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## **Prof. S. Parsuraman**

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Interviewer: Prof. Anjali Monteiro

Camera/Sound: Prof. K.P. Jaysankar

Place: TISS, Mumbai

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### **School of Media and Cultural Studies**

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and Professor of Research Methodology, Department of Research Methodology, TISS.

Prof. Parasuraman's publications include *Listening to People Living in Poverty*, Books for Change, Bangalore (2003), *Water Dialogue in India* (Edited), Routledge India, New Delhi (2012) and

*India Disasters Report – 2*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, (Forthcoming, February 2013).

He has written over 50 research articles; 30 of them published in journals at the national and international level.

He is member of Governing Boards of Universities and Institutions; National and International NGOs (CRY, CHILDLINE, Oxfam India, Plan India, etc), International Organisations, member of National Apex Policy Making Body of MGNREGA, NRLM, Social Science Research, member of 3 Steering Committees and several sub-committees of 12<sup>th</sup> Plan preparation of the Planning Commission, Chairperson/Member of Government institution restructuring: National Institute of Rural Development (Hyderabad); Chairperson of a committee to restructure CAPART (MoRD). Under his leadership since 2004, TISS has many achievements and accolades to its credit. For more details: <http://www.tiss.edu/faculty/prof.-s.-parasuraman>



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Q: When you first joined TISS what was your first impression of the Institute and your experiences in here

P: I came to the Institute to, for a stop-gap arrangement you know, between the time I submitted my PHD thesis and the time to go for my postdoctoral fellowship. And it normally takes about ten months, so I came to the Institute to.... one morning in March '81 and I came to ask for a research assistant's job so that I can while away my time between that period. And I was asked to come back next day and then they offered me, they said we don't have a research assistant's job but we have a lecturer's job. And I said I'm not going to stay here, means I want to go away for my postdoctoral and they said you can do that, but you join.

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P (cont.): So that's how I came in at that point in time. I was assigned to the Unit for Child and Youth Research, that's where I was located. And that was an interesting place primarily because, you know, they wanted a demography project at that particular point in time and I came in. That was also the time when there was no computer available actually; they'd just bought a new computer. They needed a programmer, so I think I did in the first year of my stay here in addition to doing research on child and youth research, the other thing I did was to write programs in photon. You know, it is what was my early experience here but you know this place even at that point in time had no boundaries, so that seems to be the case. And then from 1982 I started teaching.



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P (cont.): I taught two courses in those days. I was asked to develop a course on Anthropology and later they said, you know, it's like Sociology so we're going to teach Tribal Anthropology, that's what we developed. And then a course on Demography that used to be taught by Bhende, so I took on that course for FCW. So I think these two courses plus the research in the area of youth and child labour. I think a major project which we did at that particular point in time to look at the issues of child labour, particularly in hazardous occupations, that has been the work which we did.

Q: Do you have anything memorable you would like to say about your early days?

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P: You know the problem of that particular point in time was that the Unit for Child and Youth Research was fully populated by women. You know there were eight women or something like that. I was the junior most faculty, junior most at that point in time. So it was interesting because they always brought food. So, you know, it was a very different kind of place for me at that point in time because Demography mostly had men. I found here there were more women actually, so the entire washroom in that floor used to be just me! . So it is a funny thing actually. But I, but it was a good thing, a way to grow up with them and many of them are here now, still.

Q: You said that it was a place without borders, can you talk a little about that?

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P: In the sense that, you know, I was recruited to the Unit for Child and Youth Research you know I think within a year of my joining they gave me a lecturer's post against a reader's post. You know it was unusual situation, they said whenever you reach that level then you can move on to that reader's post, that's what they said. And then of course they, they wanted me to do programming in statistics. That was one way of doing work, and the second thing- because they bought the... there is a DCM machine they bought in 1981 and I, you know, programmed in basic and that's what I used in my doctoral days. The second thing was that to teach, you know, the two different subjects like Anthropology and Demography; two different locations I think in Social Work in those days... I think the Social Science people teaching, that used to be an interesting thing.

