Mr. Pradip Prabhu

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Camera/Sound: Ms Shilpi Gulati

Place: TISS, Mumbai

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Pradip Prabhu is a member founder and voluntary social worker in the capacity of the General Secretary in the Kashtakari Sanghatna for over 3 decades. He has been a member of the Advisory Committee of the Planning Commission on the Implementation of Welfare Legislation. He was also an Expert Member of the Expert Committee appointed by the Government of India to Examine the extent of tribal Land Alienation and to Recommend Legislative Measures to curb and control the same. He did his MA from TISS in Personnel Management and Industrial Relations in 1972. He is the former Dean, School of Rural Development, TISS.

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Q: So how did your association with TISS begin?

PP: See, just before I came '69- '70 I had volunteered to work in a tribal school because there was no one to be able to handle it. And by the time... my kind of thinking had more or less broadly crystallized. That was, I wanted to work with the working class people. And so, I had always... I thought, I thought that trying and doing a degree in personal management and industrial relations would help much more in any negotiations, any talking, any thinking through in terms of the relationship between trade unions and the management.

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PP (cont.): And as a person working with- at that time I was thinking of working with trade unions- of being able to understand how your enemy thinks. To understand how your enemy strategizes. And so therefore you are able to develop your counter-strategy to address these strategies. That was more or less what my understanding of doing PMIR was, to kind of understand the logic of management. Not because I wanted to become a manager but because I wanted to become a trade union activist. And I studied hard, I did well. I did well for the simple reason I had a strange logic that I've picked up from my parents in that your choice to do something should be on the basis of your success in doing whatever you're doing now, and not on the basis of your failure. So whatever choice- because I was going to make a choice that was, you know, radically different, very, very different, from what the choices of other students were. And in fact they were quite upset and angry with me that, you know, I walked away with all the prizes, that I stood the best... I was the best student of the class, the best student of the Institute, etcetera. And they said, what good is it going to do. And I gave them my logic, my logic was just

that you do what you do, you do it well. And nothing more, nothing less.

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PP (cont.): And particularly because I wanted to master this understanding. So I did fairly well. It was a very- how would you say- fascinating period in my life. It began with... very soon we got involved in- I wouldn't say we got dragged in- but we got involved in the whole question of the Students' Union. And the Students' Union generally being dominated by the Second Years. Which now, by hindsight they would say it's a logical thing, alright. And, we were all young, spirited kind of this. There were many others, spirited in the group. So we said no, no, we'll challenge them. And the First Years are slightly more in number than the Second Years, always, this happens. And as a result, we won the elections. And then there was this very challenging time because they knew the logic, how Tata Institute runs, alright, and we didn't know the logic. But anyway, it was worth learning. And, the other part of it was that there was a certain egalitarianism that was there in our group. Of course, at that time PMIR had not become such a fancied kind of job. It was somewhere in between management and the workers and things like that. It becomes fancied much later as the need for being able to address the workers as people, etcetera, also emerges.

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PP (cont.): And so it was not so fancied. It didn't attract people who had this raving urge to, you know, wind up as Chairman and Managing Directors of companies, as there is now. It was people who largely... little, slightly above middle, middle-class aspirations of getting into management, things like that. So we didn't have that kind of internal competition. There was

competition in the group, but we didn't have that cutthroat competition, you know, like; 'I want to make it at all costs' and all. So it was a good working atmosphere. We were a small group of 30 people, it was enjoyable. We... setting also was, you know, far simpler, far kind of within certain nature-bound kind of confines. And we enjoyed ourselves, by and large. I enjoyed learning. I enjoyed learning for two reasons; one was that we had the opportunity to kind of engage in trying to understand the subject. There was a strong feeling at that time, and definitely this was articulated, that TISS was actually, the course that was being taught to us was ten... was predated by ten or fifteen years, and we did give that feedback.

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PP (cont.): For me it didn't matter at that time, because I thought I got what I wanted by the library and negotiating learning in the library. And that is what made my day, so to say. That's what I remember broadly. You know it's a long time ago it's 70...it's I think, close to 50 years or definitely 40 years since this, '70 to '72. There is one thing that left an indelible mark at that time, I took a long time to work it out, you know. You know, there was Doctor Gore who was our director. Who was an extreme... a person who was able to kind of sublimate his emotions to a very high degree. And so therefore was very... very, very staid in his whole approach. And at that impressionable age, I thought he would make a good role model. And so, you know like, being distant as a manifestation of being superior. I learnt the hard way that was not the way I was made. It took me some 5 or 6 years to work it out.

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PP (cont.): This TISS, you know, I did a lot of experimentation together as a student, like, since

I'd come straight away from a tribal school, I was very much in close contact with the tribal community. And it was my first experience at that time of tremendous dignity in what you understand as poverty. Today I don't even understand it as poverty. I understand it as the demands of ecological living. So I was trying to see that, you know because that impacted me tremendously. And, I also, as someone who was in charge of that school and, you know, having little to do in the evenings- you don't have too much to do in the evenings if you are in a remote area- so I used to spend time with the students and was able to influence a lot of young people that, in this whole context of what do we give back to our own community which is responsible for our own being and becoming. So when I was here I used to... I did two experiments.

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PP (cont.): One experiment was, right through my... as soon as I landed here I went to a nearby school and asked if, you know, that somebody wanted tuitions. That I was willing to give tuitions late in the evenings and on weekends. And I did have a very interesting student for tuitions. She later on became a student of TISS herself. And that was an experience first of all, that part of being able to raise some money to support some students which was one part of it, because I sent whatever I could this. The second was that to begin to understand that there are also people in management... because the father of the person whom I was teaching, this girl had just come from America with her family. They were in ESSO, that petroleum company. He was the... he was the, I think the head of the ESSO refinery here. And it gave me also a kind of an insight into... that, you know, everybody's not an ogre. That you can have a humane kind of thinking, etcetera, even within senior echelons of management, this is a point that came.

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PP: And, if one looks like compared to what you have now, there was much more of lectures than there were of, you know, self work and things like that. Now there's much more of that kind of thing. And I think later on they took our feedback, but that was one area which had to change so that we could learn. You know I used to think very much of why we couldn't adopt the, you know, IIM-Ahmedabad model in terms of case study approach to learning and things like that. So therefore that was the thing. Otherwise, I don't know. I don't have too many memories of that period other than, you know, just being classmates together, having a lot of fun. I did well, I studied hard, I did well. Made friends with simple people in the, this... particularly in the library, so they allowed me to take books after the library closed at 8 o'clock those days. So I could take it to the room and study. Those are some of the few memories I had, and this impact that Gore had on me, which I think I later on got [?].

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Q: Could you speak a little about where you went after you finished all of your work in [?]

