



Prof. R.N.Sharma

Interviewer: Prof. Anjali Monteiro

Camera/Sound: Prof. KP Jayasankar

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Prof. R.N. Sharma is former Dean, School of Social Sciences, TISS. He joined TISS in 1978 and was Head of the Unit for Urban Studies for several years. His areas of research interest include displacement and resettlement, and urbanisation and development. He was involved in several important studies and has published extensively. He is the author of the lyrics of the TISS song “Jayati Jayati Vidya Sansthan”. He retired in 2012.



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Q: Mr. Sharma, you've had a long innings at TISS. Could you tell us about, you know, how you joined the institute, what was your first impression of the institute when you joined and... You know, how you kind of settled into this place?

RNS: To be frank with you, we knew about Tata Institute of Social Sciences, that this is Doctor Gore's institute. I mean, sitting in Kanpur IIT, doing our PHD, our identity or understanding of TISS was synonymous to M S Gore. That that is the institute of M S Gore, why not to apply. So this is how I applied, I was at the final stage of completing my PHD thesis.

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RNS (cont.): So they called me for interview. I was getting another appointment, so I inquired whether any possibility of... the outcome of my interview because I had been offered another post. They said that they have like ... me for the lecturer's post, so we will issue the letter. And one day I was in TISS then, on 2nd May, 1978, so almost thirty three years back.

Q: And what was your first impression of the institute?

RNS: Now to me- you'll laugh at the idea- I was not knowing, to be frank with you, I knew about Indian Journal of Social Work and we knew that little bit sociology because M S Gore is there. I was not knowing that there is a training for social work because our conception... I was basically a student of science, so our conception actually of social work was like philanthropy, that time.

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RNS (cont.): So I was wondering that; can there be a formal training of social work? And when I... we came here, then I came to know that our assignment is basically a research assignment



than really teaching; we are not going to be in a teaching department. That was a bit disappointing; to make the adjustment, just to remain a researcher. And that time research was virtually synonymous to doing the projects. So Professor Muthagee was my Professor and Head and that time he was doing a project for MMRDA, and this was a water supply scheme for Mumbai city, funded by the World Bank.

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RNS (cont.): So he asked me that I should join that project. After then I said I'll do one project on.... (Phone rings)

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RNS (cont.): So, the....

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RNS (cont.): ...enter in Doctor Gore's office and in two minutes he will come out, I mean, it was not like Armaity Desai, Doctor Desai, the second Director where you can go and you can actually chat also with her. He... that way he was very formal. So our meeting will be... even actually with the students, I remember very well, Panvalkar actually will go inside and within three minutes or four minutes he will come out. So I asked his advice, he said, you... why don't you start working actually on North Indian migrants here. He himself did a study on migrants.

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RNS (cont.): So I did a study of North Indian in... Migrants in Mumbai city. And the institute



gave me 1800 rupees the... for the project. So that was my first project and then, then started multiplying. Then the news spread, then, then projects started coming up. But then, to me, it was... Anjali, it was a trap really. A trap in the sense that you keep on doing the projects. And research units were identified with the projects, as such there was no teaching. Teaching was by default. Social work department, some faculty goes, Mrs. Panwalkar was not there so I am asked to teach, the moment she comes back then actually again my teaching is... so it was more really, not encouraging. Rather, it won't motivate.

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RNS (cont.): And that was the lacuna that research units were facing by and large in this institute for years together. Like ICSSR institutions, that per se there was no teaching actually attached to the units. And they were doing, they were supposed to do the projects. Luckily I got involved so I kept on doing the projects, so it is spread, and then the offers started coming up you know, national, international, to do the projects. So I got involved into plenty of projects. But basically, it was that kind of thing. And then, that time, the institute was identified as- frankly speaking- institution of, more for social work than any kind of theoretical orientation. I mean, that was the impression. Bombay University will carry that kind of image.

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RNS (cont.): So that was, I think, the- I would say- inadequacy with the research units. Which we had to overcome and we were struggling... faculty among ourselves, what could be the, the breakaway really from that kind of stagnation. Otherwise, it becomes like an ICSSR institution. This I can finish if I continue and.... Then from... Prof. R R Singh came here as director, the third



director; there was a glorious period of Dr Armaity Desai, I'll come back to that. But then, when Dr Singh joined here as a director, I pushed the idea... rather myself and Sarthi Acharya . We, we had this idea in mind that, why don't we start a course on Development Studies.

