I was quite well known. I won't say I was popular. I was well known, I enjoyed teaching, students were quite responsive, my wife Mrs. Hebsur and I were quite friendly with the students. For sometime she took English until her work also became very heavy and I distinctly recollect many M.A students. There was a constant flow of students, as you probably know, into our flat, when they would come to borrow our brass lamp for all kinds of auspicious functions but they would forget to return it. I didn't know who borrowed, but I had to chase them. Then finally somebody would, other than the person who would borrow it would bring it back...and I'm confining myself to the M.A students. Methodology was not a particularly liked subject by the PMIR for some point. But I don't know after 1 year in 83 or so, the no. of PMIR students opting for Research Report took a quantum jump. Earlier 3/30 used to submit, and then about 10 or 12 started submitting research proposals. Maybe on the part of the employers they were asking what kind of research....maybe the industry also went into the research proficiency. I must tell you something about it. There was one student by the name Samuel Sudhakar, this Sudhakar was a genius at mimicry and my habits were set. I would go to the class and take the roll call and I would call say Radhika Kumaraswami and some girl would shout 'sir, she is taking her breakfast, she will come soon' and I would snap at her, let her take her breakfast leisurely, lunch leisurely, even dinner leisurely, let her not come, like this....then I would take the roll call, I would keep away the lecturn on the chair and I would begin with my usual patented sentence, that you may kindly recollect we were discussing in the last lecture the qualities of sound hypothesis. I would always begin like that, you may kindly recollect that we were discussing the strength and the weaknesses of the survey design, now to continue the discussion...these were my



patented words. Samuel Sudhakar was such a genius at mimicry that he...if you put him behind a curtain and without telling the students, if you made them sit in the class and give the signal to Sudhakar to start the lecture they would all believe that it would be Hebsur. He was such a genius. Then, there was the custom, I think it is still there. The juniors used to give farewell parties to the seniors. How to enliven the parties. Some humour has to be there in parties...some jokes have to be there...it can't be a very serious affair, so they would invite for 2 years, Samuel Sudhakar as one of the guests and he would mimic me to the superb amusement of all the students. Probably in this way I became more notorious and I distinctly remember I took over the charge of first deputy director on 1st Nov, 1986 and what the organizers of the program on the institute day did and following January, they caught hold of one Parsi lady, made her dress like not Armaity Desai, in a typical Parsi tradition and she was taught to immitate Armaity's intonation and Armaity spoke on that day, Dr. Hebsur is not fond of functions like this, and in fact I said that it looks like a Wise Regal Coronation, why this function. I prevailed over him and then he agreed. And I also said some such thing, not only for a small group, for the whole audience, including the members of the families, the mimicry was done, and I remember the children sitting in front of me, look look, that is Hebsur Uncle, that is Armaity Aunty speaking. It went on like this....since you asked me about student life, I must mention in great fondness my very first PhD student Dr. Mohammed Rahman, very brilliant man, very hardworking student, from Bangladesh. He stayed back to pick up evaluation RM from me. When he was not given promotion in Dhaka University, he casually applied for a UN Civil Service job and was selected. Rose from position to position. We lost touch with each other. We established touch when I was in



Bahrain in 1997-2005 and he was stationed in Baghdad, UN Food Program but came the Iraq war, he took retirement and came to Dhaka. Somehow I re-established contact with him and in Dec 2009 we got his number we called him, we are coming to Calcutta, we are going to visit you, and that man, so hospitable, so grateful, arranged for the visa to be obtained at the Calcutta High Commission of Bangladesh the same day. The next day was Moharram, so we were afraid we would miss our flight or would have to reschedule our flight so he sent the instructions down the line to the Deputy High Commission in Calcutta, we got the visa the same day. Our tension broke, really and I think it was a very joyous moment in the life of Mrs. Hebsur and me. We looked forward to it. Next day we went around and flew to Bangladesh.