PP: See, after I went from here I... it was not yet the time of- what you say- placements. Placements, that was the first year that we had just placements for internship. There were no job placements at all in that time. And I was the first student to have been selected, and the only student in that batch, to have been selected for internship in Glaxo. And it kind of rounded up a lot of the fieldwork that we had. My first fieldwork was in the Century Mills and where I was, in a way, witness very shortly to a kind of conflict between the workers and the management, and how the workers got thrashed. It just reminds me of how we got thrashed later on, but that's another matter. My second fieldwork was in a large organisation with women workers in Nelco,

and my third was in Air India and my forth was in Tata Power. And this was the fifth. And, I think this probably did... these fieldwork placements did a tremendous amount of impact in terms of trying to understand my constituency and how does my constituency think. It was not how the management thinks, it was how my constituency thinks. So that match of my thinking of how the management thinks, and how my constituency thinks, my fieldwork helped me to consolidate a lot of that understanding.

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PP (cont.): After that, I was thinking of... I was not sure. I wanted to work in a trade union, and so therefore I had begun initial steps with the Transport and Dockworkers Union. I used to go in the mornings there, and in the evenings, like- my own choice also- I used to teach in a night school. Because that was how I thought I could relate to and understand to a whole section of young people who are basically workers but are still striving to be able to finish school. So I used to teach in a night school in Mumbai. During that time, you know, during the previous year when I was- before TISS- when I was in the tribal area, Thalasari in that area, I used to... at that time I used to talk to many of these young students about, you know, what does one give back to one's community. You know, because, what have you got is all from your community and if we are going at the end of it having gained so much from the community which gives us an impetus to be able to break out of what is otherwise a, you know, a capsule of being, so-called, not having access and then we use that access only for personal advancement. Now what does that mean?

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PP (cont.): So, this used to be my repeated message to a lot of the young students; you know,

8th, 9th, 10th standard students. So, as I was... in January, already in January '73... January '73, while this trade union kind of immersion was going on, a batch of these young people had got involved in this whole issue of displacement. Displacement of around 5000 tribal families for a milk project. Later on when we kept working calculations and backwards, you know, it worked out to... the compensation that they got per person, worked out to about ten rupees per person. That was the amount of compensation and people were almost going to be thrown on the streets. No alternatives, no kind of rehabilitation, very less. And these young people had got together- this is somewhere early, mid-January- had got together and said we will fight it and had organised a spontaneous kind of dharna against the dairy management, the government dairy.

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PP (cont.): We were, at that time, politically naive. And didn't realise, you know... all the other political parties in the area, mainly the CPM and the Congress, began to look at these young people essentially as upstarts. And that they were challenging an order which both the Congress and the CPM had negotiated and thought that they had got the best deal, particularly the CPM, and that we were challenging that. And so the combination of the political parties and the police and the administration resulted in all of us getting thrashed and the dharna being disrupted. That is when an important... that is an important point or juncture in terms of 'what do I do'. And I had made a choice by then that these are the people with whom I'll throw my lot. But I also realised a second thing; that if one was to do something for them, you would need to know law.

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PP (cont.): And so then we talked and we discussed, we accepted that we had lost. We thought

we had lost at that time, this is 1973. We got, managed to get an order from the High Court in 2009 which comes somewhere reaffirmed a lot of things that we were fighting in 1973. And I went to do law. The place where I could get hostel accommodation was Pune, so I went to Pune, studied law. And at that time it was also a period of experimentation, of trying to understand how... now, I had already moved away from my thinking of working class and began to see my future as with these communities, not sure about what it was going to be. I'm also grateful that I didn't go through the run of the mill of social work kind of this, so it gave me an opportunity to kind of search and think out, right through law. And I tried to also negotiate a certain amount of personal knowledge of homelessness... because this....

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PP (cont.): So during my LLB classes and that period I also lived on the streets with just the homeless to try and understand, as another way of learning. I did finish my law and went back through this area. I became part of a experiment because 'til that time, this whole period, I was part of the, of the Jesuit this- what you say- Society of the Jesuits which is the one that runs in Xaviers school and St. Xavier's College and this. And so therefore that facilitated also a lot of thinking. During my time doing law, I was also doing part of my studies in terms of the Order. And my experiments; I worked as an agricultural labourer for nearly a year and also did studies, I did some living on the streets and also did my studies, etcetera. What I would understand is my experiments with truth, the truth as it is.

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And when I finished my law I went, became part of a team that would live in a village and work

with communities. And as a result, I renewed, began to renew contacts with young people living in a remote village. Not so remote, but in a tribal village, living as the ordinary people in that village do, going and collecting firewood, cooking your own food, collecting your own water, living in a hut and getting a feel of what the courts are and how the courts manage, without an intention to practice. By the end of that year, this is... I'm talking of '76, by the end of '76, one got an understanding and that's where I think all that I learnt in TISS began to fall in place. While I was in TISS I was learning a lot of methods of management training, which I largely did on my own. And also read up on simulations, structured experiences and things like that. I think it was early '77, we evolved something of what I, we called as 'youth festivals'. For two reasons; one was we called it a festival as a celebration of consciousness and also as a place of convergence. That's what happens in festivals and jatras and yatras and things like that.

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PP (cont.): A workshop or a training program or something, it was just a place when we came together. That whole program of ten days was really very, very exciting. And it determined many things that today we consider to be cardinal in the organisation. The first thing in that, and that was... you know, like, the essential message of the whole work, workshop was that you know, you can be the author of your own history, collective history. You can be the author of your own emancipation, you can be- collectively, all, never as individuals- you can make your own future; but you have to stand up, you have to affirm it, you have to assert it, you have to struggle for it. And to be able to struggle for it, you have to organise for it. So these were the four kinds of messages that the whole youth festival dealt with over ten days.

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PP (cont.): We had designed it carefully, you know, in terms of the first part of being 'who am I' because unless I understand who am I, how do I understand my own process of humanisation, that's you know... my own process of emancipation, my own process of advancement. And the second was 'what society am I part of', and the third part was 'how do we want to go ahead'. And the message was basically unity, organisation, struggle etcetera. That set into motion... you see, many of these steps set into motion what was not intended but what- or at least what was not consciously recognised- but would be the internal logic of that own process. That the strengthening or the creation of consciousness and the internalisation of that consciousness leads to action. So, for that first workshop we did, had done two or three things. One was I was looking after a hostel of tribal youth, and there was a lot of land that was there in Ashargarh where i was located, which was lying fallow, not used, and I tried to motivate the young people 'why don't we cultivate this land? Why don't we work?' And we did a very interesting, mischievous thing I think so. For example, the whole transplantation period, one, only one student of the class went to school, the remaining worked in the fields, we all worked together. We ploughed the land, we cultivated paddy, etcetera, etcetera.

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PP (cont.): I was talking about that period when I was in this... in this, boarding that was run by the Ashargarh Mission and with the students we had, we were cultivating the land. And for the first workshop, actually it is the students who this grain, this daal that they cultivated, this is what they gave for the workshop. And we did it in a village of people who were, you know, the few, the very, very few who actually were rehabilitated in that. These are all coincidences which at

that time one did not know, did not notice. And it's the first time I think really, honestly, what I learnt in Tata Institute I could use, the first time. There was one part of my own studies in Tata Institute which I learnt what not to do. And, this gave a whole insight into trying to use training methods and training techniques, part of which I had read up when I was here, although we had no formal exposure to it, used it.