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RNS (cont.): I'm sorry, I mean, you can censor it also. One of the professors of, senior faculty of the Social Work said that if you start teaching- research units- then we have to wind up our department. Now that was not really very healthy, encouraging comment. I told Dr Singh if this is really the kind of response of Social Work faculty towards introducing any social sciences course, that's unfortunate. And the and the course is so vulnerable that any other course can demolish it, and then it will be demolished one day. I'm sorry, I mean, this is how... actually I felt a bit upset about the whole thing. And Dr R R Singh I think maintained the status quo. So he did not show much, really, interest into the whole affair, so the matter was closed there.

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RNS (cont.): So that time we could not pursue the idea of going beyond the research units, I mean the projects, and coming out that teaching service, you know, I mean, outsourcing. That if they want you to teach, then you teach otherwise it is no teaching.

Q: Can you talk a little more- coming back to the research, you were saying that it was... sort of tended to be project driven. Can you talk a little bit more about the kind of research agenda, the kinds of themes and what do you think were the contributions that, you know, TISS made to various, you know, public issues and what do you think were the limitations of that research?



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RNS: See, that one advantage of research in TISS- and I think that has been the history of TISS- that the, the, the themes, really the topics which were chosen for projects, various projects, were essentially for the disadvantaged group, deprived actually, sections of society. More for... for social justice, more really looking into the kind of deprivation, exploitation. So that way, the projects were more... quite useful. But then these were... started actually becoming the more sponsored projects. More sponsored projects, then really the agenda will be decided by those who are funding the projects. So theoretical component will be much less there. But, I mean, my modest claim will be that I broke the ice, I said that there is plenty of data, we can publish the projects. Because one argument was that these... actually projects are useless projects as regards the theory or perspectives because they won't give opportunity for theoretical formulations or writing research papers.

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RNS (cont.): My humble submission is that it was very... inadequate kind of, actually, kind of impression. And I myself tried to really work little bit hard in that direction, and I published couple of papers and most of these papers are based on actually the projects' data. So otherwise the impression, general popular impression was that these projects are actually projects for the projects' sake. They... nothing actually they will enrich the theory. Which really I used to refute, or... and, depending on priorities of directors also, research projects, in what direction they will go, also happened... that way. This is also true.

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Q: Some of the... main themes that you worked on....

RNS: Initially it was essentially the disadvantaged groups like slum dwellers, like the closer of the factories, what happened to the working class, those who were employed. That was also my PHD thesis to be frank with you, so I extended the scope; I did a study of a closure of a factory here. But then it would... urban studies, so then it... we had to arrange ourselves more into urban actually kind of issues, urban processes; essentially the inequality, poverty, exploitation, the character of the labour market. So these were really the kind of issues which, for a couple of years in the beginning, initial phase, we did. Then the sponsored projects started coming up, and there personally I entered into that kind of phase where the sponsor... because that time TISS needed a lot of money. This is also a fact.

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RNS (cont.): You will be surprised to learn on a light side, that time TISS did not have resources. What we see today, you won't imagine what was the condition that time. I recall very well in the beginning, the very I think next year, when that MMRDA project was going on, Professor Muthagee was the director in the... we joined... the team. One month it was not possible to pay the salary by 5th of the month, next month, for the previous month. I recall very well Dr Muthagee was asked by Professor M S Gore to collect actually the installment- which was I think, mid... mid installment or final installment- of one lakh twenty thousand rupees. And with one lakh twenty thousand rupees, almost 70% of the salary was taken care of, that time. Because that time we were getting around 2000 rupees or so.

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RNS (cont.): So that way, TISS appreciated projects actually bringing the money. And frankly speaking, when it came to the latter phase- to have a corpus really which was UGC priority, to have a corpus fund by Universities- the major actually contribution to the project... the corpus funds, was essentially through the projects. Consultancy projects and of course actually the administrative fee or whatever comes. And that became one of the major share for actually that... because equivalent government grant will come from UGC. So that became quite substantial amount, and if I'm not wrong, now the amount may be around 15 crore rupees.

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RNS (cont.): And major part of it is through the projects. So that contribution was there towards the resources. But it was more individual faculty choice whether they convert, actually, the data into some kind of research papers, use it actually for critical perspectives, going for seminars and participating beyond really the projects. And I think I, I made some modest effort in that direction.

Q: You've done quite a lot of work in R and R kind of...