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Yeah...I talked to you about Samuel Sudhakar and the students coming to me for various help then...Rehman...us university Professors are used to university guest houses. We don't know the 5 star hotel culture at all. He put my wife and me in the Pan Pacific...A 7 star hotel, exorbitant rates and he didn't allow me to pay for anything. He took me all the way to where his projects were going on. He was in Chief of one Danish Bangladesh NGO, HYSAWA, Hygiene and Safe Water...he took my wife and me to Tangail district and he showed us some of his projects. My wife talked to the children and the Bangladesh women, he translated and he took me around the Dhaka University where the uprising began, the tables were around which the Bangladeshi students used to sit and discuss the breakaway from, rebellion against, revolt against Pakistan. He took me to the



founder of Pakistan's residence, where he was assassinated, and it was a delightful trip. It lasted only for 2 days, but its okay, next time...and I'm encouraging his children to come here. One of them is definitely oriented towards social work, social development. Then of course Reza Ali Akbar Ghassemi, he almost became like my son. He was so close to me for some reasons, that sometimes when my wife was away and I had to be away, I would tell him to keep an eye on my father. He would quietly open the door, see if my father was asleep and go home and come back at night also and check. So he married Shikha Mallik who had registered for PhD under Prof. Muthige and we attended the wedding and we renewed the contact when we were in Bahrain. I said we must go to Iran because from Bahrain it is quite near. So 1st time I had to go alone. Mrs. Hebsur was supposed to accompany me to Isfahan but her mother was not well. She had to cancel her ticket and fly to Bombay. I went alone. I went via Shiraz to Isfahan from Bahrain.

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So...Shiraz, there the whole family was there . The twin daughters, tiny daughters, Shikha and Raisa, they showed me around Shiraz University complex, various places worth visiting. And we drove all the way from Shiraz to Isfahan, almost 6 hours journey around Isfahan. I stayed with them for 4-5 days. I never felt that I was staying in the house of...of a person belonging to some other religion. I never had that feeling and they never had that feeling with me. I think in 2008 he had come with his brother in law, he stayed with me. And last year they had come here again, we sent our car, he stayed here in the guest house, with their children he had come, and I must very fondly recollect Mrs. Dabir did a



good research project. So that country which was partitioned last month...Sudan. That Sudanese gentleman Isam, was also my favourite. He was remembering me, so when I came here for some occasion, for some reason I met him and had a long chat with him.

Q: overall how would you see the teacher student relationship at TISS...how it is different from other universities

PH: This is quite informal here. Student teacher relationship is very informal to the extent of being sometimes affectionate. That is how it should be. In some other universities or main line universities, they are quite officious. The professors are quite officious. In some universities I've heard, I don't want to name, the PhD students are not treated well. I've heard that lady PhD students are asked by the PhD guide to help his wife in cooking or some such thing. I'm happy that such a situation doesn't exist here. I'm sure even now that intimate relationship between the student and teacher still remains. It is not very intimate to the extent of condoning everything that the student does. There is an element of sternness also there. That is how it should be.

Q: What about in terms of the classroom methods...do you think in TISS it is a little different from other universities

PH: Yes, it is different. Particularly at the M.Phil PhD stage it was definitely different. Even at the M.A stage we used to encourage the students to be active, to participate a good deal. I had the habit of suddenly asking a question to a person who I had noticed to be a bit absent minded so that kept the students a bit alert. But still we have a long way to go. That Indian tradition of reading at the time of examination still persists. The



American Pattern should be introduced here. When you come to the M.A class, you should read the subject matter first. I used to circulate what would be discussed every lecture. I would have a regular time table every week, taking into account the holidays, but that habit of listening first and reading at the time of examination, reading at the time of assignment still persisted when I left. I don't know whether it is still there now. That should be introduced in all Indian universities not only in TISS.

Q: Could you think of what are some of the key turning points....

PH: Well, I wish I had studied the history in detail. One of course is the...TISS becoming a deemed university.

Q: Could you talk about how it became a deemed university...