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PP (cont.): And of those forty, it was an interesting group of people who came. There were largely, there were largely young people who were my students at one point of time. Or, some of them were schoolteachers at that brief time in 1969-70 that I was in the school. This is back in Talasvi Taluka where the school was. The workshop, that youth festival actually worked wonders. It threw up out of the forty, it threw up close to thirty people who got very intensely involved in the whole process of associating with one's community at that stage. Many were schoolteachers, most of them were schoolteachers; some were students who had passed out who were at home; some were from that Daptsari uprising which had... fiasco. And I don't know what happened to them. They... you would…It is very difficult for me to even explain what happened, you know but like for ten days the average participant of the workshop slept maybe two hours or three hours in a day. We... they spent a good six to seven hours discussing among themselves as to what they should do.

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PP (cont.): And, don't know what triggered it off. Of course, what happened in the workshop, the simulations that we did, the structured experiences that we did did trigger off, it's not that it just

was, you know, something out of the blue. But it triggered off more than one intended. And there were four critical learning. The first critical learning out of that workshop was that rights involve struggle that it absolutely is. The second was, struggles required self-reliance. The third lesson was that self-reliance required internal solidarity. And the fourth lesson that came- I'm reflecting on something that, you know, that wouldn't have been in those words and all that- and fourth, that this internal solidarity required a tremendous sense of personal, affective, as well as intellectual, as well as ideological commitment to what you sought to achieve. This was not something that one imagined at the start of the workshop. But this was, you can say, to some extent, the intended but unintended effects that you would see broadly. Unintended in terms of its impact, in terms of its influence, in terms of its internalisation by this group of forty people.

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PP (cont.): And this was in '77. And by the end of '77 there were study circles in some twenty-two villages. We then thought we will spend at least another month of doing far more serious study and the important thing was that it was all voluntary. Your time, your energy, your resources, your contribution. And this kind of... the fact that those students had, you know, contributed from their crop to feed us for those ten days, and the villagers of this rehabilitation community contributed their whole labour to cook for us and care for us. This set a pattern. You know many of these things, and this is what I see as very fundamental learning at that time for me. Today I see much more of the construct of tribal consciousness. This set the pattern for workshops from 1977. We are now in 2011, and in the period of this, almost 34 years, there must have been at least five hundred workshops, if not more. And yet, 'til today, villagers have all raised their contributions in terms of food, in terms of labour, in terms of support. We've lived in

people's homes, people have vacated their homes and it set a whole thing of where the agenda of consciousness became the agenda of communities. This was my learning.

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PP (cont.): I am trying to think of, you know like, did this play a role... by that time, by that time I was still hardly associated with TISS. After that, one began to be called in TISS to kind of take a lecture or.... For us, it was our way of trying to raise our own support. And it triggered off... So you had, in '78, out of those forty- and then many more workshops were held- a group of maybe about twenty people who had volunteered, so it was volunteered to be part of a more intense learning. They, we spent a month together, they spent fifteen days going and visiting other organisations like Shramik Sanghatna , Homi Sena and they came back- and I was not part of that process- they came back with their decision that, to form an organisation. And also the name that they would call it the Kashtakari Sanghatana [?] and a decision of all of them that they would collectively volunteer.

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PP (cont.): That decision they took on the 1st of October, I was not there. I was called on the second of October and they said we have decided to form an organisation first. Second, we have decided to be the volunteers. This organisation we have decided to call it Kashtakari Sangatna- and these are all tribal young men and women, not...- and we are inviting you to also be part of this process. Not in any condescending manner, I was actually excited about it, very happy about it, and I said yes. So he said then, if you are joining us, you will have to leave this establishment and come and live with us in the village, to which it was, for me it was game. And then the

organisation, of course, the spirit of volunteerism, the spirit of collectivity, the spirit of this still remains in the organisation with a lot of difficult challenges.

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PP (cont.): That first year when I walked out of that mission, in October, that first year of trying to organise, particularly as we approach summer.... We were also quite fortunate that at the end of '78, government had passed a resolution regarding rights over forest. Or not even rights over forest as much as regularisation of encroachments in forest, things that we changed much later. And the organisation got an agenda that cut across the whole organisation so that was... gave us a tremendous opportunity to expand and move and all that. In that one month, I, we, began to understand this whole question of what hunger is and how people cope. Cope by what you would call eating grass. What they would consider as, you know, vegetable growth in the forest. I also, we were all part of that same choice; we ate what the people gave us to eat. And so we were eating grass most of the time.

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PP (cont.): One doesn't realise... and this is something that as one, as you look back and see all these little, little things were laying down very important principles of how we work, how do we associate with people, how do we depend on people so that the organisation is actually a manifestation of a mutual dependence of people on the organisation and organisation on the people. And this is a lived reality. My association with TISS afterwards led me to, you know, a lot of reflexivity, of thinking through because you are trying to make the organisation and its processes intelligible to young people. And so therefore you are first trying to make them

intelligible to yourself, one. You are trying to understand a lot of subaltern logics, and to kind of integrate it as part of your own thinking. And that I would say is what has been TISS's contribution to us, because the others also like Shiraz used to come, Brian used to come.

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PP (cont.): In the latter years, in the past few years, TISS has really also becomes a point of where you can anticipate and expect that there will be solidarity. The most critical instance is what happened in the Long March of the adivasis, about three weeks ago. TISS contributed close to about thirty, thirty-five thousand rupees, students, faculty, things like that. Something you would not see in that degree elsewhere. That's my one, the most recent memory of TISS. The other memories of TISS were of people who understood what you did and supported you. I have a few memories of those kinds of people; one has been, was Denzel Saldhana who was always close and supportive. In a different way was Vidya Rao, at that time. There were some of the younger faculty who were supportive of the organisation.

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PP (cont.): There are very interesting... if I would try to look and say, how do I explain or understand the thirty years of my intimate association- I'm still part of the organisation- but my intimate full-time association with the organisation. One, we can say we abolished hunger, absolutely. Second, we can say that we have been able to mediate- we've only mediated- we've mediated people's power, the struggle of people, to ensure livelihood security directly to around thirty thousand families directly. Indirectly in our assessment to at least 3 million families. That this has been the most significant contribution of Kashtakari Sangatna, that it has been able to do

this and it has also been instrumental, very majorly instrumental with very little kind of effort to project it- which has been our style, and I think it's a good style- for what today can be understood as the recognition of the rights of the tribal people to the forest. This has been the most significant contribution of the Kashtakari Sangatna that you can imagine. There are other people, but the Kashtakari Sangatna has been playing a singular role.

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PP (cont.): All these thirty years, my lessons are basically from the Sanghatna and from people. My association with TISS has helped me to reflect on this learning, on these experiences, and in the way, in the effort to make it intelligible to the other you also make it more and more intelligible to yourself. The third phase, after that I will expect you to ask me questions because I'm not a person who lectures. I basically am much more discursive and so I don't even know if I am addressing all that you are seeking. The more you ask me, the deeper I can go into things. See, my choice to come to Tuljapur was first part of a choice to be, to hand over the organisational processes to a new generation. That was my fundamental departure. And one has to understand a very significant contribution of TISS to the work we are doing and to the work nationally has been the contribution of young women and young men to the organisation.