RNS: Yes, yes... yeah.

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RNS (cont.): This was... incidentally the World Bank organizations, they came from London, one organisation who was waiting for the project in Singhroli area. And Singhroli area was the first actually kind of site where those who were displaced, they were helped really by... that time, even NGO term was not really well known, and Smitu Kothari really started the movement there, which many people may not be knowing. Everybody knows about Medha Patkar and



subsequently many, many came forward actually... from the civil society groups. And it was really essentially the Singhroli area for the testing ground for the NGOs, the emergence of that kind of movement, D L Seth, Smitu Kothari.

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RNS (cont.): And they started, actually, that agitation and formed a group actually in Singhroli area. So I went with our team and we found that time really... I mean, that the... project-affected persons are nobodies. Rather in my latest paper I have said that that time the people, those who were displaced were booted... were booted out by the projects. Now the people are booting out the projects. So, see the reversal. And I think the credit goes a lot to the civil society NGO groups no doubt, particularly Narmado Bachao Andolan, Medha Patkar. I appreciate lot of, really, kind of empowerment of people who are displaced all around the country and bringing them some kind of... some kind of dignity and at least the cognition that they are also human beings. And if you are going for development, they are also to be developed.

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RNS (cont.): That whole understanding really slowly and slowly came through the civil society. So I... then I did lot of work- and I got trapped into it- then what happened, government organisations will insist that actually please come and do the project, please come and do the project. In the beginning it was curiosity. To be honest, my... my own weakness was that I am from rural area, so my curiosity used to be that I'll go to the villages and I'll talk to the villagers. And that will be the revival of really, that... my village days. So... but I got into that trap. Then more and more invitations will come and I'm a person who... who can't say no. So I'll get trapped



actually very often. So number of projects we did in that area... then I started saying sorry. And started more publishing. In any case now that field is very open wide field, well debated.

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Q: Do you think that the kind of research done by TISS contributed in any way to these struggles that you are talking about for social justice of the....

RNS (cont.): Of course. Of course. Plenty of research. Even our present Director, Dr Parasuraman... in fact, when Medha Patkar, she was agitating for the rights of the tribals, when you are creating Sardar Sarovar and thousands, thousands of people affected for their livelihoods, the, the study major... study of really affected villages was done by TISS. Even Bhopal disaster, the survey was done by TISS.

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RNS (cont.): Even our ... survey... see, even, even talking to the officials, the gentlemen versus really the common man, who are for them nuisance. I mean, that is to be really the attitude of the, the, the officials. That we are giving them so many lakhs of rupees and they are creating nuisance. For them, they were nuisance. That really changed in the mindset of the officials. I think we, we... TISS has contributed a lot, TISS faculty has contributed a lot, I also have some modest, actually I think, contribution in that direction. NTCP and such organisations, we did really lot of kind of actually sensitisation; that they understand that they are also human beings like you, and if you want to develop others, you develop them also.

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RNS (cont.): Because World Bank... I mean, talks of displaced people should be the partnership to the process of development. If that be so, they should also be the focus of development, which was not happening. And now it's the reversal. Now people are deciding whether they want the projects or not. And many big projects in all actually support from the... up to... from the Prime Minister's office to really the State governments are being voted out, they are... bhoom dayenge.. because of this kind of empowerment. And I think TISS has contributed quite, quite a lot in this area, yes.

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Q: Where you at all involved in the Bhopal... research on Bhopal?

RNS: No, because I have sinusitis, so I could not go. So that project I did not do, because of my sinus problem.

Q: Could you talk about... a little bit about... as we've seen from the... '78 onwards how, you know, the research units came into focus and how the whole kind of agenda of research of the institute kind of expanded. Would you like to say a little about that?

RNS: Other than the main, the effort which was essentially of Professor M S Gore, our director for a longer spell- twenty years- who brought the idea and funding really from ICSSR for this project, I mean the research units; frankly speaking the formula... the formative stage of various research units was a one person's show. One person keeps on working in one area and that area slowly and slowly developed into kind of possibility of giving it shape of a research unit.

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RNS (cont.): I give the example of Professor Suma Chitnis. Extensively she worked in sociology



for education. Then, the need was felt, why not to actually have a research unit in sociology for education because that was something which was not really in the country, or something of that kind. Professor Ramachandran; it was not Professor Muthagee, in fact in it was Professor Ramachandran who was Professor in research methodology. He looked into the housing in Mumbai and particularly the working class housing and so on. And this is how the idea of urban studies came into mind, and Professor Muthagee was appointed and was asked to work in that area and this is how urban studies emerged.

