

ANITA ANAND'S INTERVIEW WITH VINA MAZUMDAR

A

I was twenty and a half and I sat in the visitors gallery of Parliament through the midnight session of the 14th August, having sat through several sessions of the Constituent Assembly, from the same visitors gallery. Early morning at the crack of dawn I went out with my father to watch the Union Jack coming down and the Tri-colour going up on top of Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Central Secretariat buildings. We thought that was something that we must not miss. Then the day time session we attended again as visitors. One thing that I remember very vividly of that particular session was before the Lord Mountbatten and Lady Mountbatten were due to come out of the hall.

We had come out and got into our car, but the car could not move as there was a huge crowd out there and there was a cordon made by the Naval staff to hold back the crowd and allow the VIPs to go out. There was massive shouting going on Jai Hind, Jai Hind when Mountbatten and Lady Mountbatten came out.

I was sitting on top of the bonnet to get a good view over the head of the crowds. That cordoned channel gradually kept shrinking, shrinking, shrinking, until Mountbatten realised that without a response from him, he was not going to get a passage and then he did Namaskar and said Jai Hind and then the passage opened up. My father was a staunch Nationalist, even though he was within the Irrigation department. He was a designer and his single all his adult life had been flood control and irrigation. So he had seen it as service to the country. He was involved in constructive work in 1942 and he still had about a couple of years left before retiring when he received orders to collaborate with the Army.

When he went to a meeting to find out where they needed the collaboration he was told flatly that the support of the department was needed in mining all the dams and embankments in East Bengal. Because Burma had just fallen, they were getting ready with what they called the strategic retreat and scorched-earth policy. My father just walked back to his office, wrote a two line application asking for leave preparatory to retirement, losing more than two years of service in the process and just walked out.

Never in our life had we seen him come back from work so early. My mother asked what was the matter? He said 'I have retired'. So she said what do you mean retired? He said yes I have retired he would not say anything more. Then the telephone calls started coming in and we only found out from his end of the telephone conversation. The Irrigation Secretary, Chief Secretary and all kinds of people were calling up. All I remember is his statement, "I am sorry Mr. Blair, (the other names I do not remember). My job is construction. I have spent my entire career building these, if you want to demolish them you have to find someone else to do so. I can't do it".

That was his kind of Nationalism but he was very hard hit by the partition. He came from the villages of East Bengal. Even though he had not gone home for a long time, he had done something to help. He was responsible for whatever flood control measures were taken for East Bengal before the Raj quit. There were a lot of multi purpose river valley projects which he had designed, which got taken up long long after his retirement, basically, after independence. Some of them were taken up after his death. The then Irrigation Secretary, used to tell my brother "your father has left enough projects which will take us 40 years to complete".

But on that 15th August, he just told my mother, (he normally was a person who would hide his emotions and maintain great control, did not believe in emotional display). “Yes the country is going to be free, so we must hoist the National Flag, but in my house I would not like any illumination, because my original home has become foreign to me today”. And it was just after that, no about a month before, when partition had already been agreed to, as I was applying for my passport, (until then for my two brothers who had gone abroad, my father had instructed that in passport applications the permanent home address should be village such and such, District- Faridpur, East Bengal). When I was filling up the form, he came and stood behind me and said ‘Put down the Calcutta address’.

In August I was in Delhi, but until ‘46 I was studying in Calcutta. It was after I appeared for my BA (Hons) that I came to join my father in Delhi and then I got admitted to Delhi University, for my Masters. But in the meantime my admission to Oxford came through, so I left in ‘47, just in fact within 3 weeks after the 15 of August. On the 15th August my brothers called from Calcutta, very excited, saying ‘unbelievable things are happening here’. For over a year there has been this acute communal tension in the city, You know, Hindus did not consider it safe to go into Muslim mohollas and vice versa, and periodic cases of stabbing etc. were always being reported. Gandhiji was persuaded to stay in Calcutta by the Chief Minister, Surawardy and Shyamaprasad Mukherji. Both of them came to the station, together, to ask him not to go to Noakhali but to stay in Calcutta. Surawardy, apparently told him “Sir if you are not here - the day the transfer of power takes place, every Mussalman in West Bengal is going to be butchered”.

So sitting in his compartment Gandhiji did a deal. He said “Will you give me an undertaking that no Hindu in East Bengal will die”?. Surawardy said yes. Then Gandhiji said and you will stay where I chose to stay, with me and you will go with me wherever I go”. Surawardy agreed to that also. Shayama Prasad said “we came together to convince you that we need your presence if we are to hold back the frenzy”.

Then he went and lived in that Muslim woman’s house. She had lost her entire family in the riots and was an old woman. It was a basti, a slum. Surawardy stayed with him. I attended a prayer meeting where Surawardy (wearing a lungi and a banyan) sat next to the Mahatma and went on singing *Raghupati Raghavs Raja Ram, Ishwar Allah tere naam, Sab ko Sanmati de Bhagwan*. All these were historic moments. Then there was another flare up, and Gandhiji came out of his room, because there was a huge crowd assembled there. Some of them were armed with lathis and das (sickles) and they were abusing him. Then somebody threw a stone, a small stone which just grazed his temple, so Gandhiji said “Agar tum log sunne koh tayar nahi ho to mera to ek hi rasta hai, I will go on a fast unto death”.

So the fast began that afternoon and quite incredibly (till today I do not know whether there was any planned organisation because nobody could have known that he was going to do this) within an hour after the fast began, I mean the news was coming over the radio, quickly you know how the news flies around in Calcutta, so we all got to know that there were all kinds of people walking along streets and lanes, reminding people that Mahatmaji was fasting. One of our relatives who had always been very critical of Gandhiji, who came in and started telling my parents, “If the old boy dies out here, Bengal will never be forgiven by the rest of the country”.

AA: You said that in difficult times in your life you thought of what your father said and how he had left a great impression in your life. Do you have a son?

VM: Yes, one, and three daughters, plus three grand children

AA : Three, bah. What do you think has changed for your grand children or for your daughters, lets take your daughters, or female grand children. Do you think that in 1997, they have a different country, different, a different vision?

VM : I was brought up by the standards and the usual practices of what I always used to believe was a typical, conventional middle class family. Later many of my friends said that what you considered to be very typical or conventional was anything but, because your family seems to have swallowed all kinds of behaviour on the part of their children. But you know, when I said conventional and typical, I was including the joint family, the immediate kin group. And what we did, I mean my generation, particularly myself, was this unlimited opportunity for pursuing my studies, all because of my mother, who never had any formal education. Never saw the inside of a school, you know. She was completely self educated, but she had this tremendous faith and she was by those day's standards, very well educated. She and my Bua were very close. My mother learnt a great deal about the respect of a daughter-in-law in the Mazumdar family, even as she received the unexpected, and certainly not approved help in educating herself from the same persons who had never had the chance herself.

Bua was a rebel, undoubtedly, and she became a major influence on my mother, who came into our family at the age of 11. My father left immediately for studies abroad, so from that day till the day she died, my Bua was, (as my mother would refer to her as her) like her second mother. Between the two of them, they planted something's in our heads. Okay there was this underline, not a teaching but a confidence. Oh no daughter of this family would do anything to let the family down, that was there. So one of the Aunts who was notorious in the family, for very blunt speaking and very conservative views, asked my mother in 1947 if she had taken leave of her senses, in sending me off to Oxford, at the age of 20? My mother looked at her and said, "why are you thinking she will misbehave? I have full confidence in my daughter". Okay that trust was like a weapon, if you like. Otherwise, as I said, they never stopped me from taking part in political demonstrations, meetings. Nobody ever raised a question. My older cousins had faced more restrictions and got educated only because of my Bua's determination. After Bua died (1933) my mother encouraged their studies.

The lessons from these two, one a full blooded rebel, (Bua) and one, I would say, only partially, (my mother), influenced all of our generation. For instance, Ma had declared war against the two institutions of dowry and Meye-dekha, (I can't translate), and she used to tell my Aunts 'you keep on subjecting your daughters to this kind of indignity. I am never going to allow this for my daughters.

AA: How did she become a bride was there a Meye-deka, was there dowry.

VM: Yes, and she had felt humiliated. (Not dowry, though because she came of a Kulin family). She felt very strongly about both the practices, and when I was 10 years old I overheard a conversation between her and my father, because my sister was getting to be 17 and there were a lot of offers coming for her. Ma was turning down all those offers on various groups that's "Banedi" family, they do not know how to treat their women; that's too wealthy a family they don't know how to treat their women, will not marry my daughter into such families. Then my father laughed once and said that you keep saying no, but you don't say what kind of family you will prefer and what kind of a groom you will prefer for your daughter. She promptly looked at him and said why someone like you, self-made, cultured, educated, none of this nonsense about whether aristocratic background.

Baba used to laugh and tell us – "You know, I am the conservative in the family, by upbringing and by conviction. It is your mother who is the liberal'. We used to call Baba's changes that in social values, Baba's step by step liberalisation. For instance, the mode of transport when I started going to

college. Until then, my sister, and I had gone to school in the family car. Coming back, there used to be a servant waiting, then we came back with him in a phaeton..

Whenever we went anywhere we either went in the family car or somebody would escort/accompany. But by the time I was to go to college, it was war time Petrol rationing, so Baba said 'how will she go'? Ma said, "why all the other girls are going by buses and trams". He used to meet some retired people when he went for his daily walks in the lake. So he talked to some of them. Then he came back and told my mother "Yes girls do go by public transport these days. Still, the first day he came up to the bus stop to see whether I could really manage.

So, that went okay, going by myself by public transport. When it came to going to Presidency (College, which was of course his old college) he said "I think she has learnt how to manage. Theek hai, no more objection". Then when the question of going to Oxford came, then he had some resistance. He said, Bees saal ho gye abhi ladki koh abhi shadi wadi nahidoge? So my mother came back to her argument "You had always promised that in education you will not make any distinction between sons and daughters. You must admit that this girl has proved herself to be the best student among all your children. You sent two sons abroad. And she has set her heart on going to Oxford. Between Ma, and my sister they finally convinced Baba.

Once he had agreed, he had agreed and then when I sat for the entrance examination and got offers for admission from three colleges, in Oxford successively, he accepted that, okay I was going. After that some sort of advice was sent by his elder brother rejecting the idea, but Baba could brush off. By the time I came back (1950) I wanted to take up a job. I was 23.. Baba had said no I still could not conceive defying him. But Ma said 'go and talk to him'. So I went and spoke to him about applying for a job. He looked up and said 'but that was understood'. When I looked surprised, he laughed and said "Why do you look so surprised? Look you know I have always been rational. I am a scientist. So I knew this was a logical demand that was going to come. When I agreed to your going to Oxford, I expected this. Besides something else has happened. While you were away the country has adopted a new Constitution That Constitution tells me that I cannot discriminate between you and your brothers. So I have always believed that my responsibility for them ended with giving them the basic equipment and after that their lives' decisions must be taken by them, and they must learn to stand on their own feet. So the same now applies to you". When I looked utterly stunned, he laughed and said "Don't you know that I have always been a very law abiding man" This is the new law and I have to adapt myself".

The same self confessed conservative father, helped me to resolve my dilemma after my first daughter was born. I took a job in 1951 (Patna University) and then I married in '52, self-chosen. After that my mother took charge and organised it all. There was some criticism from my eldest uncle, who came to talk to my father. He had been the only one in the family who opposed my going to Oxford. In 1952 he told my father, "Have you taken leave of your senses? first you educate this girl beyond what is necessary, and now you have agreed to her marrying a man who is not even a graduate". I was standing behind the door listening. For the first time in his life, Baba was answering back his elder brother.

He said, "First of all, Khuku's mother has not only got to know that boy but the family. She assures me that I do not have to worry about either the boy or the family. They are all very fond of Khuku. About the educational disparity, I asked Khuku. She tells me that he is certainly her intellectual equal if not her superior. He just was bit of a rebel so he never completed his formal education, that's all. She says that he has read far more than her. Well I think she is trained to make that assessment. So if she does not have any objection why should I? I have met the young man, I find him a very cultured person. I don't see why I should bring up this trivial issue whether he has a formal degree or

not? When I tell all these stories, you know people say how the hell on earth can you call this a typical conventional middle class family? But that was how I perceived it.

When my daughter was born, you know I went through all these kinds of pressures that come from other people, so called well wishers would come and look at my daughter and say 'ahha, this poor thing does not have her mother'. I used to be away from her for only 5 hours a day, when I was away at the university. And my mother-in-law was there and the baby's father used to adjust his work so that he could be at home during that time. So the child was not being neglected. But all this kind of pressure did make me feel guilty. Secondly, I was not able to give adequate time to my professional responsibilities, there was no doubt about that. By that time I had been in teaching for over 2 years, so I was carrying on. I used to teach extempore in any case, and I was teaching the same courses, so having worked very hard for two years on preparing all my lectures, after that it was all in my head. But I was conscious I wasn't putting in as much reading as I should. My husband wasn't of the slightest use. I asked him he said it's your decision, you decide' Patna university was where I got my first job and that's where I met my husband. It was a Patna based family. I went to Calcutta I used to go nearly all the vacations. Now this was one issue where Ma was not able to help me, because she set very high standards of maternal responsibility, so she said 'you better go and talk to your father'. She also told him, don't give her your standard formula that your life's decision must be yours, the girl is really asking for your guidance, she's in trouble. He called me and said 'your mother tells me that you are having some serious problems what is it? I told him, and said I can't decide. He said "Well it is very reassuring that you are doing all this soul searching, as it tells me that you are taking your responsibilities seriously. Responsibility for him was a creed. But you are looking at it from your personal, individual perspectives. You as a teacher, you as a mother. There is a third factor in the equation Khuku, bring in the third factor and the equation will resolve itself".

I couldn't understand what was the third factor. He said "when you wanted to go to Oxford, you know I wasn't very keen on the idea, your mother persuaded me. Alright I paid the money, but where did my money come from? It came from this poor country. So the third factor is that this poor country made a substantial investment in your training. Do you have the right to waste the training?"

I sat back and thought my God this man is really treating me as his equal, because this is the principle he has always applied to himself all his life. His entire education was on the basis of scholarships. Right from end of primary school, he had sat for scholarship exams to get through the entire school, then college and then a state scholarship for study abroad. That is why he had always believed that whatever he had learnt he had learnt for the service of the country and his services had to be at the country's disposal. The only refusal was to take part in the destroying (in 1942) – hence the premature retirement.

At that time he came home and said "now its high time these guys go. Because they are now out to destroy what has been done, what ever positive thing has been achieved". That is the extent to which Baba influenced my life. I was always very close to my mother and I have learnt hell of a lot from her, which has gone very deep, totally internalised. But whenever at crisis points in my life, it is as if I can hear my father's voice.

Some years after his death I was feeling very upset, couldn't face going to the University and I had invigilation duty, I was sitting on the floor and it was as if he was just standing there and telling me 'what do you mean you won't go. Its your duty. You opted for it remember!'. I got up in five minutes, had a bath, dressed and left. Four hours in the examination hall I didn't remember a thing about the upset, because there was a crisis in the Hall. The brightest bunch of our students could have walked out, not day it I had not been there to stop them. It has happened, so many times. Long long after his death when I had to take major decisions that were not very pleasant

AA: You think that your husband has the same effect on the children, especially the daughters, because we are more interested in looking at how daughters are influenced by their parents and there is a special bond between the fathers and the daughters.

VM: Oh there is a very close bond between the father and all the children. But they also call him names.. stop behaving like a brat at times particularly when he is being most unreasonable. It is the kids, I still continue to refer to them as kids.. they are the ones who can manage him much better. Sometimes to the extent to saying stop behaving like a brat, or why are you in a particularly bratish mood.

AA : Which is something you wouldn't say to your father.

VM : No, no you see that kind of a distance this generation has never had. He was always, you know he helped to look after them also. What is becoming more common today amongst the middle class, my husband did it very naturally. I had to be out of the house for part of the day and while in the early years my mother--in-law was always around, but all the same he used to arrange his work time in such a way that he would be at home and my mother used to go around boasting to all our relatives and friends as to how efficient Shankar was in baby care. I mean satisfying my mother's standards was not that easy. She used to say aree bhai doctor ka ladka hai, he knows everything. the way he sterilises the bottles and jugs and spoons. I have seen that he rolls up his arms and goes and washes his hands and does not use a towel thereafter, makes the feed and the babies respond. She used to be very happy about that. He always helped otherwise it would have been impossible to cope.