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PP (cont.): Suresh, Suresh, V. Suresh from Chennai was also a PMIR student. He is a lawyer now, and one of the main, I think the national Vice-President of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, PUCL. The main thinker and author behind the POSCO report. He is a contribution of TISS, you can say. You know, part, part. Then Brian is another contribution of TISS who's still

there in the organisation, who is today actually the one who shoulders most of the burdens of the interface of the organisation with the outside. And Priya who now after she got married went back, she's in Delhi and works as a volunteer for the, for the campaign for survival and dignity as a full time volunteer, together with mothering and babysitting and things like that.

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PP (cont.): These you can say are three very, very significant contributions that TISS has made. In addition to, you know, there is a kind of unstated support of a large number of the faculty which has remained untapped. Then there have been five students who have come in from Nirmala Niketan, that was because Shiraz was teaching there. Who came, worked for shorter, longer periods and then have gone their own way. This has been a very significant contribution. So by 2005, 2005, the... it was I thought, I felt at least high time that one... that the organisation should be taken over by you know this].... And so two opportunities came my way. One opportunity came as a member of the special group that was constituted by the Prime Minister to have a closer look at Naxalism and its growth, etcetera, in the tribal areas; and through that, in that context, in terms of the involvement in drafting the Forest Rights Act.

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PP (cont.): Earlier, in 1996, together with Barajan Andolan of which we, Kashtakari Sangatna is very much a part, and Dr. B D Sharma, we had helped draft the PESA. That is the law of self-governance for the tribal areas, which we are trying to revive now, hopefully. We don't know whether it's worth reviving after fifteen years. And I also took up this challenge of trying to understand the... and I think they also realised that as an activist I would be much, it will be far

easier to understand what happens in the Maoist areas from within.

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PP (cont.): I did submit that report, it did become... was kind of reflected in policy changes, but more and more it gave me an opportunity to take distance, but to be available to the organisation, to do the cadre formation, to do the leadership formation, which I still do. And- that was in [?] When you might ask me why I've shifted to Tuljapur. I've shifted to Tuljapur because I believe that the challenge before us is to be able to assist in people's own growth in their consciousness and to assist them in developing their own commitment to work for the rural poor. That's why I opted for Tuljapur rather than here.

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PP (cont.): And also trying to remain connected over here, I take that course on policy, government and governance. But the core of that was there. And also in line with my philosophy which has been right through; your choice is not based on failure, your choice is always best based on success. So you don't choose to go and work with the rural poor because you can't get a job in industry; you choose to work with the rural poor because you are as attractive to industry, and they might chase you, but you stand committed to the rural poor. That is the, what I would like to contribute to the process in Tuljapur.

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PP (cont.): And so therefore partly contribute to the extent I can; first to building up excellence because rural India requires the best, it doesn't want inferior products. And whether this... what is

this best? Again in my understanding, this best is people who are extremely conscious of the challenges before them, extremely and continuously critical of the responses to these challenges and.... [phone rings]

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PP (cont.): Are you all getting what you all want? Now you ask your questions, yes.

Q: Could you speak a little more about rural campus in terms of what are the motivations there, what is the student life like on campus?

Q: And also how students respond to a rural atmosphere, you know. How do you see it shaping them and their work?

PP: See, my... first of all, I must say I've been there only for... from September. That's maybe eight months. That my responses could be impressionistic.

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PP (cont.): But my overall kind of feeling is one of expectation, okay, and a sense of... that we need to push the standards higher. There are some very fundamental limitations that come from the choices we make. The choices that we have made in terms of the BA, which are very, very highly- what you say- very highly respected choices; that this institution will provide an opportunity to first generation learners, to young people coming from the rural areas, young people coming from otherwise from first of all underprivileged sections by virtue of historical realities. That is, the ones who've been discriminated in terms of caste and things like that, as well as students who are discriminated by virtue of their location, that they come from a rural background, etcetera.

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PP (cont.): And this requires- these choices require- a very high level of intervention which is non-determinative, an intervention that is non-directive, but an intervention that at least continuously helps students to come back on track. There is one whole situation of where you have the students coming from the... for the BA and from next year if you have an integrated MA, this is going to... children who... essentially students who have come from parented systems. You know, not largely, not students who have lived in hostels before, but you know, day scholars going from their homes, etcetera. Where there is this combination, you know, like the school... like the college need not be involved in their parenting, in a positive manner.

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PP (cont.): And so, but... because they go back to their families. Here you will have students who will need adult parenting. And this is a very, very big challenge which I feel has not been understood or addressed effectively because many of these young kids are, you know, going through a whole process of affective learning. And affective learning, if it goes wrong, can be a tremendous waste of time. Affective learning is a very powerful way of learning, but if it goes wrong it has a lot of this. And this is one very, very significant challenge.

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PP (cont.): The second very significant challenge for us is to recognise that students who have come from a underprivileged and discriminated context do not need palliatives. They need very carefully modulated and communicated challenges to perform, to make new boundaries, to cross those boundaries and to accept. This, this kind of thrust in my assessment is not as strong as it

should be. And this I believe is something that will have to be addressed very quickly because you're not only contributing to intellectual learning, you're also... have to be part of emotional learning whether you like it or not. Whether you like it or not.

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PP (cont.): And you have to be part of a process of character formation. So the Tuljapur campus is trying to make the woman or the man of the future. This is what we have to realise and this is our fundamental challenge. It's not a degree factory where you come, you know, you get your degree and you go. Partly because that, while a lot of students come, they come because TISS has a brand equity in the market and there are many who are attracted by that brand equity and believe that this TISS degree would be a good stepping stone in the job market.

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PP (cont.): Now accepting that this is the motivation by... with which students come, we have to be able to see that you come through your door, I would like to take you through my door. What is my door? My door is young people who are committed first to excellence; young people who have a very high level of social, social consciousness; young people who are fairly determined to the agenda of emancipation and advancement; young people who want to make the world different from what it is now. That is going to be our challenge. That is my door. That is the door of the Tuljapur campus.

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PP (cont.): And this has to be a collective exercise. In the sense that, if you take the Mumbai

campus, the Mumbai campus has sixty years of history. Now I think it's... how many?

Q: Seventy five years

PP: Seventy five years of history. And seventy five years of where it has largely swum against the tide. And today the challenge for the main campus, for TISS, is not to be among those, you know, one among the many institutions of social work as it, you know.... But to say 'we are different'.

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PP (cont.): What is the... what is this difference? The difference is these four things that I spoke are; high standards of excellence, are high standards of social commitment with awareness, are high commitment to the agenda of emancipation and advancement as human beings in whatever walks of life. I am... I don't think that everybody- for some, it might be the constraints of their economic conditions, for mothers there might be constraints of future possibilities which would constraint their kind of direct involvement with the rural poor and their struggles.

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PP (cont.): I see this also happening, what has happened with us in the Kashtakari, what happens with us, you know, both as the activists who have come from relatively urban, middle-class background and also activists who've come from the grassroots. And for activists who have come from an urban, middle-class background there is tremendous opportunity to establish yourself- not just in the organisation, even outside- to contribute, to be part of a process of thinking, of reflecting, of things like that. While for the local activist, who is, in my assessment- he might be just a twelfth standard or tenth standard- I think in terms of understanding and consciousness is

on par with a student of the BA in... in TISS Tuljapur.