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RNS (cont.): Rural Studies initially came as a project, I think that other faculty might be telling. It was a project essentially, thanks to the Ford Foundation, I think, grant. And once substantial work actually emerged in the form of a project, then actually it took a shape of a... initially a kind of a... a, I mean, what we call Tuljapur campus and then really it became a school now. Today it is a school. So to me, see, really the formative stage of all units started with the individual faculty, senior faculty, dominant in that particular field and then came up with the idea of floating that research unit. Similarly happened with Youth and Child Research Unit. UNICEF grant came and that actually turned into substance... I mean, subsequently into a research unit.

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RNS (cont.): So I don't think per se there was a kind of a vision that these will be the research units and this will be the kind of various, you know, sub-areas or sub-themes. Rather, some senior faculty kept on working in the area and then they gave shape to the units. To me this is how research units evolved. And therefore, one could even question actually kind of



classification or naming of the research units or areas where the research units actually became, I mean, famous by their names. But I think this is how they work.

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Q: One vision which has been sort of talked about in the context of TISS is this whole linkage between social work and social sciences. There was a certain vision probably that Gore had when establishing research units, of some synergy between the two, what do you feel about it?

RNS: See this is exactly... a difficult question and a question that was haunting us, particularly those who came with social sciences background, for years together. Because the institute was essentially identified as an institute for social work training.

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RNS (cont.): And it was so imposing, kind of a philosophy and idea, and even the academic activity, that to come out of that and thinking, actually, units as being a challenge, actually, to that was difficult to conceive that time. The discomfort with the social sciences faculty was... being actually project-oriented and so on, and therefore not appreciated beyond TISS. And therefore a stagnation in academic, kind of actually, calibre. So to me really the distance started developing- this is my understanding- between social work, the mainstay and really the social sciences. HRD was always a separate thing; surprisingly the history of HRD is that before the social work, in fact it was the labour class in Mumbai... that labour class actually came in those, actually, years when the creation of wealth, actually, started in Mumbai city.

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RNS (cont.): And I think Tatas- this is my understanding- Tatas actually started philanthropy to help that, actually, labour. That could be Mathadi workers, these could be actually those who do the work on port, loading and unloading of goods. So these ordinary workers were actually I think in mind of Tatas to focus on the labour, labour studies, labour welfare. In fact they introduced many reforms for labour welfare themselves, and they were pioneering in that area. So it was, to me, offshoot of social workers per se as institution was also through the labour welfare, but then it became imposing and that time Personal Management and Industrial Relations emerged as a more... slowly and slowly career-oriented course, a professional course.

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RNS (cont.): And therefore more really, with better prospects to the passing out the students, the result being that that became an elite course vis-a-vis really the social work course where the grounding was more to work with the common man, not to think of money, and be a big consultancy or big salaries. So social sciences remained caught between these two kind of extremes. And we kept on actually having that kind of uneasy feeling- I'm sorry some faculty from social work will also comment that, look here we do so much work and social sciences, some people work, some people don't work. I mean, there was some kind of distance really, and distance was increasing, was not reducing.

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RNS (cont.): And it was, I think, in that kind of really insularity of frustration that we thought of getting some identity legitimacy to social sciences. And there, as I said, I myself and Sarthi Acharya proposed the idea of Development Studies before Professor R R Singh who was the



Director there. And, I mean, somehow he was more maintaining the status quo during his tenure, that is my feeling. So, he, he was not really that innovative to come out with some kind of good. And the breakthrough came in a big way, just like a blast, in the name of restructuring and restructuring first time, to me, has done a wonderful contribution to social sciences faculty in TISS because it has brought legitimacy to social sciences.

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RNS (cont.): And this is the biggest contribution of restructuring, this is the biggest contribution of the present director. That now social sciences faculty, they have their own identity, they have their own programs, they have their- actually- research, their teaching and they are now recognized outside. I'm sorry, during those days; TISS was not acceptable to Bombay University. Now several faculties, they go to give keynote address to Bombay University, I have gone. The fun that I want to make, that unfortunately Bombay University started declining for various reasons. And thanks to really, kind of, recommendation by apex body for restructuring, one... the biggest gain is restructuring has brought legitimacy to social sciences, as I repeat. And that is the biggest contribution.