To some extent when we moved to Delhi, it was at the cost of his career. I got a job at the UGC and my son was then only two months old. He is the youngest and but prior to this child, we had worked out a plan that Shankar was to go to Calcutta because at that time he was just about to start a career as a professional singer and I had persuaded him to take up something that was really his life's choice, rather than keep it as a hobby. It was his passion. So I had said look I am going off to Oxford for two years, you start training.

Initially, he had kicked up a lot of resistance and said how can I begin something that one has to begin in very early life? (We are really the same age, only 6 months difference). And I have my responsibilities, I said I can take care of the responsibilities, because by that time his mother had also died. My parents were gone, so I said "I can take the children with me and if I can go and pick up research at this age I don't see why you can't start training". So on the way to leave for Oxford we went to Bombay together and I handed him over to his Ustaad saying "now I am off for two years Sir. So Amir Khan Sahab gave me his assurance, that he will be..

AA :Where were the children?

VM : Two children I had at that time. The daughters who went with me. One was five one was seven.

AA: And what did you go to Oxford for?

VM : To work for a D.Phil

AA: This was different to your previous visit.

VM : Yes. I came back (from my first trip) in 1950 and then went back 10 years later in 1960.

AA: So you took the two girls

VM : Everyone thought I was mad. I got letters from my Principal, from my old tutors saying don't do something like this how can you do research if you take the children. I said there is no option. By then my mother-in-law or my mother weren't around. I was not going to make this mistake ever. Some of my colleagues in the university who had left their kids with their mother-in-law and then the mother-in-law suddenly died, while they were away, they all warned me not to make the same mistake' for you are neither here nor there, you can't concentrate on your subject, take them along, so I took them along.

I had very strong support from one lady, my doctor's wife, whom I used to call Shefali Di. She said 'don't pay any attention to all these wretched men, (for her husband was trying to advise me to leave the kinds as he was not too happy about the state of my spine. He thought I had some problem. He said, 'I don't want to stop you from going because you have set your heart for this visit, but don't take the children, because in case something goes wrong there you can always come back but if the kids are with you and you become out of action, then?

Within half an hour after he had left his wife came and said, she was great.. A lady of tremendous courage and tremendous sense of humour. She said 'which woman does not get back ache?', "What on earth possessed you to go and talk to my husband about it". I said I only did it because I had this journey in front of me so I thought I should at least inform him. He was very fond of me. He was our family physician, even senior to various other members of the family, a very good man. You see he took it very much to heart that (a) he did not want to disappoint me (b) as a medical man he thought he should do his duty and he didn't have the heart to tell me. He had told Shankar so Shankar came and told me with a lot of hesitation 'I can take care of them. I said the question does not arise. Then fortunately, Shefali Di arrived just then and blew me up sky high.

She said you come along with me and she took me to the senior most Orthopaedist there who thought that plainly I should complete my research. He was another one of my seniors, who had been teacher of my brother-in-law, so they all called me by my name. On the one hand I was a colleague because they were the teachers in the university. Then he looked at the X'ray plate and he said you haven't had this pain for the first time and I said no. He said sometime in your teens? I said Yes and then he said, and all these years you never thought of consulting. I said no, it never struck me.

He looked at Shefali Di and he said 'I know the specimen. I am sorry Vina this is a congenital affair. It is going to be your life long companion. Come to terms with it, do some exercises, I will show you, and forget about it. But you will do one thing. Since you are going to Oxford, I can let you go with a clear conscience, there are lot of my friends and very good Orthopedists in Radcliff hospital, I'll give you a letter and you will go there and report to this doctor and you will go there for a check-up every month and in the meantime you will do all these exercises that I will show you'.

So Shefali Di went home and blew up her husband and said now I got her the right advice and she is going with the children. What is this nonsense you people say, leave the children and go don't you know Vina? So I went off. Even my brother-in-law thought, I was mad. When I came back, having completed my "D.Phil" in record time of two years and then when I came to Delhi with this UGC job, he said 'Okay, you have done many wild things, now consider that you have passed that age, my dear and settle down'.

He was eight years older than my husband and me. He was also a doctor, but over the years as he watched me he said 'I cannot get this woman to slow down. I cannot get her to remember her age

but it seems that the more she runs around, the more energy she gets'. So towards the end of his life, by the time I had become involved with the Bankura Project, and was running up and down all the time and every time I went to see him he used to ask me detailed questions about what's happening there. Then his eyes would sparkle and he would tell his children just listen to what your Aunty is doing.

So I even asked him, (in the last phase of his life he was very miserable, very unhappy) "why don't you come with me, our Bankura women are constantly bringing us their health problems and they want to organise some health care themselves. First his eyes sparkled and he said you'll take me? I said leh jayege but then he suddenly departed, heart attack.

During those two years (1960-62) that I was away Shankar trained very hard and he was not satisfied with it.. He came back to Patna and used to send me hilarious accounts of his efforts at cooking for himself, which have remained great family stories, all the children know about it -- Baba's efforts at cooking. He was a dab hand at making toasts and omelets and fried eggs but that was the limit, the other things he had to learn during the time I was away. And before we returned he, the ancestral house was finally sold and what he got as his share part of that he paid to my brother, who had financed my trip. The other part, he used to make our little two room flat as comfortable as possible, so there was room for the kids to stay and study and there would be a little corner in the other room for me to study. He used to get very disappointed that I never made use of that, because there wasn't any time.

After I came back I had two more children, full stop.

AA : Four children in all

VM: Four children and full stop. The last one in the year '65. Then within two months after that I was coming to the UGC. As long as I was expecting, he couldn't go off somewhere. So I said look I go to Delhi after all your brother is there and your sister-in-law is there so I won't be left completely to my own devices, they will help. They will help me find a house and help me settle down, you go to Calcutta.

Then comes a telegram from my sister-in-law . "Both of us insist that Shankar comes with you when you arrive with the children". So he came with us. At that time we did not carry any heavy baggage, just a couple of suitcases. Then it was the elder brother laying down the law, who stopped Shankar from going to Calcutta. I tried telling him Chorda don't do, it I can cope I am telling you. But he said don't talk nonsense. I know you have great confidence in yourself but there has to be some rationality in this.

He blew up his brother. "She is coming to a new job with a two month old baby and three others. The older children have to go to school and the two young kids have to be looked after. There is after all the question of security, how can you go away, you come right here, go back and get your baggage and all that, collect all the stuff from there and whatever arrangements you have to make with your flat but you are coming right back". He really laid down the law and Shankar agreed.

As I see it, his professional aspirations lost out. Calcutta is the place for new singers to start. In those days atleast, it was still the place to start and he had a lot of friends in Calcutta, who had asked that you come here and we will start introducing you to the music crowd. It meant a lot of frustration for some time, because he did not want to teach, which was something he was very good at. If he taught he would not take the money. There are quite a lot of singers around, who call him their guru. They have established themselves, but somehow he used to become very self conscious, you know.

After a few attempts at performance, he gave it up. He went and took some other job. For years he did not sing. Now a days, (for years) except when his old disciples would turn up, then he would sing for them a little bit.

Now his doctors have said “Sir why did you give up your music? It was the only breathing exercise you were taking” His lungs are very badly damaged because of very heavy smoking. His heart is also damaged, he has high blood pressure. So these days he sings for his own, early morning sometimes, middle of the night.

AA: So it’s classical singing

VVM : Khayal. Direct disciple of Ustad Amir Khan and Amir Khan Saab used to say this is the one person who understood what others could not understand. True. So when something had to be written up about his music, (there was a Canadian musicologist who had come to do research on Indian music and she had singled out half a dozen artists. She did a lot of recording of their music but then she also wanted some kind of write-up about what were the intrinsic qualities) Khan saab sent a letter to me, saying that ‘Shankar is the only one who can explain my music. But I also know Shankar, so I am entrusting the job to you to get the write up out of him and send it’.

He used to be very fond of me, Khan saab and take great pride in announcing to all and sundry, “this girl spent three years in Oxford. But chehra se kiseko pata chalega? Baat sunne se kise ko pata chalega?. You know how Indian people are - the fact that they don’t see any outward changes in you, is considered a high qualification. My mother also used to go around boasting she has not changed at all.

Baba differed, he said, ‘what you are saying is impossible. She has been on her own and at the most impressionable period of her life. She must have changed. The good thing about her is that she does not want to show that in her outward behaviour, because she won’t do anything that we might find hurtful or offensive. That’s all right”. Khan saab also used to say “theek hai she can’t distinguish/remember the names of ragas, but samajhdaar hai, she moves at the right places and I can tell by her expression what is going in.

I was the only one who could argue with him, nobody else dared. I said Khan saheb, why aren’t you recording? He had very strong objections to recordings, I said ‘its something you owe to posterity. It was only after I fought with him for a couple of hours that he agreed to record. Otherwise for someone of his stature there should have been huge stock of records. Basically except for a few LPs, the only things that have survived are the stuff that All India Radio used to record and some of his other disciples when they took permission and recorded at informal concerts, those cassettes, and they are not on sale. They are all in private collections. He was one of the most interesting persons I met because of my husband’s passion for music and somehow suddenly discovered that I did have a taste, though no knowledge, absolutely, till date.

But my husband still asks me occasionally is this voice okay or is this okay, it is this better, try out two--three different voices because he says the most important contribution of Amir khan, one was the kind of way he developed the raag, and the other was voice control and its something very difficult to explain to people.

Then when I came and joined the UGC instead of the 5 hours that I had to go to the university, it was an eight hour office day, coupled with bus travel, (you remember what Delhi buses were like in the 60’s)? It really meant most of the days between 10-11 hours

absence and office work was totally different. I learnt a great deal. Coming from one university, where you get a micro view to a planning institution which is supposed to plan for higher education for the entire country and being sent here and there. My first Bharat darshan began in the UGC, being sent to different places.... Because I was the last person to come out of the University, the Chairman, D.S Kothari, used to depend very much on me as he knew how strongly I felt about higher education and he would dump all kinds of responsibilities on me, because he also was another wild man with wild ideas, for which he didn't always get sympathetic response from his officers. He would call me and said that do you think that this is a responsibility that UGC ought to take up? I said absolutely. Next statement jaraa kar ke deka do...jo yeh ho sakta hai. Every time I took up a challenge and waded in to that kind of an exercise, the rest of my colleagues would start complaining bitterly. They would say she goes out and does these wild things and then the old man sends for each one of us and says if she can do it with four children why can't you. So I wasn't always popular but I was very popular with my subordinate staff because I fought for them.

In a way, they were challenging years there was extreme hard work. I lost 40 pounds in two years without any effort on my part, just working for the UGC. At one stage my brother-in-law said 'what the hell are you trying to do to yourself and started giving me all kinds of medicines like Stress cap. No he didn't believe in tonic.. Then (in 1970) I was offered a Research fellowship by the Simla Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, to work on education and social change. By that time I felt that I needed a break from really a very strenuous life. My eldest daughter had just completed her higher secondary and joined college. The second one was in her last year at school, no not last year, she was in class 10. In those days there used to be 11 classes. She was going through an adolescent rebellion and playing up tricks. I thought it would be a good idea to remove her from Delhi also, and the young ones from the kindergarten stage also. So I went off to Simla thinking I was going to be there for two years, back to more leisurely existence and do some solid research. Before I had been there a month an offer comes from Berhampur University in Orissa appointing me (in absentia) as the Professor and head of the department of Political Science. This was a new university. they wanted somebody to build up the department.

At the time the letter came, I was so exhausted physically and mentally after having uprooted the family, got them into schools, settling down in a new house, leaving the eldest daughter with the father in Delhi. Shankar wrote saying she was finding it very difficult to get to college and come back and sometimes when 'she gets back, if I am not in, she can't get into the house'. He didn't like the idea of her being alone altogether, so suggested we should seriously try to get her into a hostel, "but Ramjas was a co-ed college, they don't have a hostel for girls. An old friend says Mirinda House might take her into the hostel, but only if she changes college". So I decided that I better come back to sort this out. Just at that point the DPI Higher Education, from Orissa (an old Oxford friend), called up and said "You are a very funny woman. A University offers you a chair, and you don't even bother to acknowledge the letter". I said look I am very sorry but I was too tired and I have just come and settled down, how can I think of moving again? But I decided I better come and consult a few persons I consulted a few friends in Simla and all of them told me 'Vinadi a university is where you really belong, and you are such a super teacher. It would be a pity to spend the rest of your life inside the UGC. Oh you are doing damn good, we are all very grateful that there is somebody there we can go to, but you should not turn this offer down easily. So I came back to seek DS Kothari's advice. He said the same thing. "I have always known that university is where you belong and this is a new university. They want people like you to build up strong departments and you have a very powerful friend in the DPI Higher Education. He is the one who fought in the

selection committee, I understand, that there was some local opposition, but he and the external expert both said thatEven though he helped you have not shown much interest in the job they appointed you. Plus he said “bache bade ho rahe hain, Delhi is not a good place to bring up children, and your income is certainly not adequate to provide them with the kind of care they need, whereas in a smaller town the pressures on them and on you will be much less. I will be very sorry to let you go but I am thinking more on the university system, (because that remained his first concern.. He continued to think of himself primarily as a university teacher.

He also told me that “your husband and your brother-in-law are opposed to the idea, but since you have come and asked for my advice. (I had told him that in similar situations in the past I went and asked for my father’s advice, he is no longer here). So he said yeh to fasa diya. To advise as your father would have then this is the only answer I can give you. You have not left me a way to think as the UGC Chairman, to think of the UGC first. You should think where you can contribute most and think about what is better for your children Jo ladkhi college mein hai, first year mein hai woh to theek hai. At that time itself I decided to go, but I asked for a little time. I thought let the children complete their school year, and in the meantime let me atleast write something for this Institute after all they gave me a fellowship, a house and put a lot of faith in me.

So before I left I wrote three papers, which the Institute published as a single volume, which still remains my first publication, because my D.Phil. thesis never got published. First the children and the UGC got in the way, so I never managed to. I had a request from two senior professors at Oxford and the University press. These two chaps wanted to bring out a series of volumes on South Asian history, and they had singled out two of the these submitted to the university, mine and Barun De’s. So they wrote to me saying that would I agree that, the press had already read your thesis and agreed it should be published, but they want you to shorten it a bit and since it is now a few years old they want you to update it. So I started revising it in my off time. Two chapters I revised and I had a very devoted PA, who used to go around saying I was his second mother. Very young lad.

As I finished revising one chapter he would promptly tear out those pages from the bound volume. I said what are you doing he said now I am going to type out this chapter while you get on with the next one. Aap ke upar chode denge toh aap nahi kijeyga and I find time when I am a little free to type them. So as he typed, each revised chapter that got torn out of the volume. Net result is that for several years I carried those two revised chapters along with the old drafts in a separate packet but in all the moves from one house to another, from one place to another they got lost. I thought even the thesis had been lost. But it has surfaced now, minus those two chapters, so it remains unpublished. The three papers the Simla institute published, after I left for Berhampore (Orissa). The disapproval from my husband was very strong, He had wanted me to stay on in Simla, complete the work and then come back, so did my brother-in-law. Again he thought this was another of my wild moves, sort of unsettling the family.

But after DS Kothari’s advice I decided I had to make a bid for my independent judgement, to some extent feeling that well possibly this is more or less the end of the relationship. And I never thought in terms of taking any legal steps or anything like that. I was disturbed because never before had Shankar opposed anything that I wanted to do. I went to Oxford with full support from him. In fact he used to egg me on “you have all these arrangements for you to study but you don’t use them. He couldn’t quite understand that reading required some concentration. Between the house work and the children and the university, and the little ones particularly, plus that our house was practically like a club. We went to very few places but we could be invaded every evening either by his friends (his very close circle of friends and admirers) or by my old students, who demanded hell of a lot of time from me. And, all this was enjoyable those days. Patna, used to be a very warm place, and 14 years that I taught in the university the kind of affection I received from my students and quite a

few colleagues, I will never forget that, and till today I know that when I go back to Bihar, Patna, I go to some of them and say, look I need help, they will come to my help. A few of them are around here, some of them were not even my direct students but they go around saying that they were my students, like Muchkund Dubey or Suresh Singh. They insist they are my students. Any time I need their help they are ready to give and sometimes when they need help they call me up and say thoda is mein phans geye, madat chahiye. And then I have another student in Aligarh university (Hassan). Whenever he comes, he comes with his family and stays with me. When he falls sick, his children call me and say Aunt, Baba is asking for you. (gone now). That kind of relationships. I value them. Some of them have gone and died on me, so every time its like losing a very very good friend. Most of them were not all that younger. Some of those people who have remained so attached were 10 years younger but I became Vinadi and my husband became Shankarda, they became family friends, and Hassan of course has seen all the children grow up from the baby stage and they remain attached to him and he and if I am not at home he will hold long conversations with them and say tell Vinadi that I had called, and those were the things why I enjoyed the university so much.