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PP (cont.): For him the avenues of being able to, you know, expand his own conscious, consciousness is limited by the levels of engagement with people who can be part of that same agenda. And so therefore in... if you take the Tuljapur campus you'll have both kinds, you'll have one of the what I would call 'opportu-need' class, the group that has opportunity. And the second is the group that has to make opportunity; it doesn't come made. For those whom it comes made... alright, you know, you don't start rejecting people by saying 'okay, your background is already X Y Z, you try to see whether you can... this', and I also realised that sustaining in, you know, long term, long drawn out involvement in people's struggles as a full-time activist actually requires that you are not burdened by a lot of other things.

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PP (cont.): Burdened like with family responsibilities, burdened with economic dependence of... then you can enjoy that feeling to work. That's what I've seen in this. And that is that class of what I call, you know, the 'opportu-need', the class that already has opportunity. You know, how does that, that class with that already has opportunity some... begin to subscribe to your agenda. That's what I believe, I am there for; that we somehow have to go back to a vision which says that we must make the difference. It's not just enough that we will make the difference. And we have to create young people who want to make the difference.

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PP (cont.): If we can create those young people who want to make the difference, not just in terms of their own motivation, but also in terms of their conceptual skills, their analytical skills, their powers of synthesizing, the ability to think out of the box, the ability to kind of sustain themselves under... when under stress, under challenge, etcetera. If we can create those then we are going to contribute to nation-building which is, in my assessment, the most critical challenge of today. The dreams of 1947 have already, not only... not only not got forgotten, they have been relegated to the... you know, to the dustbin of history. And therefore I think this is what Tuljapur could contribute; of creating people who are drawn to dreams of tomorrow.

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PP (cont.): Dreams of what this nation could be tomorrow. When I mean 'this nation', I mean this nation who is otherwise the dispossessed, the marginalised and... understood as marginal, but actually are the major contributors for, to the generational wealth of this nation. So that will require, you know, both building internal coherence among us as faculty, you know that we are not... we are not essentially faculty who have, you know, also done an MA and a PHD and then now, you know, into this kind of thing. And so that is going to be, that internal coherence of us as a faculty and an internal cohesion in terms of our seriousness and commitment of what we want to do as a teaching institution. I don't even use... I use in my kind of understanding; I don't talk of it as teaching, I talk of... talk to... talk of... talk of Tuljapur as a formative institution. It just doesn't help in the creation of brilliant minds; it also helps in the forming of very sensitive and committed hearts.

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PP (cont.): This is what... and so this internal coherence and then our internal cohesion, understanding that we have a special role, and then the third part of it is, you know, sustained communication, very sustained communication that is consistent; that we build up a tremendous internal consistency in terms of what do we want to look at these young persons who come to you, you know, in terms of what they can be tomorrow. At least in terms of our ideational and intentional levels. Practically, alright you know, this is... you are trying to shape minds but you're not trying to kind of... you know, put them in a straitjacket.

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PP (cont.): So how do we do that? And how do we do that as a collectivity, not just in one.... So how does that become an organisational thrust. This is what I think are our challenges. Are we living up... I don't think we have as yet been able to make it as part of collective consciousness. A few... etcetera. But at the level of collective consciousness we are very disparate. We are also impacted by the fact that people come from different backgrounds and then, 'til today, I think... Parasuraman as director has... is now very clear in terms of his mind as to what is the objective of Tuljapur.

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PP (cont.): And partly that the, the whole collapse, abject collapse of the Washington Consensus is challenging us to evolve totally new forms of intervention of... as an institution and as individuals. He's understood that very clearly. And so therefore, it's a matter of putting bit by bit together. May take its own time, but I... I hope I'll be able to contribute to that process to the degree I can.

Q: Since it's our seventy fifth year this year, is there anything you would like to say to TISS, any message you'd like to give?

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PP (cont.): It's exactly what I am saying, you know, that we are not... we have to be somewhere as an institution the first among equals. First among equals in the sense of being able to... to give leadership in this whole agenda of nation-building. And as an institution with seventy five years of history behind it, we are poised at a very critical kind of place, a locus, and have got a tremendous challenge of trying to occupy that space. The space of what I would call and understand of very conscious, committed yet humble leadership. This is what I think seventy five years... and to nation-building.

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PP (cont.): I don't know whether you were there when last year I was called for Sameeksha and I tried to explain as to what was neo-liberalism, what is the logical outcome of a neo-liberal agenda; that there will be more and more people who will be mutilated and destroyed by this process, and we can see it happening. And so the challenge before us is; you have to put an end to this madness. I'm using strong terms. Or we as an institution and the people who we send out into the world, if they're not part of the agenda of putting an end to the madness, then we'll only be reduced to garbage collectors, collecting the, these human beings who will be... have been destroyed and mutilated by this process.

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PP (cont.): Of being reduced to hogs in the market. That's our challenge. Do we want to be this kind of leaders, as first among equals within which we'll have to build widening, widening, wider circles of, actually, consciousness and commitment to the agenda that we have to build this nation. For too long, and yet if you look at events of the last three four days, you will see that a whole set of young people, young people who have been, somewhere been caught up in this... you know, in this exuberance and of, you know, thinking that they have been able to achieve a great step. I think they have probably put their first foot in the right direction. But to put a second step is going to be a tremendous challenge.

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PP (cont.): And then looking at places like TISS, TISS already is the... is the space, has created the space for people to come and occupy and to be part of the agenda of a new nation in its making. It's like, they try to argue of a... you know, Anna Hazare's this- what you say- hunger strike, as the beginning of a new Independence. I would see that as an institution's seventy five years, we'll have to make this new Independence. I think that's... that's the freedom that I'm dreaming of and I think TISS... TISS is, I think and I hope that TISS will be part of this, you know, march to freedom. A freedom which is not just from want, a freedom from, you know, essentially, the constraints on evolving an authenticated process of humanization. If we can... salaam, thank you.

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Q: Continuing with our conversation from last time, little more you would like to speak about

Kashtakari Sanghatna

P: And to some extent also the role that T.I.S.S. played both in not so much in the formation of the organization as much as contributed in indirect manners to my thinking, the thinking of the organization, etc. And now in particular, where much more than otherwise, where T.I.S.S. has become, to some extent, a forum for civil society, to be able to articulate issues that otherwise had to be done purely on the street. In terms of the KKS, I think there were some very very critical processes that we took from TISS, and many that we evolved on our own. The first kind of critical input that came in terms of the formation of the cadre itself, went beyond simply understanding the activist or the cadre as a political animal to which moving into an understanding that the person is political and the political is person and one brings into this whole world of yours, not just what you think about things, but to a large measure what you feel about things. This impacted, considerably, our whole approach to cadre formation, political formation, their training. So it was, that was one part of TISS' contribution, the other part was that there are a whole lot of methodology which is both participatory and the use of what we understood as the basic S's, S, in terms of involvement.