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Q: Can you talk a little about the emergence of Development Studies as a teaching program and since you've been involved in the course....

RNS: Yeah, so.

Q: Could you look at it from today....

RNS: Yeah, Professor Ghanshyam Shah in fact came, he was the Chairperson of the body, I



mean the apex body... came for the evaluation of TISS programs and they recommended, the committee recommended social sciences programs. That, we thought, this is now opportunity to push the idea, what we were thinking actually for years together and did not materialise.

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RNS (cont.): So that time I was on sabbatical, and I came to know that Professor Parasuraman had joined. Incidentally, Professor Parasuraman was our colleague only. We knew he was a person actually, accommodative, very accommodative of ideas. So in fact I cut short my sabbatical for this reason also, two months earlier I came. I finished ten months and I came here and I requested him, can I join after ten months, and he said yes, please come. And that time, the dialogue was going on within the institute for this Development Studies, because we had been pushing the idea but it never materialised.

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RNS (cont.): So when I came, I saw... again, I mean you can censor it- there was, within social sciences faculty, there was a lot of actually kind of, I mean, argument and favour and disfavoring, Development Studies and all that. So when I came the debate was very hot, and there was I think some kind of polarization of faculty, in support or against. And that time, the file was handed over to me by Doctor Parasuraman that, would you like to look into that possibility of, feasibility of this course? And to be frank with you, I had a soft corner for this Development Studies because I thought that development essentially is synonymous to development economics.



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RNS (cont.): And social sensitivity is not really part of the game, so it is an economic-centered kind of understanding of development. And we are a huge society, with plenty of deprivation, hunger and whatnot, nourishment, this... I mean, exploitation, deprivation, culturally and actually emerging in so-called industrial society also. So I shared the ideas that Development Studies can be a combination, really, of learning from development economics and bringing social sensitivity towards the process of development, which this country needs actually much given such a huge, actually, mass of people. Who really are deprived, who live actually in a kind of... I mean, they pass through injustice, exploitation, historical or recent ones.

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RNS (cont.): So we sat together, we held discussions, debates; we tried to pick up actually prospectus, syllabus from a couple of universities; we started actually conceiving, and gave a shape really to the course, I mean, Development Studies. And it all happened because of continued encouragement from the present Director, no doubt about it, because Dr Parasuraman is an innovative person. And he's restless to do things, this is also true, that is actually his personality; to do good things. So finally workshop was organized. We invited experts from around the country to talk about, actually, to see, the feasibility of such a course; whether it makes any sense. Because even we were not sure actually what would be the market for the students, where they will go.

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RNS (cont.): And there are no Development Studies centers actually, per se. So, the question of



really their career, that was also in our mind. But we thought actually that the course can be a good course, a good combination to understand really the process of development. Or lack of development, because when we talk of development, information becomes immediately relevant; the other side of the coin. And I think we were on the right track. Of course the course went through change in last four or five years, but the course has taken shape. I would like to take this opportunity to convey- and we have been sharing with Dr Parasuraman, and he's very much into it- that this course has to be recognized by the UGC. Because now five universities are offering this course, Development Studies.

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RNS (cont.): So it should be recognized as... for the NET and those kind of benefits. Once it is recognized, then many universities can come up with the centers for Development Studies teaching and research. And I think then this course won't look back. So then uncertainty will disappear altogether and I think we are drawing good quality students who want to learn theory, who want to understand development processes; we get quite a good number of candidates- around 600 or 700 applications- so I think that the course is taking, this... shape. And yesterday night only I can share with you, one of our DS students- incidentally he did his MA thesis with me, who was appointed by Thedi- he got Dr Manmohan Singh scholarship to do the PHD in Cambridge University.

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RNS (cont.): From India, only one... there are two scholarships I think, Manmohan Singh scholarship, Dr Manmohan Singh scholarships, and he's the one from India who got the



scholarship. And he's from DS, and he was our student- to us that becomes a good satisfaction. Two days back, one student who is passing out, he got admission in Oxford University; now he will try for getting a scholarship. So these are really kind of moments for a teacher that brings some satisfaction and legitimacy really to the course.

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RNS (cont.): And now, couple of courses have come up. Your course actually, quite relevant course, so I would say now that the way it is expanding, it is good, but then... now it has to be consolidated. That is also my submission, that now the Director should move more towards consolidation than expansion. For institutionalizing and sustainability of various kind of courses and programs that we are introducing.