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P (cont.): So I could do that. And thirdly that even in the early '80s I used to have projects that involved more than own faculty; from other groups in the Institute, actually. And so that was a very interesting part of it, that we didn't know the boundaries. And there was something very interesting at that particular point in time and which still continues I suppose, in a sense; that you can close your door and work on your own, nobody is going to disturb you. And that's a privilege actually, that, you know, the idea that you have that space to work on and that was the most productive days actually.

Q: Can you share something about Prof. Gore?



P: Yeah, Professor Gore was... I was the last person to be recruited by Professor Gore and he was in my interview here and he was also in my interview at IIPS.

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P (cont.): So, and he knew that I had been selected in both the places, so I came to Professor Gore to ask him; Sir, you know I have both these appointment letters, you tell me what should I be doing. He simply said- sitting where I am sitting- he simply said do you want to be the only Demographer in this place or become one amongst two dozen Demographers. I think he settled my case! So, I think he spoke very little and I mean those days, I think this is the nature of communication we had and of course he left by '82, so there was not much time that we had interaction but this was an interesting interaction we had. And that sealed my fate as far as TISS is concerned.

Q: One of the, sort of, important research projects that you did was related to the rehabilitation of the Narmada Dam...

P: In '87 when the Sardar Sarovar project was cleared, they created the monitoring... the independent monitoring and availability agencies in all the three states; Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. And the Government of Maharashtra wanted TISS to, to do work on Akrani and Akkalkuwa tehsils that were going to be submerged. So Miss Desai created a four-member team that had; an economist, Professor Sarthi Acharya; a social worker, a community development person, Professor Panwalkar; and a social worker, Professor Asha Rane. And then they wanted a data person, and that's how I got into the project actually.



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P (cont.): And, but suddenly I found by '89 I was the only person left in that project actually because all three of them moved out of that project. And we were doing, first of all, the baseline assessment of the villages that were going to be submerged, and we were to follow up of the people moved to the new locations. In other words, you create a database- in the database in their original place- and then follow them up over a period of time to see what changes happen to people and social, economic, environmental and other aspects also. We created the database at the individual level, household level and at the ability level. And... but one of the problems which we had is that by the time '88, '89 came already people from Manibeli and Chimarkari and Bankhedi were moving to Gujarat and they were resettled there.

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P (cont.): We said- and Miss Desai, our Director at that particular point in time- we were very clear in what we were doing; we said, this is about people and we are collecting information from the people. And this information, in whichever form we submit to the World Bank and the Governments, must be available to the people. I think that was a position that we took. But then, I mean, the contract didn't allow for that position actually. So we told the bank that either- the World Bank- either, you know, this is the only way we work otherwise we don't want to be involved in this project I think. So we struck a compromise. The compromise was that we submit a report and within that there would be action points that must be done by the Governments, and we give six months time for the government to carry out those points.



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P (cont.): At the end of the six months, we hand over the report to the people with the action taken in terms of what the government did in the six month period actually. But I think by '91, you know... '91, '92 with the Committee coming into the picture, I think we gave the report to the people the day we submitted to the government actually. You know, and that's how that has been made, and that was an important statement which we were trying to make. That, you know, don't appropriate resources that belong to the people. And if you... you know, that would become mostly extractive actually. And you need to give back what you collected from the people, and also to verify, you know, verify what you've collected and reported actually; is this was the right thing actually. So I think that tradition was quite important, you know.

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P (cont.): And for a Demographer, I think that was very interesting learning actually because for us, data is a public source and it must be available to everyone. But how did social workers look at data and people's access to it was a good learning actually.

Q: Do you think TISS has arrived at this position through a series of other, this thing, or was it always there this kind of understanding that, you know, data belongs to people.

P: I think TISS, the TISS before 1982 is very... was very different from the TISS that emerged after '82. TISS, before that, was doing basic research, you know, some of the path-breaking work



done by Professor Gore and Punekar and others were in the realm of social issues but basic research.

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P (cont.): And it was useful for policy and programs but it is at that level. But much more, far more intensive engagement with people, you know, where you need to go back to them became far more important I think with the arrival of Miss Desai. And that redefined the position as to what you can do, and I think the point was that you can talk to press; you can talk to public as long as there is evidence to support you. And I think that was, that was very important actually and ethics of, you know, data handling and dealing with that, and working with people got redefined at that particular point in time. So there were, there were people who agreed to that notion and worked with that, and there were people who had other ideas but, you know, that's the tension that existed in the late 80s which more or less settled by early 90s actually with the Sardar Sarovar.