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So we use, first of all, the five cultural forms, the song, the skit, the slogan, the story and the symbol, all trying to create, you know, or encapsulate understanding in terms of its, both its complexity and its simplicity, and the second was a departure from the typical, you know, lecture and...I-know-all-you-know-nothing kind of approach, or you-know-little kind of approach into

what do we know and how do we discover and understand it collectively. So the use of simulation, the use of structured experiences, the use of role play, etc. And some of which where even management kind of tools and instruments which we were able to take to the organization, so we, like modified a large number of games. We used a business game essentially, to be able to understand first of all the organization of present society, the role of capital and capitalism, how, where is it constructed, where is poverty constructed within that frame. Now this was very critical in terms of our contribution to the formation of the cadre. A model that we replicated across, because KKS also took a major lead in terms of training cadre in Maharashtra, in Gujarat, in Nagar Haveli, in Rajasthan, in Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Orissa and Jharkhand which we still do. And took essentially this method of learning, first emotive learing, alright, secondly, ideology as...first of all, understood, ideology as internalized, ideology as assimilated, ideology as asserted. These were important constructions for the formation of the mind of the activist.

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This was the very early days of the organization. And in those early days of the organization, there were some fundamental, you know, one could say these were part of one's own reflections while studying and searching. What do we want to understand to be the fundamental pillars of the organization process, and we chose five very, very critical pillars of our. First of all the organization will be totally accountable to people and will be a reflection of the will of the people. Secondly, the organization will not take funds from any other outsource or from outside, but the source of support and financial...financial support of the organization will be the people

in the form of membership contribution. Third was, that the issues that the organization will take up will be the issues that actually belong to the people, the people own those issues, and that they will stand behind those issues. Fourth was that the leadership of the organization would be the local people and so therefore our thrust continuously would be, how do we build this local leadership, who would take over and manage the processes of the organization. And fifth, and the most critical part of it that the organization will always be answerable to the people. And so therefore, everything remains open. Things now that we talk of, good governance in terms of transparency, accountability and all these kind of things were also constructs of how the process of organization building would take place. And so the very first of attempt of it was this whole process of trying to create mass consciousness. Now how do we create mass consciousness which actually is owned by the people is when the people raise resources for these processes. And with the exception of the first workshop where the, where, we didn't call them you know workshops, we called them youth festivals, as places of convergence, as places of consciousness, and as locii of celebration. So these three processes which they merge in a festival,

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who would support them. The first time, i think they were the hostel students who raised some part of their crop and they contributed it for the first workshop and the local people. And after that, from then till now, that's a good 30 years, and there must be a good, at least five/six thousand people who have passed through many workshops. And all these workshops, all these festivals in the villages have all been contributed by people. Which then took us into the creation

of cadre, the formation of cadre...and that these were important five kind of constructs of the organization were a shared consciousness of all of us as activists. The choice of forming the organization was eventually of the local adivasi activists who decided that in Dhule with the Shramik Sanghatna when they went there and they decided that they will form an organization, they decided that they will call it the KKS and they decided to invite us to it.

Q: Sorry to cut you short, for a very naive understanding, if you were to say what is the purpose of KKS, in a nutshell, I know it's a

PP: The first part of it, in a nutshell if one must, has to say, understanding Kashtakari, that is the centrality of labour, and of the labourer in the creation of this world that is, we live in, okay? And the second part of it...so the Kashtakari is the center, and the second part of it is the organization of people who labour, who toil, as their organization.

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So as their organization it does three things, 1 it promotes their interests, second it protects their interest, and third it kind of becomes the central reality in their daily existence. So in terms of say promoting their interests, one of the first, or let's start with protecting their interests...the very first set of issues that came up were the question of uncontrolled money lending, people's you know lands and of course crops, and grass and things being kind of taken over by usurious money lenders and recovering that...again through people's actions. So there were people's votes held. A fund looks at promoting peoples' interests, one of the most critical interventions that we

began as KKS was protection and promotion of people's livelihoods. And since they were forest based communities, their livelihoods being intimately linked to the forest. So there were two parts, basically, to that understanding of forests. Forest as a source of survival and forest as an integral part of our human consciousness. And that forest struggle that was launched by the Sanghatna in 1978 finally reached fruition close to thirty years later in 2006 in the Scheduled Tribes Forest Rights Act and that whole period of thirty years, one sees as a contribution of the KKS. When I talk of KKS I'm not talking of merely the activists, I'm talking of it's cadre, I'm talking of the people who constituted it, the thinkers, the organic intellectuals that were produced by that organization, by the organization and their contribution eventually which led to the formulation of the law, you know and one of the first, if not...only laws that is actually grounded on the will of people.

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NREGA to some extent is also grounded on the will of people. And the fact that any rights, rights are always affirmed, rights are always asserted, rights are always enforced and so what would, what would be the organization that would enforce rights, assert them, articulate them, expand them, and this is what the organization is. The rights of people who toil, alright, and also the rights of labour, to some extent. Therefore, from the anti-money lending struggle, we got into a lot of kind of this, because we never anticipated that the empire could strike back, that is the moneylenders the landlords, etc would strike back and they did strike back at us. They struck through the police, they struck through an almost say...a legal army, so some of us were in jail.

They struck back through propaganda; they struck back through the press, so in fact the effort to generate propaganda that we were naxalites and you know and so therefore resultant thing that we should be eliminated. And except for some very fortuitous circumstances where another, I think he was a TISS student, if I don't mistaken, intervened much later. We would have all been, three of us at least would have been shot in an encounter. We were actually taken at 3 o' clock in the night deep into the forest to be shot. His name is Suhas Palekar, you know, if you ever try and, he was a student of this institute, he...at that time he was not a student, I think maybe at that time also he was a student or, he was that time the secretary to the Minister of Education and somebody who reversed the clock and got us back. So...the effort you know and, and if you look at the contributions, one thing was that we knew, most of us knew that we could always come and in Tata Institute that time earlier, it was, there was Suma Chitnis, there was you know Armaity Desai, there were people who stood by us...in greater lesser you provide contacts you provide access you talk to people, you put forward a word of saying, you know, these are this etc and sustain the struggle,

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you know, it's difficult to just dismiss all these my contributions, they might appear, like Suhas' intervention might appear very little, very simple but if he had not intervened, we would have been probably shot and our bodies would have been thrown somewhere in the jungle with arms in our hands and things like that. Didn't happen. Therefore this whole struggle that we took up in 1978 then matures finally in 2006 and actually 2006 is the beginning of a new struggle because a

law doesn't become, you know, efficacious unless it is enforced by people, by people strengthen people's this. The KKS has been in that sense, at the heart of this very central issue. The other area of the you know the formation of the KKS was this fact that people will contribute and people will share of their little not necessarily of their plenty and the early days again. It was not that when the decision was made that we'd live in people's houses and eat what they give us to eat, none of them will have their own house. It meant tough, tough hard decisions for most of the activists. The local activists found it easier to this but like I keep on asking, I kept on saying to myself, how long am I going to eat grass, you know, because this is what people went to the forest collected, what to everybody else would appear as grass and weeds, and boil it and cook it. This was how they subsisted at the heart of the monsoon and heart of the working period. But...these choices again, and a certain amount of, the fact that we make a choice and we stick by it played a very major role for much later, what was that; that there was somewhere an idea in the mind and the heart of the membership of the KKS...that they have to care for their activists and their this, at whatever cost it be. So when in 1979, a kind of, how would you call, it was a contract, for killing was given, and that time half a million was a huge amount in 1979 it would be something like 5 crores today to eliminate me in particular for many years till finally that thing was kind of withdrawn.