But there is no doubt that these changes in my jobs expanded my mental horizons and taught me a hell of lot of new skills which all came in very useful in setting up this institution and keeping it going for 12 years for virtually single handed. Its also one of the things that the other WID activists and scholars comment on, "Vinadi's multiple skills and the different approaches in dealing with bureaucrats and dealing with academics and dealing with young scholars and young colleagues, plus that she is not afraid of administration, she can cope with all the wretched requirements of audit and all of that kind. I had to learn all those things. When you have to work with a grant giving agency, like the UGC or how to get more work out of your young colleagues. All these things I learnt. I don't regret - they were strenuous years but they brought me friends at different levels. When Committee on the Status of Women in India started work and when the responsibility descended on my head as a Member Secretary, two years after the committee had been set up, I literally didn't know what to do. We were given one year extension and the first two years really no work had been done.

Naik Saheb came to my rescue. He walked into my room the day I joined. He said "I know exactly the kind of baby you have been landed with I know all the internal state of affairs, and look I have done a lot of this kind of work before. (He had been member secretary of so many commissions and committees). If you think you are going to do the research yourself forget it my dear. Your first job is to organise the investigation. So identify the issues on which you need research, identify the people who you know who can do it, don't bother about the money, ICSSR will put up the money. I made provision of two lakhs to assist the Committee's research. Till now the Committee, as a whole has refused to avail of that offer, except for Lothika and Leela Dubey, who came to me and said for the two task forces they were in charge of - some kind of research had to be done, so I told them to identify the people they wanted, I have placed a certain amount of money at their disposal. Now with you I am not even going to do that. You identify and send for those people, let them give me a budget estimate. Soon after that he had to leave for abroad, before he left he told one of the ICSSR Directors, Dr Narula, what ever Vina sends up just sanction, take my sanction for granted, don't wait for me".

One of the other Directors, a younger man who didn't particularly like me in those days, (now he is a very good friend) raised his eyebrows when he saw my list and came down to speak to me. He said "Dr. Mazumdar it seems you want only the top notchers to do your research". I said yes ofcourse and they are the people I can depend on. He said "do you think they will agree". So I looked at him and I said "I am not asking you to persuade them, that is my job. All you have to do, is to get a budget out of them, I'll get a proposal out of them. I know that is required, you just have to put up

the funds and Naik saheb has told me that I have carte blanche". In his presence I called up Shiv Kumar Mitra. I wanted a study done on influence of co-education or single sex institutions on the levels of performance of the students, or how did it influence their choice of subjects? Shiv Kumar Mitra was an old colleague/friend from Patna, then Addl. Director in the NCERT. I called him and said "look I need a study like this absolutely desperately, a National study. He said where do I get the money? I said ICSSR. He said you are sure, I said yes Naik saheb ne bol gaye hain. He said okay I'll turn up in your room tomorrow and let us discuss what exactly you want. So he came the next day and I sent for this chap from the ICSSR. I said look Dr Mitra is here, we are just going to discuss his proposal, so why don't you come and join. So he sat there looking utterly stunned, as Shiv Kumar and I talked about it and then Shiv Kumar said "okay national study and she wants it done in less than six months. Then I must identify some collaborators and then he thought and reeled off some dozen names in different states. He said can't cover all states, forget it. I must get collaborators that I can depend on. I said theek hai, of course that's what I want so I identified those persons, he said I have to send telegram or call them up and persuade them. I am going to say this is an SOS from Vina and we can't let her down. So alright my friend you have been listening, so I can't write out a proposal but what do you want first. I can draw up a budget right away, I'll go back and write it out as a proper proposal, but let us go on with the budget first. So in one hour flat the budget was ready and approved.

After that that man never queried my choice of people. I just went on telephoning, sent out telegrams. Called up Asish Bose. Asish Bose said 'that's a lousy committee, what are you doing there? I said well I have been landed with this responsibility, now are you going to help? I need, desperately need, some demographic and I insist. So he said okay I'll come tomorrow. Sent telegrams to Sirsikar, to Iqbal Narayan. Sirsikar calls up from Poona, I had given a sort of one page note saying that "these are the prevalent notions about women's political participation and awareness, with which I am not satisfied, because the feed back I am getting from the ground level do not fit these conclusions of the earlier studies that you people have done".

AA: How much are you smoking Vinadi now a days. they say cigarette smoking is injurious to health

VM : Yes I know I like you saying that now, as if we have not sat and matched each other. I brought my PA, Nair and then I brought this fellow, Nandan, so he has been with the CWDS since the beginning, terribly attached and he also tells me not to smoke. Once when my daughter, Ranjani was here, she was sitting in my room and I was blowing this guy up and she gave me a piece of her mind, "Ma you talk, scold him as you scold us". Later when she had gone I called Nandan and said I got scolded by Tutul for talking to you as I talk to them and ankhe mein pani, he said 'please continue' and till today that's what I value the most. Committee. Yes the great new point.

Berhampur University (1970 December to May 1972)

AA: Wait lets back up a little you went to Berhampur, how long were you there ?

VM: 16 months then DS Kothari summoned me back to the UGC. I had already heard from the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare that I had been nominated as a member of the CSWI, so I had taken the Vice Chancellor's permission. Vice Chancellor said only during vacation, not during term time as we cannot spare you during term time. And but it is a national committee, so you must accept, Likh diyya tha. Very soon after that I had to again take a decision whether to come back or not, because by that time my second daughter was also completing her higher secondary so she was going to come to Delhi to sit for her exams.

And Saswati ran into very serious problems in Miranda House. For some reasons which I have never been able to understand, the Mathematics department there, (she was doing Maths honours) disliked her because she made it apparent that compared to the teaching she had received at Ramjas, the Miranda House faculty for Maths was found wanting may be, that could be though she told me that she never made it apparent. The other reason most probably was because Madhu Kishwar espoused her cause. First of all she failed in second year, this girl who had never failed in her life, she failed by a few marks. But when she came back to repeat her second year they would not readmit her and they admitted somebody who got far less marks than she did.

My sister sent me a furious message saying “I don’t know what what the hell is going on”. I went (at that point they were staying at my sister’s) because both of them had come for their exams. Didi went to the college principal whom we had known for umpteen years, from the time I was in school in fact, and nothing happened. ‘This girl is running here and there all over the university and nothing is happening and you should come and sort this out. I did what I could but I didn’t know anybody in the university’.

That was one hitch. The other was a strike in the Department. Just before my previous visit to Delhi in January I had announced the MA results and I was very pleased because my colleagues had done a very good job as internal examiners. Immediately after joined the year before the batch of students whom I had not taught, - their results had to be brought before the board of moderators. The university had the system of double examiners, one internal one external for every paper. And the rule was that if the difference between the two examiner’s marking was more than 15, then those papers were brought before the moderation board. And they had to be then revalued. If the difference was below 15 then the examination section would work out the mean and take a decision.

I was horrified to find differences going up to 40-50. 17 students had appeared, and 17 sets of papers came before the moderation board, which did a hurried reevaluation, distributing the papers between four or five members. After that when my junior colleagues joined after the vacation, and I got to know them, I asked them “what kind of standards do you set when you mark postgraduate papers? Most of the cases I found the internal marking was very high, the external marking was much lower. So they looked at me and they looked at each other and both of them were Utkal university students, they had good records. They said Madam but this is the practice here. So I said why, they said our head of the department of Utkal university likes to control the results, so this way he ensures that the bulk of the papers would come before the moderation board.

I began to understand why the DPI higher education was so anxious to get me to Orissa. . So I said “look, you have been damned unfair to the students. The moderation board cannot do justice to so many people. Number two, what are you doing to your own credibility, your own standards”. They knew their subjects alright, they were serious students, so I said “Okay now I am going to introduce new things here. Post graduate students being lectured 4-5 hours every day, no tutorials, no seminars - this is not the way. I am going to reduce your lectures. Aghast they gasped at me ‘reduce’?. I said yes I am going to reduce your lectures, you will not take more than two lectures in a day and over the week you will not take more than 12. Instead we will introduce tutorials. We will ask the students we’ll give them a set of topics, give them 2 months, 3 months, they can chose, they can prepare,, they can write. Then after that each will be presented in the tutorials and you will discuss with them and you will give some kind of grading.

They said Ma’am do you really think this will work? These boys are not serious students. I said you have to make something out of them. We can’t let them go just like that. I had already talked to some of the students, how did you pass your BA exams they said “Madam we copied”. That was an institutional practice in most of Orissa’s colleges at that time. So I said bhai yeh to nahi chalega. So

they said “yes we know, but madam you will have to help us. We don’t know what is expected of us”.

After some probing questions I realised that these kids had never been taught. They did not know how to use a library, they did not know how to make notes, so I turned over the departmental library to their charge. I said ‘you will look after it, you will manage it, and you are responsible for the book. I had three colleagues, two juniors and one much older than me (retired teacher from Benaras University, who had been brought in initially as the head.).

Apart from tutorials, I decided to introduce periodical tests – to enable the students to (a) understand what a post-graduate standard was; and (b) to learn to time their answers during an examination. I had never been an admirer of tests/exams – but realised that my PG students needed some drill that they had missed in their earlier studies.

I explained my reasons openly to the students – assured them that questions would only be set on the parts that they had been taught so far and given one week to prepare. “When you come and sit in the classrooms, answer those papers within four hours and because time control also you have to learn”, that thing also worked. The two junior teachers were getting such a kick out of all this, they never complained that I was making them do so much work, including by rotation each of them had to spend all their free hours sitting in the, departmental library, showing the students how to use a library, how to prepare notes. I also went, because the Vice Chancellor had told me “don’t ask for additional staff, I can’t give you. You have to make do with this team for the next three years. Next Five Year Plan we will see”.

Then I started sending the youngsters, my colleagues, for research methodology course being run by the ICSSR, or a summer institute in political science by the UGC. Sirsakar, was going to do one for the ICSSR, I sent one there. I sent the other one there to Delhi, because Naik sahab used to send me all these information. The Vice Chancellor said “you are continuously recommending not only these two but some of the undergraduate college teachers (who by that time had started dropping in because I collected all of them to sit down and work out a new intermediate syllabus, four-day workshop). Orissa schools went up to class 11. After that the colleges used to do PUC and then the degree course. But national policy required this 10+2 of schooling. The state government said flatly that our schools cannot take on the additional burden, levels so the plus two years had to be taken on by the colleges and the universities.

At that stage I persuaded the Academic Council to follow the Education Commission’s visions - because my head was full of the Education Commission report. (1966) and in the UGC we were using it as our bible. When I went to Berhampore, nobody had seen a copy of the report, so my copy I made everybody read, and I wrote to my colleagues in the UGC and said give me some more copies. The Academic Council after a debate accepted my suggestion – that the school system leaves certain skills absolutely missing which are essential for higher education. And so instead of taking these two years merely as a passage to higher education we had to make the intermediate a self-contained course as many students may not continue their bachelor studies. We should try and make up what is not provided adequately by the school system linguistic skills especially on English and mathematics.

The VC liked my suggestion, but said ‘how do you propose to do it’. I said, ‘sir, there are so many new methods of teaching English now as a second language now. Instead of just pushing literature which they can not understand. Why don’t we teach the language by structural methods?. You insist on English being the medium at the University, that we teach in English, that students answer papers in English but they have no command over the language’. Many of their teachers don’t have

adequate command over the language too to teach in that medium, though they can read and write well enough – they don't think in English – nor do the students.

So he said ideas are very good, can you get the resource material? I said sir, no problem, NCERT, and the Central Institute of English in Hyderabad has this. These were the knowledge that one picked up being in the UGC. The VC had at one time been Deputy Secretary, Education in the Ministry so he got the decision through the Academic Council. and so these went out as guidelines to Board of studies. Then the Vice chancellor said you are going to Delhi, for some other work, so do this part also. So I collected material, came and handed them to him, to give to the English Board of Studies, to work out a syllabus. In the meantime I collected all the under graduate teachers of Political Science from the 13 Colleges affiliated to the University, gave them the guidelines, and asked "Now you have to decide what the Political Science course should contain, because you're the ones who have to teach. Don't give me a combination of what is taught at the PUC and what is taught in BA part I. That was what each of them had brought with them. So I said 'Why did I send you those guidelines? Now apply your minds, think of the three fourths of intermediate students who may never go on to further studies. As citizens of India what is it they must know as students of politics.

We had three days of hard discussion. All the time they kept saying madam why don't you draw it up. I said no, you are the people going to teach, you are the people who are going to formulate. They were all bright youngsters, you know, and nobody had ever asked them to think. On the 4th day, they produced an absolutely marvellous syllabus. Then they said, "Ma'am, where's the material there are no text books". I still remember, one of the totally new papers (out of two) was originally conceived as the Indian Constitution. I said "look these children will be absolutely bored. We teach them the Constitution at the school. You are going to teach them the same Constitution in great detail in BA. In between they become so fed up with it, that they do not take it seriously". They said 'han yeh toh sahi ki baat hai, we also get bored'. I said then "what do you do". We do not give adequate attention to the nature of India's society - and how the Constitution tries to provide principles and an ideology, to create a new nation a new social order". They knew it, but never had a chance to think outside the established mode. So ultimately they worked it out as **Nature and Foundations of the Indian Political System**. Their excitement – was all that I could have hoped for the question of teaching material came up again. I said "look you start with nature of Indian society. Bahut sari material hai, caste, pluralism, diversity – linguistic, religious, ethnicity etc. **It was not that they did not know**, they were quite reasonably up to date. So they said hain phir toh ho jayega. But for the **Foundations of the Indian Political System**, I said 'suppose you start off with readings, selected readings, okay, Nehru, Gandhi, some of the other fathers of the Constitution. In logon ka writings se...

AA ; Accha Vinadi weren't there any mothers in the Constitution? Only fathers?

VM: There were very few. Hansa Mehta for instance. I went and asked her, I said K.M. Munshi has said in his autobiography that you used to give them lot of scolds in the sub-committee on fundamental rights, because you were such a strong champion of women's rights". She said "Nonsense. We all agreed that this was decided in 1931, so there was no need for further debate. When I said that some discussion is necessary, the men make snide remarks. I just stopped that". Now Lothikadi has dug up some more details - where women tried to make significant suggestions for change, but they lost **out because they were in a minority**.

This exercise made these young teachers. So enthused, I can't tell you how rewarding it was to me. All of them bright youngsters - were rotting teaching in these mofussil colleges with, no good libraries, no access to any further training. So I started sending some of them out on these refresher courses, properly developed training courses that the UGC and the ICSSR were organising. Vice

Chancellor said 'you seem to be always recommending these cases'. I said, 'sir you told me I can't ask for any additional teachers. So I have to improve the quality and these are very bright young people, they need some encouragement. Then I said I am making them work. If I can't give them something, that will help them to develop themselves, then how long will they go taking this taxing from me? Okay that was something that appealed to him. He said "Yes I get reports that you are making them work much harder than before. This has come to my ears. So ok I won't stop you, but how will you manage your classes. So I said "If you agree, I will persuade some of your undergraduate college teachers, they are within bus distance, to come and help taking some of these classes while these youngsters are away". Well, nobody had ever made such a suggestion before, so he said what will be the expenditure? I said 'sir I am going to tell them that this will also give them a little bit of experience in post graduation teaching, which will come in handy later on in their pursuit of their career'. So the arrangement worked out, and I acquired these devoted disciples. One of them is still around in IGNOU. Oh yah he would call and say Madam I need help.