Q: Just a....

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RNS: TISS, when I joined was a small community. I think we were thirty three, maybe I was thirty third or thirty second, I can't recall now, but around thirty faculty members and a very small administrative staff. Only seven or eight faculty will stay outside, most of them were staying here in the campus. So the joke used to be- I recall Dr Hebsur comment- that we are so small community that I'm telling you the joke; after two days you will tell me the same joke. So the point was that we are a small ... we were a small community, valid community. So interaction was there, it was quite intense, and therefore there may be some kind of... because academics are ego-centric, so there could be a kind of, that kind of evaluation, continued evaluation of who is good, who is bad or who is actually doing more or who is doing less.



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RNS (cont.): But, but there was plenty of this kind of community interaction. And I was a bit inclined towards literature, towards drama particularly. I used to go to Prithvi Theatre all the way from TISS to see the plays. In fact, I've seen play of Amrish Puri and this... Om Puri, Sulbha Deshpande, Arvind Deshpande for two rupees ticket, so those were the days. And we, we thought actually we can also create a kind of small group of those who are inclined for this kind of cultural activities. So we started staging plays on Institute Day. I want to recall one event, that's why I'm mentioning this.

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RNS (cont.): And, I, I come from the background... village background so nautanki used to appeal me a lot really, I mean, I used to be crazy for seeing nautanki. Unfortunately I don't know Marathi, tamasha is very rich culture of Maharashtra, but many translated tamasha... Marathi plays I saw in Hindi. So we were doing a play on TISS vision, we gave the title 'TISS Vision', like that time Doordarshan used to be very famous, so we gave actually title 'TISS Vision' and we performed on the Institute Day. And you will be surprised or happy to learn that Professor Armaity Desai was Director. She played the role of a new candidate coming for admission in TISS, and she was very happy to join us, the team, and to perform that role.

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RNS (cont.): So, the idea was that the candidate comes and bit gets confused because of too many branches in social work, within social work; there is a correctional administration, there is



a...then a... that a... community development, then there is family and child, so the candidate... and then these HODs of these different sub-disciplines within social work, they came and lure the candidate, that you come to our side, we offer this, we offer this, and this is the uniqueness actually, we offer you this knowledge, body of knowledge in family, or in child, or in correctional administration, in crime and so on.

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RNS (cont.): The candidate gets confused and then we send Ezekiel Topo... perform the role representing PMIR. So he comes with the Superman dress actually, and he comes on the stage and tells the candidate that we are doing PMIR and they get so much salary after passing out, and the course is so popular and finally the candidate leaves actually all the social work faculty and the candidate goes with the PMIR, with Topo. So Dr Desai really performed that role of a candidate and it was too amusing! And it became so hilarious, I recall very well that half of the audience they came on the stage actually clapping and all that.

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RNS (cont.): And then we celebrated in our house, Dr Desai was very much present, and she was so happy. The same thing happened when Golden Jubilee celebration was there. First time we had a, a cultural festival where we invited teams of social work students across the country. And it was a three day festival, and I think Dr Desai, she cherished this because she was very much actually the person inclined actually for these things also, as she was very much committed for the cause of social work of course. And she gave new shape to social work. But she was a very, very humane. And one more incident I would like to narrate.



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RNS (cont.): Her humane... but also, a kind of thing that actually... if I'm humane to you, you have to be loyal, you know. I mean, you should not actually cheat me, if I'm... you know, that kind of a typical, I would say- a typical Parsi kind of philosophy. So, that time it was a formative stage for non-academic staff union. And they were doing a lot of hullabaloo and going off for one, you know, one day strike or actually some... dharna. And I recall that day that there was one staff, service staff, a sweeper, Feru, Feru was the name. And Feru was a regular staff, and his son-in-law was also a regular staff at TISS. And his wife used to work at Professor Desai's house. So virtually the whole family was involved at TISS and getting really I mean, adequate salary, that way.

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RNS (cont.): Then his son also worked, so then... honestly three were employed, regular employed. And when outside they staged the dharna, the non-academic staff, protesting on certain issue- I can't recall what was the issue that precipitated the matter- and they were staging dharna outside the gate. And she found that all three were sitting in the front row for the dharna. In the evening, that time I was warden. So she met us, and we started discussing that, I mean, casually how this agitation was going on. And she was bit upset, and she was upset that these persons whom I gave so much work and employed everybody; they were the first ones who were staging dharna.