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People protected you on their own. There was very little and very rarely a question of you know we are losing a day's wages; we are losing a day's work, etc. They protected people right

through. And though we did lose many men, we lost many women, the men often were killed, the women were gang raped. Still the community held people together and held the organization together in a way that I find it you know amazing. And within which one began to look at how we build up an organization of people in struggle. Probably for the first time also in history in the...this we took up this whole question of the right to food, much before it became articulated, and took up the PDS struggle and sent close to 51 of these PDS shopkeepers to jail. In that...through that struggle, my assessment, maybe I'm wrong, that for many, many families it was the first time that they actually enjoyed access to what was the Public Distribution System and the whole system was turned topsy-turvy was over time like any of these systems slowly bounces back and again, you know, the empire takes over in a different way. For many years, but it could never be the same again. People had greater access and control to their own right to food security. There was another form of food security that people constructed...that was the creation of a grain bank. And grain bank flourished in many villages, they were an answer, a solution to...the kind of hunger that people generally went through. In this whole process of, how do you create food security, as a part of a construct, because we tried again to apply our minds and understand that we would function across three broad principles. One was the principle of power, and that the exercise of power is an essential part of the enforcement or establishment of a right. That was the first part.

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The second part was, is the principle of...your self- image and that you really...and much that you

do and believe is part of what you believe and it is your image of yourself both individually and collectively that influences and impacts how you act. And third is the principle of what is our future and how do we define...this kind of future in terms of the society we want to create. Each of these principles we reflected together with people and evolved three important kind of central themes. The first was you know Sahmat Sahkar Sanghatan; Sahmat as being where you are, you have unity in thinking, Sahkar is where you have unity that reflects itself in internal solidarity and Sanghatan where unity becomes a reflection of people's strength, power. The principle of the image was reflected again in three keywords or three key concepts one was Swawalamban you know, and S being self reliant as part of a very important concept of Swabhiman that is self respect and that yourself respect and your self reliance actually would feed into this thing of your Swatantra not in terms of only you know being free from but swatantra in terms of swa-tantra, you live by your own rules, to some extent. And the third principle of the society that we wanted to construct for ourselves was where we talked of Niti, Nyay and Sammanta. Somwhere of justice, equity and equality. In this construct and so therefore each of the this of the organization tried to look at its activity, its action, it's intervention in terms of how does it actually enhance these nine concepts and to what extent it deters. So the grain bank was fundamentally a...you know a manifestation of self reliance, but it gave us tremendous amount of what you say, independence. The fact that people raised their own resources and this came in you know was tested as somewhere in 90 I think it's in '93 when...we, several villages and that was how we released bonded labour,

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By a village adopting that group of bonded labour and kind of supporting them and feeding them at the time when they generally were starving and they would go into debt. So there was this village of Raitali, Vartha Pada, which had adopted this group of bonded labour. And of course, you know, it was like they had to hit back and there a huge armed posse of 70 armed policemen attacked that village, beat up women. And people ran to the hillside. And they shot, they won the first the activist who worked in that village he was not in that village, they shot him in the foot and he fell down and then the policeman walked up to him, this is what I'm imagining looking at the nature of the this, and he shot him in the head because the lower part of his head was completely blown off. And he, you know the records of the police themselves, he was completely unarmed, nothing, he was just walking down the road trying to enquire what was happening, and they shot him. The other one was shot some, he was around at least 200 m that's 600 feet away, the third one was still further away. These were the three of the Kashtakari whom we could retrieve and who were the others on the streets, on the road itself that got killed; we had no record and so to see that nothing went out from there both Shiraz and myself were arrested and put in jail. In a so called conspiracy and...to actually, to kill the police and snatch their weapons, this was their argument as to why we were put in. But the effort was to keep us out of there. And I remember Sharad Pawar , again it happened, following year again a similar thing happened, another police firing, that time nobody was injured, nobody was killed, but at that time we had...an issue was raised. There were two important factors that one needed to understand. First was a question was raised in the Maharashtra Assembly, why don't we ban this KKS.

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The Minister of Home is very is reported to have replied, "You would be a fool to ban the KKS because if you think that by banning an organization, why do we ban an organization, basically is to dry up their source of funds, a, and their source of wider support. But KKS has no source of funds except the people so therefore banning them at best would you know push an open organization underground. That was a kind of thing, realization of how also the Sanghatna came to be recognized. The second time when Sharad Pawar came, as the CM he came to those villages, and he you know walked in some places almost thigh deep in water. And then after that he called us to his office later on, about 3-4 days later and he said there are 3 good things about the organization that I would like to report. The second is there are three things that I you know defects of what work you're doing that he said I'll report. About the...three things about the organization and the people he said, "It's the first time in my own limited existence that have I've come together come across a whole community that has no fear of the police", first. Second is that "It's the first time also I have kind of understood that without external leadership or somebody you know provoking them or egging them on, people are willing to stand for their rights". And third, he said about the organization, "Third thing that I learnt was that people are not afraid". And this has happened now, '93, 78 is the organization, 15 years later and if I see that as a significant indicator of how far we had moved. The negative things he said is that you don't teach people, you know, to improve their agriculture and people are still living in poverty. And...secondly you have, you know, not spread horticulture in all these areas to bring them under, you know, a kind of this productive this and third is, "You have not taught people to respect government officials".

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So we smiled to ourselves, but in a way he had rightly articulated that what had happened and what the KKS had contributed to the adivasi people that is you don't fear. And you assert your rights, and this is what I would understand to be the most significant contribution that we as an organization have made to the people. Of course there are scores of other issues, areas like we virtually eliminated bonded labour in all the salt pans in the area, okay, and recovered in the course of the struggle that took five years something like four or five crores in terms of wages which were due to people and were never, would never have been paid in terms of, because of their bondage, virtually wiped it out. We were able, you know, actually now if one looks, the organization after 30 years in between, see many of these calculations are also could be plus and minus, but like the organization has directly been responsible for some twenty five to twenty eight thousand families getting secure access to more than a lakh and thirty thousand acres of land. The organization, there it has won, it's won part of the battle and lost a part of the battle, is that the organization has been able to really contribute to...greening and protecting the environment. In fact, in Thane district the only instances where you'll find of people actually protecting and managing the forests often against of course the timber thieves who are always there but also the forest department is where KKS works. And that whole protection of the forest in linking it to...which was one more agenda of trying to...which we still are, still have not been able to put in place, was to try an build up an alternative kind of source of for learning and use traditional methods for learning.