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P (cont.): If we can do that in Sardar Sarovar, you know, which is the most political project which you can deal with, then you must be able to do in any other situation actually. So we have, we have stopped doing projects that had a confidential cross. I think that was the end of, you know, anything you did that would remain confidential.



Q: Where do you think the overall research agendas were redefined with, you know, these kind of people coming in and secondly, in what way did the image of TISS in the minds of, you know, planners, people who funded these kinds of research like that, and... A sea change with this kind of statement that you made with Sardar Sarovar.

P: Yes, I think they started looking at TISS as an activist institution. I think that was what the image of TISS, image of TISS is what Professor Gore was.

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P (cont.): I think TISS emerged as an activist institution around that time actually, and Sardar Sarovar project was a defining project for the Institute in that sense. And we... did we build on that actually, and that was a big question actually, you know. I have a feeling that we could have built on that, we could have enlarged our engagement with the State, we could have enlarged our engagement with other stakeholders. I think, you know, that was not the case. I think the very fact that we wanted to open up the data was about engaging with civil society and the people and this was a project, you know, funded by the government. So we need to strengthen that interface as we move on, and work in a way whereby we are constructively able to work with government actually.

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P (cont.): Even in those situations, I think the Institute's ability to influence R and R policy was very strong actually because we were talking from the strength of the knowledge base, and the



conviction about what we had done; I think that was important at that particular point in time. We could have strengthened that I think, we lost touch probably in '95 with a lot of people leaving, and the people who were left behind were not really... had that kind of support which Miss Desai would have provided.

Q: Any other... you were looking at Professor Desai coming in as a kind of defining moment in the history of TISS

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P: Basically what remained as a twenty percent institution.... I think TISS remained as a twenty percent institution for- what- about forty years? And that had its own limitation, I think. What Professor Gore has been able to do is to create a framework of departments and units and that process was still continuing actually, you know. Women's Studies came later, Family Studies came later. I think that process was still continuing. What Miss Desai was able to do is to strengthen that base, I think. So both the units and the departments grew during that particular period, in a way whereby we were able to do many more things, you know. But that also created a situation whereby the distance between the social work and social sciences grew fundamentally because you had many people in social work department who can teach many of the things which social science people were teaching.

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P (cont.): So, but then that itself would have been an opportunity for social sciences to redefine itself as to how to be relevant, how to be contributing to the social work knowledge as well as the policy research. I think that is where we may have probably lost some steam, but I think TISS's contribution in those days has been very strong actually.

Q: When you took over as Director of the Institute, how did you understand the current situation of the Institute, what are the things you felt needed to be changed or to be...?

P: You know, ten years away from the Institute- '95 I left and came briefly in '97, til 2004- was a long time away from the Institute. I knew something was happening, but I was too distant to understand what was happening actually.

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P (cont.): So in 2004 when I was invited to talk about this, taking up this position, the questions that were placed before me is that; can this place be turned around? Now, then the question was that, you know, how did the governing board assess the situation at that particular point in time? You know, that is where the idea that the rift between constituencies within the Institute, the lack of research output, the stagnant student population and the lack of visibility were the things that were put in front of me. I think there were people who I'm very closely associated with the Institute, but still away and they were in the interview, and they were telling me that, you know; do you have that capacity in you to come in at a time when this needs transformation. I think that is what was put in front of me actually.



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P (cont.): So I was running back and forth between Bangkok and Mumbai- you know I was with the UN, just moved to UN before this call came- so I was moving between Mumbai and Bangkok meeting with various people in Bombay House, trying to understand what support can they provide, you know. Where does... where would the governing body draw a line or not draw a line if the faculty were to move in a direction actually. I think so we had a clean slate, I think that is what was very important at that particular point in time; both the governing board as well as the faculty provided that space whereby we can re-imagine ourselves, I think. So this was the space that was available, so what... you know, I'm an instrument in order to fill that space with ideas.

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P (cont.): But that was possible only with the faculty on board and the governing board not interfering into how we did the transformation.

Q: What were the ideas you had in terms of restructuring and what did you see as the bones of restructuring, and how would you assess, you know, where we are now.