You see, they had spent all their lives in Orissa, they had never got out, no exposure at all, and each of them came back from these training absolutely enthused and transformed. They all wanted to change their research topics. They had all registered in the Utkal university and they all decided we are not going to register in Utkal university. I said where do you want to register then? Don't say here, because I have no guides, except myself, and I can't guide you if you are all going to work on different PhDs.

So one of them wrote to Sirsikar and asked could he register there, since he had said anybody sent by Vina I will accept. One of them decided to go to Hyderabad, to the National institute of Community Development, (NICD) now NIRD to persuade Lalit Sen because he had been teaching them during one of those methodology courses. Like that they found all kinds of channels. One decided to go to the School of International studies. I said "theek hai jao, collect the UGC fellowship and chale jao". They were all bright fellows, you see, and it was good to be able to help. It was a very enjoyable period, because the university had a very young faculty, not just my department, all the other departments. There were two or three retired teachers, one in Oriya, one in Ancient Indian History and then I was the third senior most, everybody else was in their late twenties, early thirties. This bunch of youngsters were being led by their nose, by the registrar of the university who always tried to stop them from doing anything they wanted to, saying 'the UGC will not permit'.

So I made friends with all of them and said 'what do you mean the registrar has told you the UGC will not permit. Have you all studied the UGC Act? The UGC was created to protect the autonomy of the universities, that is the UGC's primary function. The UGC does not interfere with the 'sovereign areas' of the university's autonomy - which are course designing, admissions, recruitment of teachers and the conduct of examinations.'

That's when they started asking for the Education Commission's report and slowly they said 'we need continuous guidance from you, because we are being misled all the time by this man and we don't know how to resist and how to fight back'. Very fortunately the UGC visiting committee was coming, because whatever assistance the UGC had promised them at the beginning of the plan had already been exhausted. So the Vice Chancellor persuaded the UGC you send another committee atleast for the remaining period of this plan. 'Unless I get some additional funds its difficult, even if we cannot expand but the new departments that we have started at the post graduate level, they need some support'.

AA: You had stopped at you were in Berhampur and you were coming back to Delhi. Is it the UGC? Correct. And we were talking about what you were doing with the UGC and you went a little back to Berhampur to talk Berhampur, why you enjoyed why you went there. I asked you why you went

there. and you said because you were given a free hand to do something which you couldn't have done where you were. So which year was this now Vinadi?

VM: I went at the end of 1970, and I was there till May 1972, so 16 months. Election of 1971 took place in February. No university in Orissa had at that time undertaken any election studies, and yet election studies which were going on all over the place, so I suggested we do one there. Since mine was a very small department, I suggested the idea to other social science departments, that if we join together - students and teachers - may be we could undertake an election study. They agreed enthusiastically.

The young faculty and the students were absolutely excited by the idea. I went to the VC saying that we need a little money. He made me write a letter to Naik saheb, ICSSR. So Naik saheb sent off a telegram saying, 'since you are taking it up, I'll give you a little bit. So thoda sa paisa mil gaya tha, usi mein ho gaya tha, but that was my first real exposure to rural India.

And I got the feeling that democracy had taken stronger roots in rural India than possibly in the urban centers. Many of the urban intelligentsia that we interviewed went to the extent of saying that nothing short of a military dictatorship can save this country. One of them, who sat as a member of the Senate/Syndicate all the three universities in Orissa and had founded a college, said "adult franchise and higher education have destroyed the country". Universal response from the urban respondents - "students should not take part in politics, isi liye tho sarvanash ho gaya hai". But the response of the rural public was just the opposite. It was my first exposure. When we were to I come back to the students were so excited, they keep asking, must we go back today? They didn't want to come back. I said look elections come only in five years so we can't go on hanging around, abhi yeh data that we have collected, is koh analyse karna padega, report likhna padega, chalo. There was however an attempt to dislodge me because I was setting tough standards. The conspiracy, (I found out all about it later - and students, as well as local teachers), was hatched by some local politicians. In some ways I too was wrong, and there were some problems about the family that I had to face.

In January (1972) I had come to Delhi for an Education Ministry meeting. During that meeting Nurul Hassan sent for me, first to complain why have you gone and parked yourself in the back of beyond, teachers like you need to be mobile, and then he suddenly called his special assistant and said woh file mein jahan names ka listing ho raha hai us mein inka, then he reeled off my full name, address etc. I asked said what is this and he said arre baba baad mein pata chalega.

So I go back to Berhampur to find that during my absence some of these teacher politicians and politician teachers, (not my direct colleagues), had stepped up a students' strike because of the results I announced just before I left. I was telling you that day how the moderation system used to work and because of the lecture that I gave to my young colleagues, saying that no such trickery will be played here. Your future credibility as examiners is at stake, so you will please set your own standards, you have been good students, you know what a post graduate standard paper should be like. Net result was that when the two examiners' marks came the maximum marks difference between the two sets (internal and external) were 5, 6 or 7 not more than that.

So no papers came to the Moderation Board. This gentleman, the professor in the other university who had systematised this practice, said 'where are the papers? The clerk from the examination department said sir the markings of the examiners have come so close to each other, it's not necessary. We have done the totaling, some of them are identical and some of them had a slight difference of 5 or 6 marks, so according to our calculations we have worked out the mean. So professor so and so could not play his usual role and I was very happy with the results. There were no first classes, because by my standards nobody was upto first class standard, but the bunch I had

taken charge of had been was absolutely raw. All of them got through, all of them got good second classes, and the only thirds were from those who were repeating - I had not taught them, you see.

But apparently during my absence, this professor (because I left straight from the Moderation Board meeting), my young colleagues were waiting outside. *Dono ka peth mein bahut thapdi diya, bola ah gayya standard. Teeno mein - not one paper came for reevaluation, that's why the meeting finished so quickly. And I am very happy with the results!*

But this gentleman called some students, saying "She is anti-Oriya so she does not want anyone to get first classes. I tried but your professor was opposed to it " By the time I got back there was a strike. Because those who listened to him also went and spoke to the next batch and said *tum logo ko bhi first class nahi milega. And you know there was a lot of goondaism involved. Participate nahi karoge tho maar dehnge yeh saab. By the time I returned half the students of the department had run away. Rather than participate in the strike they had all gone off home to their villages, the other half was involved in the strike. And a lot of students from the area,(not our students) were also involved.*

I met my friend, the DPI in Bhuvaneshwar, and he said "this is what has happened during your absence, and I know who is behind this. I am just going to the Chancellor to make my complaint". I said hold it, wait, you can't go off like this. You may have your suspicions, but what proof do you have? I won't let you go and make complaints about a fellow professor to the Chancellor of all persons. Let me go and find out *kya ho raha hai*". So I went, then my colleagues came and said this group is responsible, that group is responsible. So I said 'look I will not allow you to play off one bunch of students against another bunch. Now what we are going to do is sit tight and try and talk to these guys and see what they have to say, why they are on strike'.

Next day when I went to the department I could see some of the students - seeing me coming on my rickshaw, and all running off in different directions. Then the news reached me that they had been warned by their ring leaders "you are not going to talk to that lady, or she will talk you round". Still what they did hurt.

Couple of days later some of them were in the library, so I just collected my colleagues and went down to the library and we sat and had a long talk. They blurted out "yeh sab hum ko samjhaya gaya hai". So I said "seeing me for the last one year - do you think I will do that? One student said, "we were told that it is expected of the head of the department to ensure that the students get good marks!". I said look my lads that is one thing I will not do, (a) because I have to preserve, and in your case - I have to build up the credibility of this department and this university, and (b) personally I will never be mixed up in something like that, because such arrangements always have a quid pro quo. Rather than that I will quit. So you tell me very frankly if you want me to go, I will go. They chorused "No, we don't want you to go". So I said in that case, so far you have responded to every idea, every method that I have suggested, now for God's sake understand I am fighting for your future, as well as this university's future. Do you know the credibility that other Orissa universities have, why do the best of your students go off to study in Delhi? Before I came here I was warned that it was a lousy department. I have not found it so. I have found all of you very respective and responsive. But you did need guidance, you did need good teaching, including an understanding of what is a post graduate standard. So they all said "Ma'am we'll come back to class". I said 'I won't go out calling all of you. All your teachers are right here, you come'. Next day two of them and said "Ma'am voh log threaten kiya saab koh marega. So some of them have run away". That day I really gave them a yelling. I said had this been Patna university, hamara Patna university ka students tum log ke tarha darpok nahi hote the. They would have gone and fought it out. But anyway I can't force you". Then final thing was a gherao. I was gheraoed within the department. They were all sitting outside, but they bolted all the doors and piled up cycles and some

things against it. **Not a single political science student was involved.** Some other departments, some other colleges. The meantime some of our students had started coming in and we had Iqbal Narayan coming as a UGC national lecturer. I had invited him to come. The Vice Chancellor wanted me to postpone the whole thing, I said Sir why? Some of the students are back and I have told them that. He is due three days later, and thanks to your wretched strike no arrangements have been made. They (the students) have taken over all the arrangements from me, and they are running around delivering invitations, they have fixed the hall, everything saab kuch kar diya. Besides, don't worry about Iqbal Narayan. For him this is dal- bhat. It happens to all university teachers these days. He is used to handling it. Yeh, because apart from being the head of the department, he is also the Professor. Don't bother he'll manage".

The day he was holding the seminar in my department, those striking boys were outside, 'so called strike', all slogans chal raha tha. Vina Mazumdar, down down, Vina Mazumdar go away, Vina Mazumdar anti-student. Every time the noise would get too much - Iqbal would stop for a couple of minutes and then when it subsided he would resume.

And I had the solid support of the Dean. He was a science man. Vice Chancellor kept getting agitated, wanted to send for the police etc. He said but its a question of 'her security'. The Dean said 'sir she is handling the whole thing beautifully, leave it to her, until she asks for help". But that day after the seminar was over, while the strikers outside did nothing to prevent Iqbal from returning to his Hotel, I, the teachers, and 15 students were all stuck inside. I said "the rest of you go to the library, everybody find something to do, I am going to clear my correspondence". Between my being away and the excitement since I came back, a lot of the correspondence has mounted.

So I was dictating letters. Suddenly some unknown character walks in I said 'who are you? He was a police inspector, plain dress. I said 'what are you doing here?', Your Vice Chancellor is very worried about your security". I said 'look you go right back. I am incharge of this building, you don't enter till I say so. And I have another superior between me and the Vice Chancellor, that's my Dean. I know that the Dean has not made any such request. He would have told me. I don't want any of you around. This is between me and my students, get the hell out. So I threw him out. I had already the Dean and my colleagues 'look this will have to be fought by student action, and let us wait here till the students of other departments turn up. Because we used to start early morning. The Science departments and the other departments started late. I said we wait till they come. Sure as anything by about 11 o'clock some science students were calling me up, Ma'am are they not letting you out. I said look I haven't tried. I am clearing up some work. They said okay ma'am you stay there we are going to come. The Union president had come all the way to my house earlier to tell me "ma'am please don't get worried by all this report of **hunger strikes**. We have made sure they have all eaten! Nobody is on hunger strike. I said theek hai but tum log kuch karo. So he had gone around to the other departments and then they mobilised.

So 100 odd students from all the departments came out and they had some discussions with the strikers. Then three of them came, just to request some face saving hona chahiye. I said zaroor, that's something I am always prepared for. So they said that they want an assurance from you that nobody will be victimised. And this should be done before the Vice Chancellor comes. I said sure. I will go with them to the Vice Chancellor and until I make a report the Vice Chancellor cannot punish any student and I am not going to report on anybody. You have to go and offer a glass of orange juice or something to these boys". I said no problem. So then I came down, till that time I was occasionally looking over the verandah asking 'kya hua bhai, gala suk gaya kya thoda pani-wani bhe dena, etna chillane ke baad thak gaye ho kya, arre bhai we could keep it going much longer when I was a student. Yehe saab joke chal raha tha and my colleagues didn't know what to do. You see they had been used to seeing teachers get into a flap. "You have no nerves at all" they

told me, I said look here **first of all I am a Calcutta student and number two I have had 15 years and sometimes I have to tell my Patna students must I teach you how to do picketing.** You should picket outside the gate, and not come into my class room to disrupt. Because if you come into my class room, I will have to make a report to the Dean and then all of you will get into trouble, which is the last thing that I want. So picket outside. You should have started earlier before all of us came into the building! So they started laughing, you see. They (the Patna boys) said now Ma'am aap ke sath to mushkil hai. So I said bhai agar yeh saab karna hai toh thoda techniques toh master karo, don't do it this way.

I had gone through many of those and mera class mein kabhi disruption kabhi nahi hua. I used to say that anybody who does not feel in a mood to attend can leave, I don't believe in this attendance nonsense - but since it is a regulation, I have to do it. Attendance mil jayega us ke baad leave, but I will not tolerate any disturbance in the class. Nobody ever left, and I never had any disturbance.

So the Berhampur strike ended that day. Then I went with those students to the Vice Chancellor. I said Sir I have already given an undertaking in writing to all the students and here this is for you that nobody will be victimised. I wanted to assure them that you will honour my commitment. Of course, of course, in fact I was so surprised" he told the students, "she is the one who is always fighting for you in the Academic Council, in the Senate, and everywhere, she has bullied me into agreeing to so many of her suggestions, and you people opposing her I couldn't understand.

And then he told them 'look here she was earning 2,500, she threw up that job to come here for 1500.

During all this strike, the girls were with me.

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AA: Two were with you and two were with your husband?

VM: No, no, Indrani was all along with me. Saswati, after she had to repeat one year and the college refused to readmit her, also came there and both of them and then they were coming back together for their exams, but during the few days of the strike, My research students came and said 'Ma'am don't let the girls go out. We don't think that anybody will have the himmat to do you any harm, but yet ladkiya ko bahar jane mat dijiye. The kids go to school, one of us will be around in the morning to go with them. We'll bring our cycles and keep them company until they reach the school and when it is time for them to come from school one of us will fetch them. So I said what is this? They said madam please we are local and as you know the strike the whole thing has been organised from the outside so please we do not want you to run undue risks with your children. Aap to you will go to the university we know that, we do not think any body will try anything with you. Then I got a bit disturbed that if anything happens to the children then what will I tell the family.

And that's why I decided that Indrani will also have to go to Delhi for her college and higher studies. But then I knew I'll have to cope with the two kids. So then I started rethinking the whole future. Because when I came in January D.S. Kothari had told me that a senior position khali ho raha hai, if you want to come back, this is the time to come back. I told him 'Sir I am enjoying myself. He said tab koi baat nahi hai maine bata diya hai, if you want to'. I was still on deputation. I couldn't make up my mind, it was a real dilemma and there was nobody I could consult. Finally, you will laugh at this, my colleagues did laugh, sort of thing that nobody would associate with Vinadi. Somebody told me about a Telegu astrologer, who was President Giri's astrologer (Giri belonged to Behrampur).

So I went off to him. I didn't give him my name or anything of that kind. He took age, date of birth and then he took my palm print and said 'you come back here tomorrow'. When I went back first he asked a few questions he said Brahman kanya? I said no and then he looked at his calculations, and said, 'but from a family that makes its livelihood through learning? I said well I suppose you could say that. He said by Bhrigu (Samhita)'s definition that is a Brahmin. Then he said your janma shani brought you here. You must leave very soon. If you don't leave things will go badly for your children. Before that he tried to tell all about my previous births. The more I told him I was not interested, he said at least listen. He was reading out.

He said in your last birth you were passing by when someone was torturing a woman, and you did not intervene, you passed by. That is why you are paying for it. For years I had forgotten all about this, then suddenly after the CWDS came into being, one day it surfaced, and I thought it was too good a story not to tell, and they all went into fits of laughter. "Now we know why Vinadi has become an activist. **But the point is he did provide me just that little bit of guidance that I needed to make up my mind.** I came out of his chamber, walked to the telegraph office and sent off a telegram to the secretary UGC, saying I will join in the first week of May. When this was sent it was March. I went and gave my notice to the Vice Chancellor. He looked up and said but why so, I told him of D S Kothari's summons about the daughters' education. So he said well I can't stop you, but you know you are going to lose a lot of money because your probation period is just about to be over and till then the University has not been giving you your provident fund contribution. You have been paying it straight to the UGC. The university would have paid me after confirmation, with retrospective effect.