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A part of which you all have also recorded in Kahankarak Ahankarak, the whole narrative of the people in the form of sometimes narrating history, sometimes narrating gender equity, sometimes narrating environmental consciousness, sometimes actually, you know, caricaturing the oppressor, and this has been part of a wisdom that we have been able to collate and bring...keep available. There are scores of other things, one of the major contributions of the KKS is that we can also say that we have contributed to the formation and the understanding of activists working today in most of the states of the country where it has been a place where people could come, could reflect, we could theorize, we could analyze, we could critique, we could synthesise knowledge and...in that sense reflected itself as an extension of a learning organization which somewhere we took from here as part of a learning institution.

Q: I just wanted to ask, for an organization like KKS, or for a movement, what are the advantages and disadvantages of having support from an educational institution like TISS.

PP: See, there are several advantages that an institution like TISS brought into the, brings into the process. One is, see the normal approach of the state and the state machineries is to call an organization or a group of people a dirty dog and kick it. See, this is normally the thing. And so therefore for most organization is always like you are anti-national, or you are a naxalite or you are violent or you are whatever and where TISS gives that kind of a measure of...see, measure of credibility which becomes a form of protection, without stating, without making it something like putting it upfront in upfront and TISS has done that.

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TISS has done that. This is very critical you know most of us will this and...to you know one was looking at the major movements in the country which has one has been the Narmada movement and one has been the whole tribal movement of the forest right, both have essentially been inspired by TISS students and today TISS is actually also both; a forum for organizations to come together, one, to be able to articulate their own thinking and their own kind of this, to be able to help them to synthesize it and...one more step that is taken recently is to serve as a kind of a platform which brings the state or the bureaucracy to negotiate with the people, not just simply, you can have a public hearing, you can publish it, you can raise the issue, you can articulate the issue which TISS has done in Jaitapur, it's done it in the Vidarbha you know, kind of suicides, it's done it in several Jan Sunwahis the whole right to forest rights kind of campaign, the right to food campaign, etc. which it has provided that fundamental platform. The, together with that the advantage that TISS has which it has is to be able to throw back to, you know, put strong scientific credibility behind a organizational position or a claim, like the demand for the right to food and particularly if one looks in the past say from '96 onward you'll find all the very major interventions or legal legislations in the form of legislations or policy change which affect large populations have all been interventions from civil society. And...in some measure, TISS has provided the platform for civil society to be able, first to, not just to articulate but also to synthesize it and to affirm it in a kind of a smaller forum so you assert it against the state.

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So whether it's the right to food, the right to work, the forest rights act, three major ones, then, right to information, and now which hopefully in another few, maybe this year, if possible, with some kind of limitation, the right to rehabilitation. In all these things, TISS has contributed in it's own intellectual interventions, but fundamentally by providing this kind of platform where popular thinking and popular thought can come together and synthesise itself in a far more clear and, you know, articulate demand. I think...TISS also, in a limited or greater degree...could contribute into sending more people back into the forefront. One, you don't necessarily all have to be great fighters at the, you know, right at the fringes, there could be some. But you know if you look at one, one, Medha for example will have articulated the issue to millions but there are a lot of, one needs organizational fighters, okay, that TISS has sent out in the form of it's students. With...the kind of perspective that has come in particularly in the past 6-7 years. Earlier it was there in a more subtle form, today it's there in a far more stated form that we stand on the side of the excluded, the marginalized, the unprotected and the oppressed. Both in terms of our internal policies I've been trying to understand the whole process of selection for Tuljapur where like a first generation learner gets a preference.

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He may not be able to say what she or he wants to say in nice sounding words, will grapple, will be grappling with English itself, okay...I, just 3-4 days back was teaching English to a person who is actually, his parents...are agricultural labour. And that the institute, particularly Tuljapur has provided that basic platform for a lot of people who would otherwise have never had any

opportunity to engage with what one calls the mainstream. But also engage with it with the criticality that both ensures that the intervention or the negotiation with the mainstream is not subverted but retains its own kind of sharpness in and its own edge in terms of continuously articulating the interests of the poor and the marginalized, which I think is a new thing that I'm beginning to see. And now, also that it is able to impact, I see it happening more and more, impact state policy both through its research and through its subtle advocacy. This is the area that I see that where and I hope that TISS takes it into the new, into the new, you know, 25 years as it goes to it's you know centenary, we won't live till then, I definitely won't...but thinking that if we do take it there, then probably TISS would be in the forefront. At least just now it is in the forefront of trying to forge, you know, a new perspective on social work education. That social work education actually means taking sides with the poor, okay. Social work education and social work, unless it's very consciously and deliberately taking sides with the poor in...in terms of its welfarist perspective, if, you know, if not carefully critiqued can actually be taking sides with people who generate poverty.

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I don't know whether I'm getting across to you, you know, that if you have palliatives, which is generally the style that follows welfare, these palliatives actually is taking sides with the other side because I'm put in a condition where I need these realities because I'm pushed from wherever I am and if in the fact of taking sides with the poor this maybe sometimes rejecting palliatives would be...consist of confronting the processes that generate, and hopefully, I'll hope

there will be more and more people who will probably come on the streets and confront the enemy directly.

Q: Towards the end I wanted to know, just wanted to know, where do you see KKS going and also how do you think this collaboration would work, where else would you, what would be the next step?

PP: See I'm still Kashtakari, and I'm probably collaborating a little more with TISS than this and in a way that TISS has provided this opportunity to be able to bring into the field of actually social work education or whatever you call it, the experiences of the people on the ground, that's one. I hope that will move forward with greater intensity. I hope, and I'm really kind of committed to, within whatever little time I have at my disposal to see that we sharpen, you know, and...sharpen our own perspectives and make them, our teaching methods, far more incisive so that we can give back to the nation, people who will lead the struggles of the poor for their own emancipation and for their own dignified existence. If we can do that then I think TISS will have marched into the next 25 years with a lot of this. As for Kashtakari, see...Kashtakari is an organization of the people and will survive as long as, because it does no projects, it does no programmes, it's basically articulating people's interests and things like that and also are fighting for rights, ensuring that people are protected from injustice. And you see, it's, KKS is people, you know it's not something external that protects...it's people, it's that, the spirit of people and the spirit of resistence and the spirit of struggle. That's what KKS is. It will remain as long as, one challenge before us and always will remain that, that we are able to continuously keep political consciousness alive, take it to the next generation alright, because even the struggle for a dignified existence is you know in what when we form this campaign for struggle and dignity,

we just realize that dignity itself is a struggle, and also that...this whole question of dignifying struggle,

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And because struggle actually allows dignity to unfold itself is something that will grow with us because you are all the time expanding your own consciousness and together with it you're expanding your own understandings of the reality and your contribution to that. So I would hope that TISS would engage with this actually struggle of people for dignity in a far greater manner. We are engaging it by the struggle for dignity by creating opportunity, okay, but I think the next step has to be the struggle for dignity by direct engagement. And you know, it's like, I don't know who said it, I forgot just now, you know, into that march of freedom, let my people arise, and I just hope that TISS is somewhere also part of that march of freedom of the people of India to a far more dignified existence and we have that possibility of contribution and we will need to ensure that this spirit of actually being pioneers at the cutting edge of the initiatives to affirm, to assert, to struggle, to protect, to defend, you know, I don't even call it wealth, even poverty with dignity is much better than wealth without dignity, that TISS could be at the forefront of all this. Thank You.