PH: I haven't studied that...it is based on the Committee Report, and it is found in Prof. Gore's autobiography. I haven't studied in detail. But those I must say this much...those days the deemed university status was not given very easily. We had to come up to a particular standard and that time the benchmark was the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, established much earlier by the same Dorab Tata Trust. We were supposed to come up to that level and then only they would give us the deemed university status. And of course there were the Institute of Intellectual Excellence, that is the Indian Statistical Institute. That is one major point. Then Prof. Gore starting the various research units. That is another major inflection point in TISS. It helped us go to the grass roots level, no doubt. All our researchers have dirt beneath their fingernails. We have trodden in the wilderness, I have broken my ankle while touring Bihar, I have fractured it, I have



interacted with all kinds of persons, I have been thrown out of officials chambers because I asked sensitive questions about backward class movements. But, something...some other doors open. As you say when you are studying social history in a comparative perspective, some doors don't open.

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...no matter how hard you knock. But some other doors suddenly opened. So our researchers are of a different kind. Our M.A students, their capability and capacity to go into the rural areas, even strange rural areas and collect data is amazing. When one of the scholars of Denmark, I forget the University, Danish gentelman, came to India to study the growth of Hindutva, he first went to the University of Bombay, he got affiliated there. Then he learned nothing from them. Then somebody said if you're studying communal violence, etc. go meet Dr. Hebsur, he changed his sponsorship, he came here and I gave him two of my best students as research assistants. He paid them well also. One lady, Mrs. Budhkar who went to study in JNU, I heard that she acquired a fatal disease and passed away. The other one, I forget his name, they went along with him to Aurangabad, and then they found location to stay and they helped him in a very big way and also in Thane. So in terms of field experience, in terms of entry into the field, get themselves accepted by the field, our M.A products and our research assistants are very good, super. You were asking me about this....then Armaity stage of course, she gave me full freedom to rewrite the PhD rules and I realized that opportunity to upgrade RM to include even the Kuhn Popper debate, and I said earlier, I'm sorry I couldn't include semiotics, but I



invited outsiders. But I find difficulty, if I were to ask you to suggest to me a good social science work, good Political Science work employing semiotics or deconstruction, what would you suggest. I have tried my best to search. Ashish Nandi's Gandhi: The Intimate Enemy is one book, I have to fall back on Andre Beteille and social anthropologists who have absorbed your semiotics and deconstruction or vicarious understanding, etc. don't you think so?

Q: Would you have any thoughts or reflections that you would like to share on this occasion....?

PH: I would say knowledge grows by challenging conventional wisdom, and not only conventional wisdom, not only blindly accepted theories. You challenge them. Even if it means challenge them empirically or through the subjective understanding, through the phenomenological approach and again I would like to say use your opportunity to undertake certain kinds of participatory action research. This is how TISS can make its impact. But never lose sight of conceptualization.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to say.....could you talk a little about Dr. Gore  
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PH: See, I joined in 1977 and after 4 years I went on a full bright teacher fellowship to University Michigan. So my interactions with Prof. Gore were limited to 3-3 and a 1/2 years. During that time he encouraged my interest in this phenomenon of social mobility through political process that is the OBC movement. But he himself was not an expert in the OBC...example he had a personal assistant in the name of Subramaniam. He thought



Subramaniam was a Brahmin. I told him, Sir, Subramaniam is not a Brahmin, he is Ilavam, which is just above the line of untouchability, a very powerful caste...these Ilavams have emerged as a very powerful force and the backbone of CPM in Kerala. Then he again said, look after the departure of C. Subramanian the central Govt. to the TN...The then Madras Govt. there is no Brahmin in TN Ministry. I said no, Subramanian is not a Brahmin he's a Gounder called Kongu vellalars but he encouraged me in many ways. There was a gap of some months before Mandal commission sounding us whether they would finally award the study to us or they would not. And then I went and told, look this is a project after my own heart. I thought it was god's own gift to me. Then he said Dr. Hebsur if you're so much interested, go ahead, put in a proposal. Whatever I can sanction from the institute funds, I will certainly sanction. He encouraged me that way and I told you how he was quick enough to grasp the violence potential in the Bombay police at that time so he made me write. And then later on I recollect, I had become the Dpty. Director and he came and congratulated me, and I told him, Sir, this violence business has not left me at all. I am again with the Srikrishna Commission.....He was sitting in the other room here in the main corridor, and he asked me to comment on his manuscript on Dr. Ambedkar and also Vittal Ramji Shinde, these two books. I thoroughly edited it, and he didn't take any offence at all. And of course my habit is to mark 1,2,3, 4....he came with that typescript I had sent to him and he discussed with me point by point, yes accepted, yes the grammatical mistake also accepted...