I said sir any way this much of money, doesn't not make so much difference to the children's future. Then I said sir please don't publicise the news, the students are just completing their term and I am making them work very hard to make up for those lost weeks. I don't want them disturbed. The Vice-Chancellor kept it quiet for three weeks and then the news broke and the same students who had joined the strike. The whole gang -came, "You are going away because of our folly, and you are going away in anger". I said if I was going in anger, I would have gone right then. I had this UGC job, I had come on deputation, and I had just to walk away. Why did I slog for the last three months with you lot? But they wouldn't believe me, then they cried, they broke down, my colleagues broke down, it was a scene. Finally all those boys came and did my packing, booked my baggage, one of them accompanied the whole family, because children plus a dog. You see I travelled with the bloody lot. And so I asked him.

After that, some of the people came to Delhi, they came to my house. Abhi Tak some off them keep track. So that was the end of Berahmpur. Just a little while before all this happened, after the strike was over, I had heard from the department of social welfare that I had been nominated to the Committee on the Status of Women in India.

So I took it to the Vice Chancellor and he looked at it and said National Committee, well its an honour, not only for you but for the University and you must accept. But you must make it very clear that you can give time only during the vacations. I can't spare you, you have started so many things which will go all haywire without you. By the time I came back to the UGC, I called up the department and said that look when you nominated me I was non-official now I am back in the UGC, so I think my membership should go. They said no, they said we'll check with the minister and the minister said 'she was appointed in her personal capacity, she continues. So after that you know the story of the CSWI.

1972-1980 UGC/CSWI AND AFTER

My return to the UGC in May 1972 had nothing to do with my appointment to the CSWI, but was done for very personal reasons as explained above. But within a week, after my return Naik saab took me along to meet Phulrenu Guha and explained to me that the Committee was in great difficulties. An inexperienced Member Secretary who did not get on with the Chairperson (Phulrenu Guha) or most of the other members had practically paralysed the Committee. I had been inducted “to ensure that a Report did come out of the Committee. When I stared at him, he said ‘don’t deny that you have had a lot of experience in the UGC of working with Committees and producing reports’”. I remembered the January meeting with Nurul Hussan and understood that this was yet another example of the Nurul Hussan-JP Naik style of functioning.

Until 1973 I was not seriously involved in the Committee’s work. A lot of new work awaited me in the UGC, I had a chance to go to the IDS for a study seminar on Problems of Educational Planning, which led to some very enduring and exciting friendship which continued afterwards. I was involved in planning exercises within the UGC and a nasty investigation into a racket that had to be done and examining with a lot of dismay what had happened to the area study programmes that I had worked so hard to get off the ground during my earlier stint. Situation at home was also not too easy – a very small flat, too little money, and adolescent daughters experiencing difficulties in making choices in the face of unreasonable opposition from persons they cared for deeply.

Saswati inspite of having cleared her class examination was still facing difficulty in readmission to Miranda House. She had already put in three years reading Maths (Hons.) and realized that she had lost interest in the discipline. Indrani had done unexpectedly well in her Higher Secondary and was wondering what to take up for her BA. Remembering what a hard time Saswati had, as a first year student, bussing it to Ramjas College (DU). I persuaded her to apply for Russian Studies at JNU. A few days later, Saswati spoke to me separately, asking whether I would mind if she chucked Maths and join the first year in German Studies, also in JNU. She gave very cogent reasons – her loss of interest, the doubts about her readmission to Miranda House, and the near certainty of doing badly even if she were readmitted. “At the most I would get an average degree. If I start afresh in German, I might do better”. I did not consult anyone, but told her to think for 24 hours and if she was still of the same opinion to go and apply to JNU.

Both were admitted but the wrath of the family descended on me. Shankar, Didi, Nirmal babu, all were angry. “You are encouraging irresponsibility”. Shankar was also angry that Saswati had not consulted him – she after all had always been his special favourite.

I had only one answer for all of them. Having preached all through my teaching career the right of university students to choose their courses I could not deny that right to my daughters. I had found no evidence of irresponsibility in Saswati. She had made a hard choice after considerable thought. The anger however remained right until her first rate performance through out her course assured her first a fellowship, and then a teaching job within a few months after she completed her five year course from JNU. The same people were then very happy with the way she had ‘settled’ an independent future for herself and the story of the ‘irresponsible mother’s’ role was buried in the family.

Indrani was having the time of her life getting involved with the SFI and being very active with little time for studies. There were anxieties shared by her father, my in-laws and my sister and brother-in-law. Since all these also coincided with my being increasingly drawn into the CSWI’s messy situation. I had to hear murmurs about my lack of concern for the family. As I got more involved in the CSWI (being appointed Member Secretary in October 1972 after eight of us including the Chairperson had submitted our resignation to the Minister) such tensions mounted.

Things came to the head in 1973 just after my operation (hysterectomy), when Shankar told Indrani that unless she did exactly what he said she would have to go. She answered that she would go. She was by that time 18+ and very conscious of her rights. She had asked her father “From our childhood we have heard that we had the right to develop our own convictions, and act according to them. Am I to understand Baba, that these were all arm chair philosophies?” I called her away and told her to go stay with some friends in the hostel and prepare for her forthcoming examination, leaving me to sort the matter out. She protested that I could not undertake such responsibilities in my weakened convalescent stage but did go to JNU Hostel.

By that time thanks to my CSWI work and Lotikadi I had learnt much more about laws. So I went to consult LS. She was worried, sympathetic, but absolutely clear in her advice. “If you walk out of the house, no Court in this country will give you the custody of the two youngsters. So however hard and unpleasant it is wait till Shankar asks you to go. This was finally organized formally in the presence of Lotikadi and a lawyer friend of Shankar. Everyone was very civilized and it was agreed that I was going to separate. Saswati would decide for herself but the children and Indrani would come with me.

At this point, things got out of control with the arrival of first my brother and sister-in-law (Shankar’s brother) and a little later of my sister whom I had till then managed to keep out of the controversy. First Chorda treated the whole affair as childishness on both our parts (which I had not expected from him) then Shankar said the children would stay with him – and the two brothers went on arguing over my head. At this point, I lost control of my temper but not my argument. I told Chorda “By my training my profession and temperament I am a builder of people and am therefore more competent to bring up the children. Your brother has not demonstrated that capacity. Secondly, my status in this family I do not owe to either of you but to your mother. She loved me like her own daughter, and 24 hours before her death when she regained consciousness she did not ask for any of her sons, but for me. I received her message that I should continue to hold the family together as I had done since my marriage. I do not need permission from either of you to do what appears to be the only possible option today”. By that time I was crying, and Didi walked in to take me away. Saswati came to see me in the evening, heard the whole story, and said she would stay with father and **manage** him. I went back packed some things and left the house with the children. I stayed with Didi for a short time till my convalescence was over and then moved to a new flat with Indrani and the kids. Swasati used to come periodically and take the kids to go and meet their father. She did not allow any scenes or conversations that could disturb them and succeeded in her ‘management’ role magnificently.

All these had happened when we had just started drafting the Report of the CSWI. Phulrenudi, Naik saab and D.S. Kothari (whose advice I had sought as I had done before going to Behrampore – and he had fully supported my decision) were all worried about the state of my mind so was Didi but not Lotikadi. Neither was Didi’s pet astrologer.

I think the pressures/dimensions of putting the Report together saved me through that period. There just wasn’t time to think of personal problems.

The Drafting Committee was a fantastic experience – of the evolution and growth of collective thinking. We cleared the Chapter on Law, Education, Political Participation etc. through hard work (by ourselves, and the allies whom we had roped in to do research for us) and constructive discussions with shared understanding and a collective trust operating throughout. But we ran into difficulties with the Economic chapters. Kumud and I had put together with a lot of difficulty 70 tight pages of an incomplete piece. After a week of struggling with it in the Drafting Committee, Lotikadi sat back and asked me to throw it away. Urmila (Haksar) protested. She felt that “Vina

has not written this with her usual confidence”. LS’s reply was emphatic. “Confidence, my foot. The things does not gell, it has no logical framework”.

I knew she was right. I had been trying to match what 10,000 women across the country had been telling us with the data that Kumud had gathered from all official sources. But there was no framework. So I tore up the pages and said now where do we go from here.

E

I do not have a framework and can’t match what 10,000 women across the country were trying to tell us with what the data says, the contents but Lotikadi had said throw it away, so I tore up the whole thing right then and said now where do go from here. And she said alright during the day we will work on other chapters and we will give ourselves the evenings to do some hard thinking and reading, frame our references to people.

So every morning at the crack of dawn, she (Lotikadi) used to call me. As soon as the telephone bell rang the children used to say, Ma, you might as well as go and pick up the receiver? Nobody else can call at this hour. You see she used to wake up at four and go on with her reading and then she would call me by 5.30 or 6. Whatever she had read through the night she would tell me.

In the meantime I also did some reading, I even went and asked for some help from Sitaram. I said Bhai kuuch material hai toh batao. This whole poverty debate jo chaal raha hai, what do I read. I have read Dandekar, there seems to be a lot more. So he gave me all the references and even brought the journals to me. Dandekar versus Amartya Sen versus Minhas and all the others, all working at the bottom of them. So we read the poverty debate and I was still in search of a framework.

Then I picked up Gunnar Myrdal’s Asian Drama and his notion of the **dual economy**. I ran to the office the next morning and called Kumud. ‘Kumud you have been telling me off and on about the organised and the unorganised sector. Now as you have collected the census data as well as the NSS data, do you think you can split them between the two sectors? She looked at me and went running back.

Couple of hours later, she came rushing. By that time Kumud had accumulated 400 tables on her table and we used to sit just across the corridor from each other. If you ask her today about this, she will still say, she used to get completely startled by my shouting. “Vinadi never uses a messenger, never uses a bell, she would just shout Kumud. But we were working so closely that you know that was beginning of the relationship that survives still, so I used to call her my eyes and my ears. She used to do all the reading, she did all the calculations. She came rushing back, Vinadi, it works, it works, its beginning to make sense’.

So we sat down on the table. I said “Okay that that we have the thing sorted out, this is the dual economy. So alright, now I must get back to A.R Desai’s Social Background of Indian Nationalism. I don’t know why I didn’t think of that book till now, it just about saved my face when I had to teach Constitutional history and there wasn’t any book from which I was getting any help. I better dig it out”.

The first part of CSWI’s Chapter 5 is excessively long. I mean, the introductory part, women’s role in the Indian economy, traditional and modern, because I had to build up the whole argument for this framework that we were developing, for which my three years undergraduate studies at Oxford in Economics, had not prepared me at all. And I had never kept up with economics since then. You see, I was like a non-economist trying to build up an analytical framework but Kumud and I worked

together, and once she got the hang of it, she reorganised all the tables, so finally we produced a draft. Lotikadi read it and said Aaj nahi kaal karege, let us finish the other chapter today. She sat up through the night and read, Urmilla (Haksar) also read it through the night.

The next day they came and said okay Vina this is it, now you have got it. Urmilla said, I told you Vina's confidence has to come. I said damn it confidence comes when you have an analytical framework and your data supports it. I didn't have either a framework and the data was not making any sense. This is where we were in trouble. Between Kumud's hard work and my late nights we resolved it. By that time I had packed up my flat, sent Indrani to the Hostel and the children to my sister and moved to share Phulrenudi's room in the office. Phulrenudi was staying continuously when the drafting was going on. I used to, we used to work, the drafting committee used to work till 9 o'clock, 10 to 9 every day.

After that we would go up, get ourselves something to eat and then Phulrenudi insisted, 'now you get some sleep'. So I used to sleep on the sofa and at 2 o'clock I used to get up and get on with my reading or correcting drafts and this old lady would get up, quietly go to the pantry and make me a flask full of tea and bring it every time. I used to say kya baat hai I could have gone and made my tea,, why did you have to get up and you know, she said 'there are some things that only you can do, atleast let me help this'.

The rest of the chapters were pretty much under control. This was one headache and we were terribly relieved to be free of it. Political participation had already been cleared, of course we had a fierce debate over the reservation issues, (even you know about it) by 31st December we had to complete, we asked for three months extension.

In October, the one year's extension was over and because most of the studies that we had commissioned coming in, we had to take them home to read. Iqbal Narayan sent me a fat volume after collecting papers from all different States and then so on. What to do, I knew the job and couldn't entrust it to anyone else. So I sat up with that lot, plus we had our two reports which I had commissioned. They were all there in my head and two nights it took me to read the whole collection. Then one day 14 hours dictation non-stop. The stenographers kept coming in relay and so it was done -- one straight session. I mean the materials collected by my friends, plus the insights that came from the interviews, the talks that we had with various people. The only contentious issue was reservation. All I did for the committee was to summarise, this is what has come, these are the comments that have come from the political cadres of various parties and here are the advices received from the social scientists. And five or six page note which I placed before the committee. I said this is the thing on which last couple of meetings we have had you, have expressed reservations, so here is a summarised note, you thrash it out.

They decided to reject. Before that we had dealt with women panchayats necessary, with an integral connection with the Gram panchayat and the whole Panchayati Raj structures and municipalities. There was some debate but majority said already provision hai reservation ko and it should be strengthened. But when it came to State Assemblies and Parliaments, they all decided, no. They stuck to the old position taken by the women leaders at the time of the drafting of the Constitution. So at that point then we said I am afraid, I must write a note of be dissent, so Lotikadi and Neera Dogra joined the chorus. Lotikadi said, 'you people have decided to evade a very major problem while for Vina and me it means a very major intellectual as well as ideological shift. We are social scientists, and we cannot run away from the problems and Vina's note has summarised all the views as well as advice that we collected. I don't think you have given them due respect and consideration'. So ultimately we were supposed to write that on 31st December and then we had to finish that day.

Lotikadi came to me and found Urmilla sitting there and she said Urmilla I have to talk to Vina. Then she locked the door and said, 'you have to try to understand that they are all trying to prevent you and me from writing that dissent note. Now work down the rest of it, you have written the summaries, a summary of recommendation and all that saab kuch ho gaya, now get down with this. 'You send for your stenographer and start dictating', so she sat there until I had finished dictating. And Chanchal (Lotika's husband) had said 'I would also like to glance through', so he was also waiting. He took a look at it and he said, 'Very well put'. In fact he was also startled that Lotikadi should disagree with the majority. That's why he wanted to have a look. First of all he said Vina, but Vina wrote her D. Phil thesis critiquing this system of sectional representation. I know about it because when I went to Oxford, afterwards, her supervisor was telling everyone about it. So Lotikadi said 'Vina told me, that after this she will never be able to publish her thesis. Well so what? Both of us have done a 180 degrees somersault, we can't run away from such a major problem when it has come before us.

After that discussion, finalizing that chapter was no problem. The committee I said I will put in this debate, to explain why this recommendation is not being made. So that part I finished off and gave it before the committee and Phulrenudi kept the committee in session continuously from 15th December. Everyone was asked to stay in Delhi, because there would be a meeting every day, virtually everyday we were clearing one chapter. And the dissent note was written only on the 31st of December. That's enough about the committee. To tell you the truth, the last six months that we were writing, Phulrenudi was right - I couldn't take in anything else. So future etcetera was something nahi tha. Somehow the thing had to be done and this race against time was there.

But it had been such a brain shattering experience, I knew that I couldn't go back to doing what I was doing earlier, and it was only at that point on the 1st of January, after I had in fact collapsed in the office and Phulrenudi put me on the sofa in her room, bolted the door from outside. She said that now you rest.

AA: And so you collapsed and ..

When we walked into the Minister's rooms he looked up at me and said "Oh my god, don't pass out here!". Phulrenudi said 'she passed out in the morning, we made her sleep now, she will be alright. She does not pass out in Minister's rooms'. Then he spent about 40 minutes looking at the report. the 1961 census study on polygamy and other marriage practices and in which they have brought out the data, that polygamy was more rampant among the Hindus than among the Muslims. So Nurul Hassan, said 'where did you get this study'? . I said the Census. He said "kahna kahna se nikala?". He looked through some more, then he said okay you received my orders, not to talk until I give the clearance? I said yes, I am very angry about it, why are you trying to close our mouths?. He said "Baad mein samhjao". Phulrenudi never opened her mouth, and that's why I was furious. She knew about this. That's true, that is his major contribution. He told somebody couple of years later that "had I not obtained those orders from the government, before the report was submitted, this document would not have seen the light of day". Before the rest of the government could realise what the report contained, it went before the Parliament. And the only people who knew what the report contained, apart from the members of the committee was Naik Sahib - who leant us a whole bunch of typists, to type it. I was cyclostyling and some chunks got out into the newspaper. So he called me and said what the hell are you doing. I said Secretary, Department of Social Welfare rang me to say make 200 copies, because I am going to release it to the press the day you submit. Naik saab said 'he is an idiot he does not know proper procedures. This document is destined for the for the National Archives. You don't get this cyclostyled, tear up all your stencils that you have cut. They can leak. I even called in my old PA from the UGC on whom I could depend. We had already

three from the committee's secretariat and six came from the ICSSR and the UGC and between them they typed up the entire 700 pages. Then I had to wind up the office secretariat within a week.