P: Basically I think, you know, as a faculty team all of us got together to internally analyse how are we organised, how are we supported, how are we facilitated in our teaching and research work and how that has resulted in productivity in terms of research output, production and our teaching actually. I think that was far more an internally driven, soul-searching process which the faculty went through.



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P (cont.): And at the same time we were also looking at how is the external context developing; what are the challenges that are facing people in the economic liberalisation context, and you know, the condition of people who are poor and marginalised, who are disadvantaged, how their conditions have been changing. I think we were also doing that external analysis; I think again that was a faculty driven process, I think we never had a consultant actually. It's very interesting that an institution can go through restructuring and repositioning without outside help actually. So both internal environment document and external environment document were created by the faculty themselves actually. So now once we understood what our constraints were, and once we understood that how else we can locate ourselves in order to be able to be relevant in the social and economic and political context, I think then it became easier for us to revision and reposition ourselves.

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P (cont.): So I think what the faculty decided is to dissolve themselves actually from the location they were- departments and units- and come and form a new identity actually. And that again was a voluntary process actually, no one drove people to locations, I think people located themselves. So I think it's a fascinating experiment actually. I don't know whether we have enough document that this as an internally driven process, because everyone you would have an external engagement actually. And we went to the governing board only to say this is what we



have decided, you know, and they agreed to that. And the University Grants Commission said exactly the same thing; tell us how you have located yourself and we agree to that.

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P (cont.): So that's a very fascinating experience to go through. I had my apprehensions actually, I had my apprehensions because you are disrupting the established framework and it can fail, you know. So my people in Bangkok kept my job open for almost a year, you know if I changed my mind and wanted to go back. So I think, but, that didn't arise actually. That was a challenge actually.

Q: You provided a kind of space for people to dream about what they could do and then see that those dreams were achievable.

P: Yeah, but that was because, you know, I grew up here. You know for me, I was away for ten years all over the world but still my address in, when I filled in immigration had always been TISS, Mumbai actually you know.

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P (cont.): So I was part of this place and so there was no issues actually in terms of that we had any internal motives to what we were trying to do actually. And I think that faith was very important, otherwise we wouldn't have moved at all.



Q: Coming to another area, which is your involvement in and TISS's involvement in responding to disaster. You personally as well as institutionally has done a lot of work in this area and particularly being involved in the whole area of, you know, assessment of loss... Could you talk a little about TISS and then as...

P: TISS has always been in the forefront of addressing people's issues and particularly in the context of disasters that people lose a number of things you know; homes and livelihoods and their loved ones. And TISS always went in to provide that initial relief in whichever way we could provide.

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P (cont.): And secondly, it's... one of the important mandates it took upon itself is to develop a complete knowledge base of people who were affected, given a situation where the country can easily leave out people who are otherwise excluded and in a disaster context, that exclusionary behaviour can become far more pronounced. And so what TISS was trying to do is to document all people who were originally there and create an identity for them so that their claim to resettlement and rehabilitation would become possible. And that's a very important part of it because normally a panchnama done by the government would tend to leave out people because people don't come to locations, you need to reach out to them in order to map out and try and document people and their condition and then.... But when documenting conditions, you are also able to inform the relief providers as to what is needed in that particular location.



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P (cont.): I think that has been TISS's important work, you know, which started from 1947 Partition to that of... all along the way we have been involved in that particular process. My own engagement started with Jambhulpada, you know, which is in our backyard, where TISS has been working in that location for a decade I think by the time... and all that work was wiped out by the floods in Jambhulpada. I think that has been very important lesson in, you know, how disaster can wipe out development or people's efforts in no time and create context whereby the poverty and deprivation can envelop them. So whether it is Jambhulpada or Latur... Latur has been a defining framework for me personally because that is where one got to see firsthand, because even while people were still collecting bodies and disposing them of, we were already counting the dead and, you know, enumerating people and assisting in the relief work actually, directly rescue and relief work.