0:06:11.093

RNS (cont.): She was bit upset. So Desai was also emotionally... I mean, she was very humane,



she was very helpful and of course committed for social work cause, but, but she was emotional also. And if something happens wrong, then, then she... then it used to upset her, as actually it happens with all of us, really, those who are sensitive, I'm also sensitive person. Something goes wrong and I can't stop, I also really feel sad about it, upset about it. So I recall that incident also. Then, then our nautanki flourished, we did actually a play of Phanishwar Nath Renu, we did the tarjuma in nautanki style and many faculty joined. Rather, in one play we could not succeed because faculty started quarrelling that I'll take this role, I'll take this role, so we had to abandon actually that play that year.

0:07:05.926

RNS (cont.): So those were good days, there was a community kind of interaction. The students were also quite disciplined. And there were very strict wardens like Professor Matthew and even Vidya Rao, and there was a warden, R N Sharma, myself, who was a bit liberal, and I talked to Dr Desai frankly that I won't do moral policing and all that. If you want me to be warden, I won't go at midnight actually hunting for students and all that. But if somebody breaks the rule, then I'll come to you and we'll take disciplinary action, and we took disciplinary action. Honestly during my regime as warden, we suspended three or four students. Others could not.

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RNS (cont.): But we were very strict wardens, and a... Professor... J C Sharma was warden actually peeping into the clothes actually, the student... he, he knew that what actually shirt, who wears what shirt. I mean, so much involvement, investments. I won't have that kind of thing, I used to help students. But I won't do... I won't go everyday midnight, or alternate day and



searching for good guys or bad guys, no I never did this. So, I, I was warden and I think I had a nice time. But that time, students were of different nature. Today, I'm sorry, today... today wardenship is a challenge because there is plenty of defiance among the students.

0:08:29.283

RNS (cont.): Discipline values and norms have changed. What we considered discipline that time is not discipline today. What were the values that time are not the values today. So I don't know much, but I think wardens should be having a very tough time because even we have very tough time bringing the student to the classroom. Because they're sharp, they're intelligent, so they think that coming to the class is not very... I mean, they can prepare and they can write the assignments. So the tendency of casual behaviour among the students is there, which upsets us. And we feel this is across the disciplines. I don't know much about HRDRM because HRDRM is a very professional course, Health Studies is also a very professional course; maybe they are more disciplined because, this... they have to get hefty salaries.

0:09:16.445

RNS (cont.): But I think in other disciplines really, students are really becoming a bit casual and of different values that we used to carry or cherish.

Q: You were the person who wrote the lyrics for the Institute Song, can you talk about it for me?

RNS (cont.): See, to be frank with you, I was a student at Roorkee University, and there was an Institute Song; Jayati Jayati Vidya Sansthan, the wordings were same. In fact, the first two lines of our song are exactly... maybe minor change; the lines from Roorkee University Institute Song. That song was in my mind, so those two lines I picked up- of course, I'm sorry, without taking



permission from them- but after then, then the words started flowing into.

0:10:07.600

RNS (cont.): So various... I thought of social work and I thought actually of a kind of institution... I mean, research units contributing to the cause for the society, cause for the disadvantaged, cause for those who are deprived. Then I think the words came very fast. So I was able to compose the song I think within a week or so, and then initially it was given a tune by Dr Datta. And that was also from a filmi song, frankly speaking, Jayati Jai... Jai Raghunandan, Jai Siya Ram. It was a very famous bhajan. So we gave that tune to the song, and we brought it to Dr Armaity Desai, the Director. She liked the wordings very much, but she said this is a balladic melody, the tune actually song is not... that, these are not actually the tunes for, made for Institute Songs, which have to be finished in very, very short period. Maybe forty seconds, or fifty seconds, or one minute maximum.

0:11:10.924

RNS (cont.): So we had to change the tune. And we were in dilemma. That time, you will be surprised to learn, Dr Ramaya came. Ramaya knows music. He doesn't reveal, only, only when we are close and provoke him, he reveals. And he has sense of music. He gave actually a tone to the... the tune to the Institute Song, which really fitted into what Dr Desai wanted, within the period also, and it is I think at a stage. Now I'm told some change has been made to the tune. I feel Ramaya should have been... Ramaya should have been consulted before changing the tune, that would have been appropriate.