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Then it was he who started the English teaching program and Mrs. Hebsur was available. Somebody was there earlier but he intensified it. He also started teaching of Hindi to the South Indians. We had very pleasant interactions. Whenever my friends from Punjab came, they wanted to see him and he would ask about the Punjab violence which was raging at that time. I distinctly recollect one of my students from Punjab, Pramod Kumar came on a Bhabha scholarship and met him first. They had a good deal of discussion...I must tell you something about Prof. Gore...Hebsur, I don't understand this word "paradigm" at all, what does it mean actually...and I would read, go home after...some entertainment, I would come back to it, start reading Kuhn's structure of scientific revolution. Everytime I read it, my interpretation of the book would change...like everytime you read the Bible, you find some other hermeneutical meaning in it. I would find hermeneutical meaning in every other sentence. Such a super book, but Prof. Gore was asking me what is this...people are bandying talking about, this paradigm...Sir it will take a lot of time on my part, lot of examples from physics, chemistry and Einstein...to explain that to you. I would say that, but he would accept...he accepted his limitations. He was so graceful about it. I will tell you something else.....see, I am a hard driving, hard driven person, I drive myself very hard. Plus this, I had two relaxations then. The badminton court, we would shout, scream, yell, quarrel, fight, but we never took the institute differences to the badminton court and we never brought the badminton court differences here. I would always be the last, everybody would defeat me. I would partner with Aikara , because R.N. Sharma would lose his temper with me if I missed a particular shot, he would ask me angrily, where had you gone, had you been to the Chembur market? Where is your mind, and which girl is on your mind. He would scold



me for missing...so Aikara , most sober person would always partner me and tell me how to play.

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It was the year 1980. One year earlier, Aikara's only child and daughter Maria had come to stay here. No account of mine about TISS without my telling you about Maria. Dr. Jacob Aikara, Mrs. Aikara 's only child and daughter. Somehow we became friends. I had a knack with playing with children. So she was so much attached to me that precisely at 9 o' clock, she would knock on the door because she couldn't reach the doorbell. So I had to device various kinds of games for her and I would request my wife, to pretend to be fooled, children enjoy playing games in which the elderly people are fooled. Then the pattern of games also would change. From hide and seek it went to painting and drawing, then from painting and drawing to cards, then Aikara would also come, and he would join...those were great days and I had, as I told you, from my very tense daily work from 9 o' clock to 5:30, chastening students, chastening people who didn't supervise PhD students properly, I would come home, play badminton, play with that child and incidentally, I went to Maria's wedding. We came all the way from Bahrain, and from Baharain to Cochin, Kottayam...Kottayam to up the hills, to Kattapana, then back to Bahrain. Then, when Maria's child was born, we were still in Bahrain, then we went to Shahrja, for the first birthday of Michelle. I will conclude this session by saying that Maria's coming to stay with us on the 26th or so, my wife keeps the diary much better. I'm very happy to come here, to your dept. I knew you were, you and Prof. Jayasankar



were doing path breaking and pioneering work. I am happy to find that you have progressed and I'm happy that Prof. Gore started with Tendulkar this AV unit. I am happy about that...you are giving excellent support to the TISS...not just as arc hivers, but I would be grateful to you if you chip in the teaching of RM a bit...don't you think so...I think we have stopped calling Marshe also now...I don't know what the center is doing now...Prof. Sinare is too weak to come now...I have never seen such a staunch cantion like Dr. Sinare. He has his own interpretation of the word paradigm. If you and I and somebody else share a particular categorical imperative of Kant by imposing which we can make sense of reality, we shall make a paradigm, let others not care about it. We will go and start understanding the social reality as we want to understand it. These were the concluding remarks in one lecture, I distinctly recollect...Thank you very much...

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