During that week Naik saheb told me 'Everything has been arranged. You aren't going back to the UGC, you are coming to the ICSSR. He told me of the resolution of the Council (ICSSR) in November to bring out the summary of the Report and my joining the ICSSR straight away (A) to prepare the summary and (B) Because the Minister had said that copies for Parliament have to be prepared in the ICSSR. I was so naive at that time, even then it did not strike me yeh sab kyon? I mean the ICSSR was another body but of the Department of Education, not the Department of Social Welfare. The Minister was common.

All this thing was being worked out between Naik saheb and Nurul Hassan. There was an attempt made by the Secretary of the department to get me on to the Ministry. He summoned me and said this is a government report, why should the ICSSR prepare the summary? He said you should come back to the department and prepare the summary here. I said how the hell do I know, I have been told what to do and I am doing it. But how can I come back to the department, my deputation is already ended and I have already joined the ICSSR. He said all that can be sorted out. I said look Mr. Luthra, I am not committing myself. I have to go and discuss with Naik sahib so I came out of his room. Then it struck me 'is ka peche kya hai thoda patha karna padega'.

So I walked into the room of the Joint Secretary, who had been given a copy of the report. I went to him and 'said can you explain this mystery to me'. He said 'look I don't know I have received a formal request from Naik Saheb that ICSSR should be given a copy of the report so that it can start preparing the summary. And I was just ready to dispatch the volume to him - you can see it is lying packed here. Then I got a call from the Secretary saying don't send the report I have called Vina Mazumdar here. So I aksed again - peeche kya hai?. He said look I don't know. It seems to be a sudden decision, because the ICSSR sent their resolution to the Minister in the month of November, when it was being decided. Infact this Joint Secretary, had an argument with Naik saheb, "Naik Saheb you have stolen a march over us, because we just created a position of Officer on Special Duty and we were going to bring her there to look after the implementation aspects, now she tells me that she is committed to the ICSSR". Naik saheb said "Vina makes her own choices" The Joint Secretary had a general suspicion that the Secretary atleast believed that I could be persuaded to make some changes in the recommendations. I said "call up your Minister, and say that I want to see him". He (the Minister) was prepared, he said 'thiekh hai bhej do'. So I went to ask Nurul Hassan - you aware of this move by your Secretary?. He said yes he was kicking up a big row, so I said you can talk to her. What do you think about the idea? I said "No I don't like the idea at all. What is he about does he want me to make some changes'? NH asked me point blank "tum karoge kya". I said Mr. Minister I disobeyed your instructions. You had said we should make only three copies. Well I made five, which is what you can make in one stroke in a type writer. I have kept a copy. If there is any tampering with this report, I am not going to keep quiet. Even if ICSSR tries to stop me I am not going to keep quiet. I will publish as it is. He laughed and said, "This was the expected answer'.

Then he said "arre majak ki baat hai kya. This is a signed document, and as Naik saheb told you, it is destined for the archives. After we have done the processing part, is getting tabled in Parliament. My Secretary thought he could influence your decision so I let him learn by his own efforts. Why should I unnecessarily overrule before he has learnt his lessons? So I went back to Naik saheb and said Naik saheb you tell that worm that I have joined the ICSSR and this is where I am going to stay. I am not going to the Secretariat. How much of what you wanted to implement (after the Education Commission, 1964-66) would you implement? You have a great deal of political influence, I don't. Do you think I will put myself back under Luthra's power? Wohi karna tha to I would have gone

back to the UGC, where I knew the Secretary hated my guts and the new chairman would not have protected me as the previous one had done?”. I think he (DSK) also had a hand. He must have talked to Naik saheb - D.S. Kothari, that yek ladki toh, she will be in trouble, the day she goes back to the UGC - , so it was a kind of rescue being planned also, from the consequences of my own actions, earlier. I got the Chairman’s order to make an investigation into some racket that was going on and I dug up sufficient evidence. Ultimately it was picked up by the CAG and went before the Public Accounts Committee and a CBI enquiry was ordered but nothing happened. I had told the DSK you are going to leaver very soon. All this mud way come up later. I want to ensure that it is recorded that your orders have been violated by your secretariat. so I want to do the inquiry and I want the racket to end.

So I took all my staff into my confidence. I said look we are doing this investigation, you are all going to be a part and you will examine and you will write everything that you have found out. They knew quite a lot about the racket that was going on, but I was away for two years nah, for me it was a new thing. They said that Madam before you came, one or two of us tried to point out that the Chairman’s orders were being ignored. We were told to shut up. So after that we did shut up. I said “well it is your job to protect yourself. If there is an investigation you are going to be on record that you have pointed out on the files with the Chairman’s orders was missing so I told one of the characters, I said it has to be somewhere, search it. He ultimately found it somewhere in the Secretary’s secretariat, nikal kar layah. Hamara section ka file hai. Deputy Secretary wants it so he brought it. So us ke baad voh copy vagera kar ke, sab ko betha ke attest karvaya copies. I took one copy to the DSK. He said what shall I do with it? I said sir I told your orders were disappearing underground. You will please keep one copy. I made six more copies, one copy with each of my officers, (juniors) and I have one photocopy locked up and I have locked up the files so that they don’t go on underground again. Within six months I left the UGC. But before that I had informed the new Chairman, Dr. Jacob. He gave me full support but fell sick so his term was ended soon after I left. And during the time I was away in the CSWI I knew that my protection in the UGC had gone.

Naik Saab told me, “Your mind is very disturbed and you will find it very difficult to go back to the files in the UGC, you want to get into action now. I said yes, Naik saheb I do but I don’t know how. He said naukari toh karna parega you have a family to support and I can tell you one thing. **Research can also be a tool for action** so come to the ICSSR - I will give you the opportunity to get the missing information, the gray areas mein investigation karane ka. So that’s how the women’s studies group, finally came up in the ICSSR.

AA: What year was it then?

VM : Well January 1975 I joined. First we had some small working group and we were discussing what and where to start. In the meantime I took one month’s leave, absolutely exhausted, summary teyaar kaar diya,, report tabled ho gaya, press conference kaar diya, first time in my life ever. The entire international press was there, Reuter, CNN\AFP the whole bloody lot, in addition the National press and they were handling the 45 page Press Note prepared by my own students (B.B . Sahay, Jt. Secretary, Social Welfare) and they had no time to read. So Phulrenudi said Dr Vina Mazumdar will make a presentation, about our conclusions and findings. So I talked for an hour and a half. I had no notes, nothing. I had asked Phulrenudi how does a press conference function? She said since your press note is so big, you will not have the time to do it so you better be prepared to make a presentation. That for you will be no problem. Okay prepare karna chahete ho toh kaar lo abhi, do ghanta bhi baki hai. And for this one and half hour they listened, then started the questions and there were a couple of annoying responses/ remarks. Rami Chabra lost her temper.

AA : Was she on the committee?

VM: NO, no, she came as a journalist. But before that she had started coming to my house, to read the copy that I had kept with me. I told her not to write anything until I receive the clearance. So she sort of hit back at those slighting comments. But the international reporters were just busy scribbling away. I didn't know what had followed. Chanchal said your report has hit absolute headlines in New York Herald Tribune, London Times Observer, Guardian etani tek toh hum ne dekha hai, aur kiski mein ayya hai hame pata nahi. So, because a national report had been given that kind of publicity at the International Press, some of them are full page, full page reports and here also, Verghese, M.V. Desai - all these editors kept ringing up, some of them I had met earlier. Verghese was at Cambridge when I was at Oxford. He said I want to chat, this is damn serious and shocking and I am still reeling from its effects.

I asked what do you want me to do? He said I am going to write some editorials but before I do so I want you to come and address our Saturday Club in the IIC and Verghese wrote a series of editorials. They kept it going for three months. and some of the language papers went on writing for a much longer period. I was on leave in June 1971, when the emergency was declared. I was so stunned I didn't know what the hell was going on.

AA: Okay, that's clear. that's the kind of resounding note. But of course, its funny you know Vinadi as time goes on we all grow and change and change in what we are writing. So the last paragraph I probably wouldn't write that now because I feel that women can they decide what they want but they need everyone's help.

VM : The state also has certain mandate. We have to keep pressurising that and I was still playing a lone game inspite of the years as a semi-civil servant and when somebody like Nirmala Buch came in, it became but much more exciting, because she and I could keep up a continuous inter-action and every time she had to either go and dialogue with the planning commission or she had go to some international meeting, 9she was our representative on the preparatory committee for the (Copenhagen, 1980) meeting so all the strategies that we worked out in the various working groups got pushed into the programmes...

AA: What was Nirmala Buch's position there, what was she doing there when she was nominated to the CSWI?

VM: She was not nominated to the CSWI, no ,no no she was an IAS officer, when the women's bureau was created, one of the out come - of the CSWI, but we had said explicitly it should not be in the department of the social welfare but they put it in the department of social welfare. The first incumbent was Padma Ramchandran, who by the time she began to sort of develop some understanding and commitment, it was time for her to move. The next one was Nirmala Buch, who was much quicker on the uptake and right from the her minister, Renuka Barkataki - this is the Janata Dal, you see, the whole issue was being reopened, there was Mrinal Gore, Ahilya Rangnekar and Co, raising the jhanda within the Parliament saying what have you done with the recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Women in India?

So the Education Minister said something like '52 out of the 59 recommendations have been implemented' so Mrinal got up, 'sir we are not interested in paper implementation, if they have been implemented where is the evidence'. So after that they decided to set up the National Committee, which had been initiated by Indira Gandhi, during the Emergency, to ensure a fair deal for women. Committee never met during the 19 months of Emergency and then Indira's exit. She frankly was not interested, that was the fact and I think I told you of my being drifted into the ICSSR within week after the committee's report was submitted had already been fixed up by Naik

Saheb in consultation with the Chairman UGC without any reference to me. When I asked him sir you fixed up all this you never even asked me. He said I did tell Phulrenudi that we should talk to you, but she said that there is no point now, don't talk to her now, nothing will register. She can't think of anything outside completing the report. So I remained blissfully ignorant, until the 1st of January, when I went with Phulrendudi to hand over the report to the Minister.

And nothing helped, no progress because the secretariat would not listen to anybody, least of all the chairperson. So all of us decided we can't continue like this we don't want to go on wasting funds like this, so we put up a joint resignation, that was in August, '73, end of August. We went to Nurul Hassan, and he said this is terrible. We told him, don't tell us you are surprised we have tried to keep you briefed as to what was going on. Secretary, I am the Member Secretary of CSWI which is under her control, we don't function according to the wishes of the Committee. We brought you a Deputy Secretary, people who are trying to get some work organised and then the member secretary organised a conspiracy to throw her out. Fortunately I learnt about it in time so I sent a message to Phulrenudi. I said urgent meeting of the committee has to be called because the member secretary is out of station, I don't know if she has taken leave from you, she has not taken leave either from the chairperson or the department. She had gone off abroad. This girl also rang up and said look I don't have any financial powers, salaries have to be paid, what do I do. So she obviously had other things to say so I said calm down tell me what's up.

So she said look she has threatened, she came from the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. She has threatened to complain to my secretary and threatened to damage my CR. So far I have maintained a clean record so she wanted me to say that I want to go back to the Ministry. So I have written in length, so anyway this is not a decision for the member secretary to take and anyway she is out of station so you send a message to the chairperson saying that there is a financial crisis and ask her to call an urgent meeting. In the urgent meeting the Committee took a decision, this lady should not be allowed to come back. So then there was a big ruckus.

And after that row, several of the members got upset said look we are going to resign we have had enough of this so I said at least inform Phulrenudi so as soon as I informed her she said I am also coming with you. So 8 of us wrote this joint resignation. The Minister said please give me a few days time, don't publicise it.

I was on leave in Shantiniketan when Emergency was declared. Before I had got over the shock, Naik Saab's telegram came, asking me to return immediately. I took a plane from Calcutta along with Barun De, Director, Centre for Social Science Studies, Calcutta. Both of us walked into Naik Sahib's room Barun said "Naik sahib, aab kya hoga? Does this mean that we go back to our ivory tower existence?" Naik Sahib, looking grim and bleak, said they have changed the nature of the polity. I don't know whether this is irreversible, whether we can ever go back", and kept quite for a few minutes. Suddenly he looked up at me and said "Alright Vina, let us begin on women. You go and write out a five year plan. I will give you 10 lakhs to start with. I don't think somehow my instinct tells me that the powers that will not wake up to the political implications of a research programme focusing on poor women, that's what you want, isn't it"? I said 'yes, that's what we want? He said "I don't think we'll be allowed to do much else". I told Barun to keep quiet about this conversation. He said "I am not that big a fool, all of us have to protect this man". Through the Emergency, some of us involve in 'subversive activities' "improper" for the head of a government agency. I kept saying Naik Sahib, please don't tell us. He said 'Why I can't trust you? I said, yes, but you know anybody can be careless. The less we know, the better. We share your concerns, but please keep them to yourself. He laughed, "This girl is so protective and so worried". He knew my daughters were upto the same kind of things and I had to keep quiet about that also.

Anyhow that's how the Women's Studies Programme started, maintained a very low profile. The Advisory Committee was carefully selected, with Prof. B.N. Ganguly as Chairman, Asok Mitra, Krishna Iyer, Lotika Sarkar, Iqbal Narayan, Leela Dube, Alu Dastoor— all on principle anti-Emergency. I was the Member Secretary, Kumud Sharma as Assistant Secretary. Some of the studies initiated in 1975-76 were nearing completion in 1977, when the Emergency ended and the Janata government came into office, Prof. Ganguly asked me, you read the Janata Party manifesto? There is a longish paragraph about implementing the recommendations of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. This is the time for us to intervene. Go to Naik Sahib. If he agrees, you call a press conference. Naik Saheb agreed, but said "make Prof. Ganguly, Mitra and Srinivas address the press conference. You be there but you don't talk". Prof. Ganguly said "the ICSSR studies substantiate many conclusions drawn by the CSWI which the Committee did not have the time or the resources to check. We have done that part and we depend on the Press to highlight some of these problems, because policy intervention is very necessary.

Srinivas and Asok Mitra decided that a short document with clear recommendations should be prepared for the Members of Parliament, Planning Commission and various ministries concerned. Srinivas told me "You better remember that you are writing for virtually illiterate MPs. So no social science jargon, make it as simple as possible. Mitra said not more than 25 pages, and not more than 10 to 12 recommendations. Your report 'Towards Equality' is very good, but no Member of Parliament and very few bureaucrats will ever find the time to read". So we need a short, simple document, but put in as much data as possible. I asked Srinivas, why he could not write it, and was told I can't. Mine will become too academic. You seem to have picked some skills working in the UGC, of putting it into a language understood by bureaucrats and others. So go on, draft. Lotikadi, I and Kumud drafted and took it to Mitra. Some of the recommendations we had worked out in consultation with the help of Rajkrishna (who had joined the Planning Commission) one was an employment guarantee scheme (Maharashtra Government was trying out) to help rural poor women. Prof. Mitra objected – because the MEGS only offered hard manual labour. I can't recommend that for women. Lotikadi said 'well we have done the drafting, now let the committee meet and decide the final shape. Asok Mitra was her cousin, so she could be rude to him. "Will you stop being the middle class protective male for once? We know what were talking about – we heard the women and we have done it on your data. Our draft was accepted by the Committee. Dr. Ganguly persuading Mitra out of his reservations. "They are right you know – survival first, and I agree with them that our women are much tougher than we *bhadralog* believe. Naik Saab wanted to place it before the ICSSR – but the Chairman, Rajni Kothari said since the ICSSR has no precedent of having sent such policy recommendations to the GOI – why not send this under the signature of the Advisory Committee's Chairman? Prof. Ganguly is not unknown to the GOI or the Planning Commission" Naik Saab sent the document (Critical Issues on the Status of Women in India) not only to GOI but also to many State Governments, along with the Summary of the CSWI's Report which ICSSR had published just before the Emergency.