0:11:53.845

RNS (cont.): But, but I feel happy. Even in... on light side, Dr Yesudian whom I consider very, very, very, very formal person, even he gets actually provoked when Institute Song is sung. Even he, he gets actually emotional about the Institute Song, so.... I think the song, song came well. Maybe now the wordings maybe have to change given actually the change that we are seeing. So, so I was happy about that thing.

Q: So do you want to take a shot at changing the words of the song now?

0:12:27.652

RNS: No, rather Professor Lakshmi Lingam, she told me that she, she had... rather she had changed some words also. Again actually we were not... I mean, we were informed only, we were not taken into confidence, that should have been more appropriate to tell us because we were here only. So, I'm told some one or two lines have been changed. Incidentally I haven't heard the new song because the, the... to me, the tune that was given by Professor Ramaya was very subtle and very good, so I wonder actually what kind of new tune is there, so I'm not prepared also to listen to the new tune.

0:13:22.489

RNS (cont.): So... we wrote actually, emotionally, something... but I think we meant it also because this institute really... again I should not become emotional. I mean, to me my mother was one who gave me the worth index, the best childhood and to me Tata Institute gave us actually the, the living really for... over decades. So Tata... we are actually, we are grateful to Tata Institute and, and we tried our best to offer whatever capabilities we had, that we could



offer. So to me it is a satisfying relationship really with TISS, and I think in... maybe in that emotional kind of stage, I might have written that song. So, but I'm happy about it.

0:14:05.124

RNS (cont.): As you know, this is the Platinum Jubilee year of TISS. So in that context, do you have anything you'd like to say or tell to the Institute or tell everyone?

RNS (cont.): I think just now I mentioned really that to me it was like second mother, and it nurtured us, and we tried our best to offer really to the Institute. And now we are seeing enormous actually kind of expansion and new faculty coming, promising faculty, youth faculty, young faculty coming. Quite a smart... I interact with them for two, three minutes; I ask them their names also. So we are lagging behind in not knowing them, that is actually our mistake, we should interact.

0:14:45.006

RNS (cont.): But, but I come... and TISS is being recognized now beyond- as I say that now Bombay University people look forward to TISS. And there was a time that actually there won't be an invitation to TISS from Bombay University. So that way, TISS has travelled a lot for the good, in a positive way and TISS is now really the institution known in the social sector, within India and beyond. And I think one thing I would like to mention- because I'm talking of TISS- this all happened because of two or three important factors. One is that all regular Directors, they were the persons of high integrity. That is one advantage TISS had. From the very beginning, the Directors actually who joined here, they were actually persons of very high integrity.



0:15:38.773

RNS (cont.): I, I remember Professor Gore, I worked with him; Professor Armaity Desai; Professor R R Singh also, though, though as I say he maintained the status quo. But again, he was a person of integrity actually. And, and of course, now the present Director again actually is a person of integrity. So this is one advantage that TISS had. The second advantage I think was because of Bombay House, contribution of Tatas, creating a work culture. We were a small institution, we were a small actually organisation, whether academics or even non-academic staff. These two perform, they will do their duties. So we were not really a traditional, typical university where one paper doesn't move and you are actually breaking your head.

0:16:26.367

RNS (cont.): I mean, you are, you are waiting the reply, the response, either from Director or really from Accounts Section or from Purchase Section or any, any academic staff or non-academic staff. TISS actually had that work culture. It may be a small institution, it may be an institution for social work in the beginning, but that work culture was always there. And I think that and really, the integrity of the Directors. That brought both, really... and of course, the contribution of Bombay House, you cannot ignore that. I think these three deadly combinations brought the TISS to the stage it is today.

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RNS (cont.): I mean this, formally I would actually... I believe it, and I would like really to share, I mean, my feeling. This is how I look at it. The work culture really, the integrity of Directors, and really the Bombay House contribution. These three factors. They are... and that's why we



were moulded towards work and actually we keep on working. We never actually needed any kind of danda, you know I mean typical kind of... stick actually for doing the work. We'll work actually on our own. That culture I think TISS always had, even today. And even today, non-academic staff also they, they, they... of course some problem will be here and there, which is always there.

0:17:38.374

RNS (cont.): But by and large... I mean, they are responsive. They perform their duties much faster than, efficiently than anywhere.

Q: Anything else you'd like to say?

RNS: Rather I'm thankful to you really for giving me this opportunity to share actually some of my sentiments, Yeah, that's it, I would say. Thank you. Okay.