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P (cont.): Which continued thereafter I think, so.... But then we have always been tentative in the sense that we sacrificed our teaching program, we closed our program and went out to work with the people and came back and then started moving on our work, but then our long-term engagement was limited actually. I think that changed with Latur earthquake, primarily because we had the Tuljapur campus where we stayed on to make meaningful contributions to people's recovery. I think that has been a defining framework for the Institute in terms of how we must be engaged with.... And so, when we restructured the Institute, one of the very important centres we created was this Jamshedji Tata Centre for Disaster Management, to create human resources to engage in disaster risk reduction processes. And I think that has been a very singular contribution



that the Institute has made and our people now occupy, you know, in almost all state Disaster Management Authority our graduates occupy key positions actually.

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P (cont.): So I think, you know, that way I must tell you that through our work in relief and rehabilitation and reconstruction, and through our work teaching and training and research program, I think our contribution has multiplied substantially actually.

Q: Could you talk specifically about the post-tsunami intervention and the work emerged....

P: There again in post-tsunami there are three things that we did actually. We sent out a team to Sri Lanka to work on the psycho-social aspects of people; that team worked back for a long time actually. We built the capacity of the local groups so that they can take over that work. In tsunami money was not the issue; what was the issue was expertise.

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P (cont.): I think that is what TISS was able to provide to Sri Lanka. We were one of the first to reach the far interior Katchal islands actually; we took one of the first Air force planes that took off from Tambaram Airport along with the goods and other services that went with that plane. And, you know, we were engaged in the rescue work in Katchal and other islands in Nicobar and too that of documenting actually, but then the initial ten, fifteen days went in basically doing the rescue and relief work. And we continue... and in Tamil Nadu, we were not needed so much in the sense of providing relief, primarily because it was the southern coast which was very well



endowed in terms of support from the state governments; they were active state governments. But then what we did at the invitation of the government was to create database of all hundred and fifty thousand families that were affected by tsunami.

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P (cont.): And we created a database along with the support of other social work schools, and that database is still being used by the people and the government out there. In Nicobar Islands, you know we... our work is still continuing actually, it's six years down the line where we started with the relief work, rescue and relief work, we moved on to the process of dealing with creating new set of leadership. Where the leadership was wiped out, the half of Nicobar Islands people vanished and the elderly died in that process. So, you know, conducted three rounds of three month training program each in leadership development and the ability to access resources and engage in the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction work; I think that is what we did in terms of human resources development.

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P (cont.): Then we moved on to developing the database on the households and what was lost and what was remaining, and what can be salvaged. And then we moved on to looking at how do you enhance the productivity after the resources which people are left with, you know, with our work on enhancing the value of copra. You know, we worked with the people to provide new kinds of methods, to dry a coconut, to dehydrate, as well as our work on dealing with virgin coconut oil and trying to create new opportunities in terms of remuneration available to people. I



think that work was very important, and right now I think the last phase of work, what we are trying to do is to create island knowledge centres where, which serve... which would serve as the focal point for people to access information on schemes and programs.

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P (cont.): Information on, you know, how... what is the information base which we have created; they can update that information base. And it will also serve as early warning centres, because that's what was needed actually. So I think we should be able to complete our work by end of this year, or February next year whereby we would move out of this work actually.

Q: Could you talk about the India Disaster Report?

P: Yes. India Disasters Report was an attempt whereby you document experiences of people with disasters and various domain areas where new knowledge was needed.

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P (cont.): Say for example, psycho-social health was an unknown area actually. In fact, 1995 we started that work with Latur; by '97 we joined hands with Nimhans and developed a series of training material, and by 2000 it has been mainstreamed actually. Now you don't need to tell the government that psycho-social aspects are important, but it becomes an integral part of the intervention actually. So we have... So the India Disasters Report was created to document a new



knowledge that had been developed as a consequence of a policy, programs and implementation of these ideas, and to make it available for wider use actually. In fact, in this country we do not have material, you know, that would... or resources that informs people on new ideas and experiences and practices. I think that is why we signed this agreement with Oxford University Press to bring out the India Disasters Report.

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P (cont.): The first one appeared in 2000 and... in 2000 actually, released in 2000, February. But then, you know all people who were involved in that experiment, we vanished actually, we vanished. I vanished into South Africa, other friends vanished elsewhere. So I think when I came back, I think we started that process again and I think the India Disasters Report 2010 will be appearing by next month. That looks at each one of the aspects in depth; the gender aspects, the health aspects, the ICT in disasters, the media in disasters; redefining, you know, interventions in disasters actually. That's, it's going to be far more theoretical to start with, but brings in the knowledge on varying aspects of disasters into much more, much more better understanding.