Prof. Satyapriya Sen, from Indian Statistical Institute had become the new Economic Advisor. Left Front Government in West Bengal took very serious note – but confessed great difficulties faced by the new government. "We are already seen as Samaj workers – we have to be careful. It would be easier if women's organizations demand all this. Can't you brainwash them. I asked why would they listen to me? I am not in your Party. I am a social scientist and can talk to you. You agree with our data and analysis, is it not your responsibility to tell your women's organizations. In the meantime, the Working Group were set up by the Planning Commission and some concerned ministries. Padma Ramachandran and I put on the basic strategies and worked in the Working Group on Employment of Women (1977-78) which Rajkrishna himself constituted. He said, the other

working groups are filled with bureaucrats, this working group I am going to constitute, so you give me the names of the people who have been doing research. The first name I mentioned was Asok Mitra. He said 'kala our dhola'. It was much easier for him to appoint the 'dhola'. He is the obvious Chairman of the Working Group as a former Secretary, Planning Commission. He is not just a social scientist, he understands policy making" The other names were worked out between the two of us. Rural Development Ministry set up another Group on Mahila Mandals – how to strengthen them. Padma Ramachandran was a member of the ICSSR Advisory Committee and made sure every member received copies of the Critical Issues. Sometimes the Planning Commission representatives of all Working Group in charge of manpower and employment division distributed copies of Critical Issues on the Status of Women.

By the time these three Working Group concluded, we had learnt some skills/tricks. Mitra said "make up your mind about a package of strategies. Since you are sitting on three groups, make sure each working group recommends, if not the whole package, at least a part.

Then Rajkrishna ran into rough weather vis-à-vis his colleagues in the Planning Commission rejected most of the Employment Group's recommendations. At that stage he said 'arye bina morcha lagane s yeh sarkar mahilaon ke liye kuch nahi karenge. I asked him how a semi civil circuit could organize. So ICSSR ap jakar apna dharmashala kholo, so that you are free to morcha lagao and go get help from these politicians, Mrinal Gore, Ahilya Ranekar, Parliament mein itna shor macha rahi hai, in log ko pakro, you will have to learn some skills from them". "You can't remain only a social scientist forever"

A note here on the rapid development of the Vina Mazumdar-Rajkrishna alliance. I met him for the first time in 1976 at a seminar where we had a confrontation – on Development having an adverse impact on women. He asked if I had used the same data as you do. You are the economist, specializing on problems of rural unemployment. Why don't you check your data on women instead of excluding it from your analysis"? We never forgot that. Over 1976-77 I converted Rajkrishna to facing his data and realising that the problem of unemployment of rural women as a problem with the general problem of rural unemployment' – and somehow general strategies for employment generations had by-passed this'. When he came to the Planning Commission he called me up and said "Okay now I am in a position where I can do something, tho kya karna hai?" I said 'first you come and talk to the Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Women's Studies, Prof. B.N. Ganguly.. He said "arey bhai who tho mera guru hai. I will come and talk to him. So he came. Prof. Ganguly did not pull his punches, but said "Rajkrishna, you and I, and other of our ilk (economists) have contributed to this process of marginalisation of women in the economy, because we have been doing the analysis of the economic situation which the government has used to design its policies. By our refusal to analyse the data on women we have contributed to this **invisibility problem** that Vina is so angry about. It's high time for us to make amends". Rajkrishna touched his feet and said "Sir, I promise you will do everything in my power, at least try and get back to the 1961 position. (The '71 position was the worst, which was where the CSWI's analysis). I also drew Rajkrishna's attention to models – like SEWA, available as to what could be done. What Rajkrishna did was to instruct his juniors to push critical issues before the working group the agriculture ministry had agreed to set up, another working group to look at the rural development policies, to see what could be done .

Similarly, the Ministry of Education was drafting a National Adult Education Programme. The policy had been drafted when Anil Bordia, suddenly realized that women had been forgotten. Belatedly a separate Working Group on Adult Education Programme was constituted.

AA. What was Anil Bordia's position at that time?

V.M: He was Joint Secretary, Education. Somebody (I don't know who could have been Naik Saab could have been Rajkrishna) has said all our previous efforts at adult literacy don't seem to have reached women, and the CSWI was very scathing about it. It was a fact that three fourths of the non-illiterate population were adult women so a separate working group was set up. Asok Mitra's planning approach made me work like dog. Everybody had to work, but invariably the task of drafting would descend on me. He said calm down, these are things you have already learnt quiet a bit. You are not writing a report, lengthy, you have to write very crisply, very sharply because the planning commission will never read big reports. It has to be small. Try and carry bureaucrats with you, don't antagonize them to begin with. You will find some who are as concerned as you are, once you have confronted them with the data, so try. You have carried me, you have carried Debu (D. Bandyopadhyay) so you should be able to carry this lot?.

Rajkrishna had a meeting with the Employment Working Group after our report was ready. He had read it, he told Dr. Mitra "I find the analysis, and recommendations extremely logical and coherent, the whole together. But I am afraid I must report to you **that I have run into unexpected resistance from my colleagues in the Commission about your prescriptions. I can assure you that the analysis the working group has produced, including all that data that Prof. Mitra has been so good as to provide for us** (he has given us the baseline data, which is even better than what the CSWI had worked out because he used 100 years of census reanalyzed) will be included in my draft".

Mitra asked "Prof. Rajkrishna, how serious is the government in implementing its population policy?" Rajkrishna said "well it's not my portfolio, but it seems to me that everybody in the commission is talking about population control, either for or against". Mitra said "Tell them on behalf of this working group, that nothing they will try in the way of population control will work, without an all out assault on the **devaluation of women** – from productive beings to reproductive machines. Rajkrishna said, go back, meine toh message saab dediya, including the source and then I discovered that unlike people like him in the academic world, Asok Mitra was not very popular in the Janata government circles. Hence the advice he gave me about "morcha and upna dharamshala". I told Mitra. He said 'you know the advice is pretty sounds since Naik saheb left (1978) you are not getting all the support that you want within the ICSSR. Naik Saheb had practically given you a blank cheque. Now you are hard up for staff, and hard up for money. You have to been able to award any fellowship this year because the initial 10 lakhs that Naik Saheb had allotted has run out, even though you had mobilized an additional lakh from Nirmala Buch. (She had replaced Padma as Jt. Secretary, Women's Division in the Ministry of Social Welfare in early 1978, and was a quick in backing up the ICSSR Committee, admired Mitra's approach also.) I think the next meeting of the Advisory Committee, you and Kumud come up ready with a review of the entire programmes upto now. What are the gains where the failures and how to move forward. Also "go and talk to Nirmal, tell her that Rajkrishna has given this advice". Nirmal said 'I better go to talk to my Secretary before the Advisory Committee meets and get a brief.

September 1979, the Advisory Committee met, Kumud and I had worked hard on the review, and sent it out to the Committee in advance. The review also showed lack of response from social scientists to many of the priority areas that we had identified: - e.g. the women's movement, women's migration. Most of the proposals that came were in the area of employment, and funnily enough they came mostly from Economists, some from Sociologists and not one from anybody in history. There were clear differences from the women's studies patterns of development in US. Mitra came armed with a resolution drafted in practically UN language, recognizing such and such. The recommendation was that the time had come for the programme to receive greater autonomy

and financial resources to **continue public education and expansion work**. Justice Krishna Iyer turned up at the meeting. He said “add the word **seminal work**, that the programme has initiated. I have been reading some of the stuff that has come out of this programme”. Srinivas added two-three other words but it was unanimous. Nirmala Buch said, she had consulted her Secretary. Our department gives full support to this resolution, and we will do whatever we can.

So the so resolution went to ICSSR as a recommendation from the Advisory Committee. It created a stir because the ICSSR had never sent anything like this to the government. Ultimately Rajni Kothari said okay, we will forward this to the government as a resolution which has come from the Advisory Committee on Women’s Studies. It did also go before the Council. The Department of the Social Welfare had already sent it to the Planning Commission. Rajkrishna however advised me, “You should not become dependent on only one department. The autonomy maintain karna bahaut kushkil hoga. The model should be Institute of Economic Growth. We must get funding from different Ministries. The Social Welfare Ministry also consult sister ministries because **women cannot be segregated** as the responsibility of the **one** ministry of government”.

The Secretary, Social Welfare told me we are considering, Phulrenudi also went and talked to him. He said we are committed. We are consulting sister ministries, so the size of the kitty can be enlarged. But then, the Janata government collapsed. Between September and December 1979 all this was going on. The Government’s collapse brought Mrs. Gandhi back into power. At that stage Lotikadi called me. She said Vina, three things I should doubt very much, whether Didimoni would be at all interested in women. Even if she were to do so the last person she would think of would anyone connected with the CSWI, because she hates our guts, which we know. Thirdly even if somebody were to persuade her to agree to anything of that kind she will never give us autonomy. I agreed entirely. I would certainly not like to go and sit in an institution, under this government. Frankly speaking, under any government for that matter. For I have seen the way in which UGC’s autonomy has been completely destroyed during the Emergency. And ICSSR, as long as Naik Saheb was there he managed to give us functional autonomy, but erosions were taking place. Naik saheb had been very much a party to the Advisory Committee’s efforts. So Prof. Mitra, Lotikadi and I met him. First Naik saheb said “Why do you give up hope so soon? I understand LK Jha is coming as the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, I will go and talk to him. Prof. Mitra said Naik saahib, I don’t know much you know that gentleman. I do. I can assure you that LK Jha will do nothing, unless he gets a command right from the top. So Naik saheb said “ In that case we do it6 ourselves. Alright, Vina start taking notes , draft a Constitution. He shall have a foundation meeting when that is ready for adoption. Then he wrote the minutes himself for the Foundation meeting of the CWDS in his own handwriting. He also decided on who should, he said obvious Chairperson, Phulrenudi. I said Naik Saheb shouldn’t we ask her. He said nonsense, she will agree. Asok you have to be the Vice Chair, okay. Then he said Kamla (Choudhury) has been talking to me for a very long time. She wanted to provide some Ford Foundation support for this programme, but I understand Rajni said he did not want any tied grant, he wanted an open grant to the ICSSR. The Council would decide how to allocate it between its programmes. Ford has also approached the government during the three months period, and said “if you are willing to take the initiative for a women’s center we are willing to provide substantial help. UNICEF had also approached the department of Social Welfare, to say that NIPCCD (National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development) (for which they had given initial money) should expand its mandate to include women. “And if you give us the assurance that you will bring Vina as the new Director, we will be prepared to fund it for the next five years”.

All these things we know from the friends in these institutions - but they had all assured of support to the GOI. I asked Naik Saheb, ek paisa ka bhi provision nahi hai, ap bhol rahe register karna hai” He said “**dheko in my long life, I have seen that good work that needs to be done never gets**

held up for lack of resources, it is only lack of determination. Resources aaj nahi hai kal ayega. Sure as anything, when he came back, he had a talk with Ford, their resident representative, said that he was always told by his colleagues that **this was to be a rescue Vina operation.** Particularly, if Naik Saheb was to be associated with this new center they had no objection to funding. At that point Lotikadi said, Naik Saheb, we have no objection to accepting, **but we will not start the Centre with Ford's support, we must first establish our independent entity?**

Birth of the CWDS : Role Choice and Movement and Institutional Dynamics

JPN had also a promised of support from the Vikram Sarabhai Foundation. Their total income during a year was 50,000. They had agreed to give the new institute this amount for two years. That means 1 lakh, no strings, just enough to start. "Now we can register and then Vina can start looking for a place for the office," I had only one assurance from the ILO, about a proposal to ultimately develop the Bankura project. They said "We have liked the project so much that we have sent it around to other countries, if they would develop their proposals on the same model. The moment you establish your institute we will approach the government of India to say we want to give you this project". So yeh saab hawa mein assurance leh ke we went and registered.

And by the first of May we had hired that building in Panchsheel Enclave. I moved in. I had five months earned leave due, my PA had one month's earned leave due so we took that. In the second meeting of the founding Committee had decided that I was appointed as Director for five years. The second meeting decided that Kumud Sharma should be brought in on deputation from the ICSSR. She joined in June. The ILO project took more than six months to clear. But before that the Labour Ministry, (also ILO money) put something in our way, saying yeh kar dijiye. UNICEF came and put something. We would have never been able to manage but for this kind of unsolicited support. Everybody was trying kis tarha se isko bacha kar rakhna hai. Ford grant was cleared by next year, but we had survived one year without Ford. Naik saheb and Kamla (Choudhury), and LS used to call me as the breed of the arrogant Indian academics. "So just give her head and don't try to dictate anything". Naik saheb told Ford "She thinks just of the ideal, she will accept your assistance but she will tell you what she wants". When GOI clear the Ford grant we were under the impression that it would keep us going for three years. If we could survive, by the third year we would qualify for the ICSSR support. It was only after five and a half years that we finally got that grant. Anyway there was no dearth of projects. They kept pouring from various UN agencies, and various Ministries of the government. The rate at which some of us had become over night "experts in women and development" in the international arena, came in very useful.

We decided right from the beginning that India is too big a country for any institution to take on the entire mandate, **so we said we will play a catalyst role - collaborate and interact with anybody and everybody who shared our concern for gender equality or for removing the invisibility of women from the public arena, and the social debate on the women's question.** In 1986 on Asok Mitra's (then our Chair) demand that I wrote a review which we published, (Six Years and Forward), in '87. I had written it as a paper for the Annual General meeting. Meena Swaminathan picked it up and said "this is full of gold nuggets, and we are all proud to be members of an institution that has done so much, but this needs editing. I will undertake the task of editing if the general body agrees that this needs to be published". So General Body agreed, Meena did a drastic job of editing. First Six Years and Forward was the first document that brought CWDS into one of the international dossiers. Somebody had come to see me, some Swiss group who were interested in academic initiatives, that kind of thing and basically community orientation sort of thing.

He came and had a long chat with me, and said the Ford Foundation had directed him to come there. He came to find out what all we were doing and from the discussions he was so impressed, he said

do you have a write up. We didn't have anything like a brochure, so I gave him this booklet and other publications we had brought out by then. He wrote back, saying "Without taking your permission, I have incorporated it in this international dossier. The CWDS name began to get about.

In September 1980 the new government, thrown out the Janata government's plan, which Rajkrishna had been at such pains to write and brought out a new approach paper - called the Sixth Plan framework. Nirmala Buch rang up saying "All the homework that we did over the last three years, my dear, its all gone down the drain - women are mentioned only six times in the document - all in connection with education, health, and welfare. Not a word about employment and anything". She was not looking for help. She wanted to see whether all the strategising of the three previous years was going anywhere, so she said 'do something'. I said "Now this is where you and I admit our limitations. You are a civil servant and I am, what I call, a self appointed representative of Indian women. Nobody is going to listen to us. This where we need what Rajkrishna had advised - a morcha.

So we decided to contact the National Women's Organisations . So both of us went to Ivy Khan, who had been ringing up saying 'you people have just come back from Copenhagen and now after Copenhagen what do we do'?. I told Ivy, 'forget about Copenhagen, ghar jal raha hai, ghar ke bare kya karoge, she said, okay call Nirmala Buch. I have a lot of respect for that girl. I said 'Ivy before we come, you have credibility with all these National organizations, you have contacts, you call them, say that you are calling them for a discussion about women's issues in the forth-coming Five Year Plan. She said "Five Year Plan?" Vina, you know, Jolly well, they have never thought about Five Year Plans. I said 'well its high time they did, you call them, so she called them and they turned up. By that time, so many things were happening. The Mathura case and anti-rape agitation, anti-dowry violence protests, Law Commission's recommendations on Rape Law reform etc. Women Members of Parliament calling Lotikadi to come and explain the recommendations of the Law Commission and where the Bill deferred from them. New women's groups were being formed and old ones were changing. These ladies all knew, Lotika Sarkar and Vina Mazumdar as responsible for Towards Equality. So when Ivy called them, they came. The big chiefs of five national organisations, Lotikadi, myself and Nirmala Buch.