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P (cont.): I think this is a far more in-depth analysis of various aspects. The idea is that hereafter, once this India Disasters Report 2010 is published; we want to bring out every second year an India Disasters Report comes out because that's what we have an agreement about.



Q: One looks at, you know, TISS's history in terms of broad sweeps. What would you say are like, how would you see the major milestones that define.... And how do you see the contribution of TISS to social justice and higher education, what way has it set new models or maybe, you know, set up new strategies.

P: So the early part of the Institute was an important era; I must tell you that much of the social welfare policies were developing. I think that is where the Institute's contribution was very important; whether it was in the area of child, whether it is in the area of women, it's in the area of disability and other forms of disability, whether it is in terms of prisons and.... I think much of what developed in those days as policies, Institute was instrumental in providing the knowledge base and Institute had people of that stature that can contribute to evolution of those policies. And since we had the exchange between the social welfare departments and the institutes, so these were trained and sent back to their locations actually. That was an important phase, where the linkage between the research which we did and its implications to policy was far stronger.

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P (cont.): I think that is the first phase of work, you know, where you... we can bring it up to about '75 or even around- at that point in time, up to that point in time. '80s the situation changed fundamentally in the sense that the State became a far more active, you know, self-indulgent state where State as the provider of services became a far more important part of it, and where social welfare itself was getting sidelined relatively. I think that is where the Institute's engagement with social welfare was declining or not that very strong as it used to be in the '60s and '70s. But then there was also something happening that the Institute is moving from,



ideologically moving from one position to that of another position actually; from the notion of 'welfare' to 'development' was happening in the '80s.

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P (cont.): That I think, you know, we very simplistically used to call that a position whereby we could say that you create poverty, we deal with it kind of social work, to that of we don't let you to create poverty. And you have a responsibility to make sure that poverty is not created and when it is created, addressed... you know, locating the onus on the State and for citizens. I think the paradigm shift was happening in the '80s actually, and that was a very important shift. So social work did not remain the way it remained in the '60s and '70s; and '80s social work was different. Not so very different in all locations actually, but in some locations it was far more pronounced and that's how we could create activism in the late '70s and '80s, who played a very important role in transformational social work actually.

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P (cont.): '90s was a period of confusion. A period of confusion in the sense that the force unleashed by the economic liberalisation and our own lack of engagement with the forces of change meant that, you know, we were less engaged with that. I think we were trying to understand, but less engaged with the process. But 2000, this decade has been the decade... the last decade has been a decade whereby the ability to confront, the ability to a far more better defined development, better defined rights and entitlements, and better able to articulate and locate it; I think that position has come to the Institute actually. Every single location you would



see that it's evident, whether the production which comes out of our Media and Cultural Studies program, or the kind of scholars who come out of our Development Studies program, the kind of Social Work students who graduate from the Institute.

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P (cont.): I think this is a very new set of young people with idealism and capacity to be able to induce change actually. So I think this is a very new Institute and there are... I think what it has done is that, you know, while we changed we also attracted some of the most challenging students and some of the most challenging faculty, you know. which is phenomenally important actually. I think that is where we have reached; that we have reached a situation whereby we are in a very important threshold of far-reaching, you know, ability to make far-reaching changes and the Institute can play a very important role in creating that kind of knowledge base, what we can call it as 'taking sides with the people' knowledge. That kind of knowledge base, and able to inform policy and programs that can fundamentally alter people's situations.

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Q: In what ways do you think this is different from a lot of the agendas that other universities have?

P: You know taking sides with the people is a unique agenda. It has its own difficulties actually. In a context whereby a situation which is driven by the market, where to side with the market is the easiest thing to do; you know you can create thousands of students from the Institute if you



were to serve the market. But that's a very different kind of education actually, but I think TISS is unique in the sense that yes, it creates graduates who understand the market but have the ability to transform market to work with, serve the people actually. That's a different kind of notion, you know.

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P (cont.): The transformation of the society and economy is a long drawn process given the nature of social and economic and political context. I think what the Institute is trying to do is to create knowledge on how the change is happening and how it is impacting people, and address some of those fundamental causes to contribute both to the understanding of the State as well as non-State actors, I think that is what we are trying to do. And in that context, I think TISS is very different actually. I think I sometimes feel very lonely when I sit in meetings with other heads of institutions, that the language we speak and what we stand for is very different.

Q: Where do you see TISS going in the future, given this kind of very unique mandate that it has, with the approach that it has developed to research, to teaching, to field action. Where do you see TISS a few years from now, where would you like to see TISS

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P (cont.): I think the idea of inclusive development, sustainable development in the context of strong forces that undermine people's ability to live a dignified life.... I think this challenge is only going to be strengthening; only going to be difficult actually. But this is also would be



creating context whereby change for a better condition would be possible. Now how do you create, how do we create... strengthen our ability to bring out graduates in larger numbers actually, to be able to occupy spaces in a variety of locations; you know it could be a location even to enhance people's capabilities to be employable actually, to do a variety of different work, what you can think in terms of. How do you create graduates who would work with the poor people as wealth creators?

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P (cont.): I think these challenges are going to be far more important, so you need very strong graduates who are both theoretically, analytically and empirically stronger and at the same time have strong linkages with the community, and be able to work with all stakeholders; you know, the State, market, and civil society. I think this is a new breed of graduates we are talking about, the new forms of education which we are talking about. So this is where I think locating the TISS in different locations is becoming very important, you know. How would we be able to move out to locations so that we can create graduates who can work in those locations. And also to do research that is closer to the people actually, I think that is where we would be moving into a space whereby a larger number of graduates and enormous capacity to create a basic research as well as the evidence based research for policy work; I think this capacity is going to multiply.

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P (cont.): I think we have reached a stage whereby it was increasing, but I think with our own Master's and Doctoral students and our faculty research I think what you are going to see is the



multiplication of the capability that is going to emerge out from here. So our own contribution is going to be far more stronger and our own occupation of spaces is going to be far more pronounced and noticeable, you know, and our own engagement with the State and non-State actors is also going to be very strong; that we would want to be occupying places where we can influence change that benefits the people actually. I think that is the way it goes. And at the same time, we also want to become an institution of greater excellence where... which creates a knowledge base that is valued.

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P (cont.): Not valued in the sense that whether market values or not, it's valued in terms of creating new theories and new... working towards paradigms. I think that's where it's going to be very important a contribution. The new TISS would also link with very many different universities and institutions outside the country. That is going to be happening; it's happening in a big way. Institute would be a location for a larger number of international students because the idea is that you need to create fellow travellers in very many different countries. I think we need to become a focus, I think the Hyderabad and Guwahati and Tuljapur would become a focus whereby there would be many more students from other countries come and study in our institution. So Institute would be a place of excellence, would be counted among some of the top universities in the world, I think that is where we will be headed.

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Q: In our 75th year we look back and we look forward. Is there anything that you would like to say, a lesson you'd like to give to the staff, students, faculty...

P: I think we have a privilege; the Tata Institute of Social Sciences is privileged to be blessed with goodwill and support, both from the State as well as non-State actors. I think it's a unique location, as a State-funded university I think we are better provided for and that's a privilege, to be better provided, to be better taken of in terms of resources; whether it is salary, whether it is funds for research and other support systems. I think we are in a much more privileged position. How do we share this good fortune with other people and become more relevant; I think that's a challenge we need to confront.

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P (cont.): Our social relevance has to be far stronger and I think the 75th year is an important year whereby we demonstrate that we can be far more humane and far more caring. I think it's not that we don't... we are not located in that framework but I think we can get far more caring actually. I think that needs to be happening actually. We also need to look at students as our primary constituency; I think we need to refocus ourselves to value and locate them as the primary stakeholders in this framework because they are the change agents actually. So I think we need to move a little more from our self-obsession to caring and a far more student-focused institution because that's where I think there is going to be greater gain for the nation, you know, through that particular process. Because they will carry these values to elsewhere, I think. So this is where we are there, I think we are headed, we are almost there and I think the 75th year is a great opportunity for us to re-visit ourselves.



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P (cont.): And we are already doing; I think several of our schools and centres have... are reviewing their program. Some of our independent centres will become schools and Mumbai itself is going to see enormous change in the Platinum Jubilee year and I think we will set a framework for next quarter century.