The outcome of that discussion - **they all agreed to intervene** Razia Ismail, a young activist of the YWCA had just joined UNICEF. So Razia said "UNICEF will provide support, if you want to hold a public consultation', 10th September, 1980 - that public meeting was the genesis of the Seven Sisters, including CWDS. Aruna Asaf Ali said "We won't take this nonsense from the Planning Commission. I said Arunadi, the only person I know in the Planning Commission is the Deputy Chairman, Dr Swaminathan. She said 'very good, call him now'. So I called him from Ivy's room and I said "Dr Swaminathan, the women's organisations wanted a discussion with you on the Plan. He said "oh, very good perhaps they can help us", and agreed to come to the meeting. In the morning we were planning to prepare, and we put Asok Mitra in the chair and through the morning the discussions went on, by the end of which these ladies were **all angry**. As soon as poor Swaminathan arrived Aruna Asaf Ali shoot up in the chair, "Swasminathan how dare you cut women out of the Plan?. We won't have it". And after that there was this out pouring of rage and it was an extraordinary meeting. Swaminathan found himself being maneuvered to commit himself, to ask for concrete suggestions, which is exactly what he did.

"I promise you if you give me concrete suggestions, instead of just critiques of failures, I place them before the Commission". Then the whole gang assembled at the CWDS. The base for the concrete suggestions were the same old working groups, plus a few new things that other young activists, brought in. The major difference for which I now thank the women's groups, was on promoting rural women's organization. The Working Group on village level organisations of rural women had

proposed the government as promoting agency. Ivy said government will organise the women?, What nonsense?. Vimla Farooqui followed promptly, No no, **we will organise we don't want government promotion - we want government assistance.** The document which Sarojini Varadappan from AIWC undertook to print, came out as **Indian Women in the Eighties, Development Imperatives.** It was sent to Prime Minister onwards, every ministry, Planning Commission, beginning a new consultative process for GOI, particularly for the Planning Commission.

Somehow the whole atmosphere had changed. Where we were a small handful of researchers and bureaucrats trying to do things and we had massive backings from all these organisations, all rearing to go, and quite a few of their leaders, happened to be in Parliament, so they went at it, they went gunning for the Minister, they went gunning for ND Tiwari who was Minister for Planning. And Tiwari tried telling them yes yes we all have the highest regard for Dr Vina Mazumdar etc. Sushila Gopalan told him we are not interested in your regard for Vina Mazumdar, what have you done about the memorandum that we sent? So finally there were two three meetings in the Planning commission, called by Dr Swaminathan. At everyone of which the Advisers who invariably attended - I had big fights with some of them. Sushila Gopalan would sit on one side. When she saw that I was about to completely lose control, she would put her arms around me, and would take over the argument at that point, giving me time to get a hold on myself. In that public meeting on the 10th I have never seen a Secretary to a Government of India and his Joint Secretary, speak as Sardar Saran Singh and Buch spoke. Saran Singh said "we have pleaded with the Planning Commission to have a separate chapter on women and development, what ever we have learnt and what ever wisdom we have been offered by various groups over the last five years we will put together. We have been refused, **so I appeal to you ladies to come to our help**". Once he let go of all inhibitions - Nirmala spoke up. So from that day, these women's groups regarded these two as our allies.

AA: Saran was in the Education Ministry?

VM: No Social Welfare, that's where the women's bureau had been housed.

AA: Social Welfare? But now there is no thing as Social welfare?

VM: You see it was a part of the Education Ministry, but during the Janata regime it was separated and became a separate ministry and right from the beginning the women's bureau had been housed there. And they had done some things. During the Emergency they had hired somebody as consultant to prepare a National Action Plan. This was all a part of the post-Mexico follow-up action and that consultant had used the CSWI report as the base line data and tried identify strategies.

So there were lots of decisions, lots of negatives and lots of positives, but no follow-up. Mrinal Gore, Sushila Gopalan and Co. found out that this paper implementation was worth nothing. And they were all angry and they were gunning for the government. Even though some of them were members of the ruling party. Or if not members, they were supporters. Left front was supporting the Janata government. The return of Mrs. Gandhi pushed the issue out of discussion, if the women's organizations had not intervened, that chapter – first within a 5 year Plan and the allocation of certain resources would not have taken place. So we thought alright **one great step forward.**

My next target had been all along, the education system and I found another ally. Naik saheb toh great, another ally. Hemlata Swarup became Vice Chancellor Kanpur University, so she came to me and said "I want a Women's Studies Centre in Kanpur. I said alright you call a small meeting. In that meeting, Nirmala Buch said, Dr Swarup, you can certainly persuade the UGC to give you full support, you can start your centre. But surely SNDT university already has a research centre, but

one or two here and there don't you think we need a bigger thrust, after all the education system is a very big one? Naik saheb said "you call a National Conference on Women's Studies and you have a National Organising Committee. Nirmala you will provide some support". She said "yes sir, yes sir, no problem, what ever is in my capacity". He said "If Madhuri Shah comes in, and Hemlata is already there, the UGC will cough up some money, the ICSSR will cough up some money.

AA: Who is Madhuri Shah?

VM: Madhuri Shah was then Vice Chancellor SNDT University. And I used to be quite terrified of her but she had already accepted one of my mad proposals for the Women's Studies Research Centre which was to let them innovate and not only remain confined to research, but go into action and then marry the action and the research together to go into curriculum development. Hemlata said "very good I have to go to Poona for the Vice Chancellor's Conference, I can stop at Bombay for two days. So you come along, so the two of us landed up. Madhuri Shah by that time had taken a liking to me, and used to call me **the whirlwind**. When I walked in Hemlata was already sitting there. Madhuri Shah said "now why is this whirlwind here"? What have you got up your sleeves my dear"? So I said hasn't Hemlata told you? She said 'oh it is a conspiracy eh? Now your fellow conspirator has been keeping silent, come on you better explain. So I told her this is what we have in mind. I said "Madhuri behn one university trying to do something in this area is not enough, the rest of the university system it has taken no note. So Hemlata wants to do it but before this is taken up by the National agencies you need to call a conference.

She said why don't we form an Association. I said Madhuri behn we will form an association but after the conference. She said what do you have in mind? I said "If we form the association after the Conference, it will have a democratic mandate. If a handful of us do it. It will still be considered something less important. She said hum, Naik saheb neh bata diya. Is he going to come on the organising committee? I said yes. She said okay what do you want me to do? I said we want you to be President of the organising committee, the SNDT university to play the host. She said paisa? Madhuri behn aap ka naam le ke, surely you and Hemlata can demand something from the UGC. Naik saheb has already said that the ICSSR will provide something and even I can try and I think I can tell you that the UNICEF is interested. And the Ford Foundation is interested.

She said "this is what I like about Vina, Naik saheb has trained her so well. Before she comes with any of her wild ideas she has already explored possible financial support, okay my dear have you drafted a letter"? So I produced from my bag a draft letter which she was supposed to sign to be sent out to all the universities. So she read and said 'umm I can never touch her draft but this is on a blank paper. You got to have a letter head. All right, I will put my signature on this. Now some initial money. I said Naik saheb has already given me a little, enough to print the letter head. She said no if I am issuing this, as President I must contribute, so she gave me something out of her bag and said go print the letter head and get this letter ready, send the whole bunch here to Neera behn and I will issue them" As luck would have it, voh dates vagera sab kuch ussi din tayar ho gaya. And she said the details of the organisations you and Neera behn had better sort out. And then Neera behn can come and tell me because just to call a meeting of the organising committee's going to cost you money, so we will try to do it as far as possible through telephonic conversation or letter'.

Now vahan se Neera behn ke sath ja ke planning ka kaam shuru hua. This was in the beginning of January, and we had decided on, last week of April for the conference, because that was the time they said that they could offer the facilities. And in right time came the announcement, Madhuri Shah appointed as the Chairperson UGC. Before the conference started she took over as chairperson. So letters she had issued as Vice-Chancellor suddenly acquired a different colour in the universities. We had Vice-Chancellors writing back, saying 'we want to participate, we want to send

senior members of the faculty and so on and so forth'. And in the meantime I was literally running from one end of the country to the other - because the Bankura project started all in the same time. The first samiti was organised, I had an ILO team arriving to see what had happened and then the ILO had planned a workshop on rural women and development, which was to take place at Mahabaleshwar and they said you have to come as a participant. So I went to Bankura and from Bankura to Mahabaleshwar, from there I ended up in SNTD. Just about four days before the conference was to begin and Neera behn was about to tear her hair.

She said "Madhuri behn told you, she expected at the most 100 to 150 participants, I already have over three hundred from outside. Vina where the hell are we going to put them up. That hostel in the local campus has accommodation for 200". I said "I am very familiar with these hostels, two seater rooms hai usko chaar koh kar dehngye. Single seater koh double kar dehngye, aur kya hai, so anyway by that time she brought out the accommodations available. There was a TV room with lounge. I said TV vagera nikal doh, vahan mattresses phenke dormitory bana doh, we could accommodate upto 300. Neerabehn had lined up all her colleagues, who had made the mistake of building houses near the Juhu campus and told them all "you will have to take charge of at least two or three guests. There were still many men, including VCs, I rang up the ICSSR, Regional Centre, and asked Dr. Karnik how many rooms do you have? He said well you know you were the officer in charge, you have been here, but all my rooms are booked for your conference. I said what do you mean, He said well Dr Kamla Chaudhary is coming she has booked. Professor Lotika Sarkar is coming she has booked so many of them, a big list of names, all women. I said never mind they are all our friends, we will take care of them. **I want you to book all the rooms for the organising committee because we are going to send all these Vice-Chancellors and heads of departments who are men there.** Then he said how can I tell Dr Kamla Choudhary that I have cancelled her bookings?. I said 'you don't have to tell anybody anything we will do it all. They are part of the organising group, so they will accept all this stuff. The superintendent of the hostel had told the new VC - that these people are planning to put some men in the hostel. Even after getting all these outside arrangements we were still left with 16 men, we were trying to make some arrangements.

So Jyoti behn, the new Vice-Chancellor calls Neera behn and she hands over the telephone to me, "she is very angry, you better deal with her". I said "what's the problem?" You know our rules do not permit, men in the campus. So I said Neera behn did tell me that and we have moved most of them outside - but there are still 16. So we thought on the first floor of your hostel, next to the dining room, there are about four rooms and if we put four in each, in that floor there are no other rooms and collapsible gates to close off the staircase, you see. So I said they will be completely isolated and all the rest will be upstairs in the second and the third floor. If you don't agree, we can give to turn these people away, then they will say we are anti-men. So very grudgingly she agreed. Oh all the trouble shooting that I had to do then, with the hostel superintendent with the Vice - Chancellor and Mira behn would do her job by telling the hostel warden Vina is staying right here you will do everything she says I am going home I will be back in the morning. All the problems the warden would bring to me and I had to intervene. But between Mira behn and the affections in which they all held Mira behn and they knew in principle the university was backing this whole affair. So within their limits they stretched the rules as far as possible.

Conference toh ho gaya, and it was a success (1981). On the last day we got the mandate - "We want more such meetings and we need a body, to keep this effort going". So body ben gaya,. They said this meeting is about to end. We will authorize the organizing committee, which called this conference, as the steering committee to bring the association into existence. These will be the aims and the objectives - (that part I said because Naik saheb had taught me). Unfortunately Naik saheb could not take part because by that time he had throat cancer. He was in Bombay, we went to see him. He was communicating by writing, and this is what he had said, "Get the conference to

authorise you people to be the steering committee to bring the association into existence, but then to agree to the aims and objectives". Voh karva diya and after that, it took us a year and, by '82 we had the association registered, and started planning for the next conference. Ford Foundation promptly said 'we will give you a grant'. I said not too much, lets slowly feel our way. But I can't even call an Executive committee meeting, so a little bit of core funding would be useful so we took \$25,000 from Ford.

Started off, the next conference at Trivandrum in '84. Before that Leela Dube, who was the chairperson of the Commission on Women of the International Union for the Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, she came up in great excitement. She said Vina, our Commission has decided to join hands with RC 32 of the International Sociological Association on 'Women and Society', to hold a joint international conference. And I thought it would be a very good idea for the Indian Association to join and we can hold the conference in India". So that came in 85, women and household, and then my god international members lining up to become members and from the very first conference in Bombay, UNICEF, with our permission had got some two-two persons each from the neighbouring countries. So by 1985 there were groups established in Bangladesh, in Nepal, in Sri Lanka and in Pakistan. By and large, they sort of you know, they adopted the CWDS as the model. Initially that's what they agreed an institution first before we think in term of an association. This is the way it was going, and Maithreyi started talking in term of the women's studies movement.

And then they got busy trying to institutionalise women's studies in all countries. Out of the first conference had come this demand that we want this major input into the Educational system, having only on SNDT university unit is not enough. We had working groups, on various subjects, various disciplines. We had a mathematic and science working groups saying that how this could be introduced at the school level and we had social science discipline group saying how this needed to be incorporated into university system curriculum. Madhuri Shah's inaugural address had raised questions about the pattern of organisation. What do you people want, do you want women studies to be recognised as an independent discipline? You want independent institutions? Uniform rejection came from all the working groups, "we do not want it as a separate discipline". All these university people said "that will marginalise us, they will not give us either faculty or library support and it will be treated as a soft option for some women, and we will get junk of the student group. We don't want that. It is the dimension that needs to be incorporated in to various disciplines.

Now this is where it was a major departure from the way where women studies developed in the US. Lot of people think that this was something that Vina engineered, but it wasn't true. I was sitting only with political science working group, where all the other teachers came up with suggestions of titles for, not only special papers. They said there can be some special papers but it must be incorporated into the compulsory courses. Madhuribhen told us, "I see you people have chosen a hard struggling path, its not going to be easy, but if you succeed, it will really revolutionalise our education system. Anyway I will do whatever I can".

After she left, I said "look if we can't do something within the next five years which is her term, then we will never do anything. So everybody gird your loins for a tough battle". The next stage came with Rajiv Gandhi's election in 84, just as we concluded the Trivandrum conference early 84. Between 1981 and 1984 individual academics, or groups of them taking up research on women, especially the "non-visible" ones went on increasing. Even though the ICSSR's 'promotional' role had weakened with Kumud's and my departure – it agreed to play the host for an Expert Group Meeting on Women's Studies in Asia sponsored by UNESCO, Bangkok's Office of the Advisor, Social Sciences (Yogesh Atal, our old colleague from the ICSSR) – on condition that the CWDS would take the organizing responsibility. Madhuri Behn readily agreed to inaugurate, and the country paper was prepared by Neera Behn, Leela Dube and myself – sitting in the CWDS. The

Report of the Workshop was sent round by the UGC to Vice Chancellors in 1983 – asking them at the same time to think seriously about including issues relating the status of women within their research, and teaching activities” and inviting proposals. An Advisory Committee was constituted, so it looked that the initial lead taken by the ICSSR in 1975 – was being taken over by the UGC – politically a more powerful body. The IASW Ex. Committee used to meet in the Chairperson (Madhuri Behn)’s office in the UGC, and I got help from some old colleagues.

A few individuals also tried to help – but nothing substantial was happening until Rajiv Gandhi’s election (1984 end). The President’s address to Parliament in January 1985. Immediately after, Mr. R.N. Khosla, Social Welfare Secretary called me to ask ‘have you seen that (the President’s Address?). I had been given clearly to understand, by the previous government (Mrs. Gandhi’s) that no major policy changes were going to be considered, as far as the women’s question was concerned we had to try peripheral programmes within the existing policy frame, but in the light of the President’s address it means there is some possibility of major thrusts new thrusts”.

Then Phulrenudi arrived. Un se ek lekaya as former chair of CSWI. And she had come back to Parliament, she won the elections. So do chitte draft kiya. The two letters went straight to the new Education Minister, both were acknowledged. In the meantime we got together with Madhuri behn and said that we must mobilise people nw within the university system. So we will collect a bunch of people, who are as concerned as I am about university reform and it will be a joint seminar at the UGC and the Indian Association for Women’s Studies. They said what kind of people did you have in mind. I said Madhuri behn, Upen (Upendra Baxi), somebody like Ram Reddy, Asok Mitra, I named the men, she said oh I see the game, very good go ahead, UGC will foot the bill. But you better go and talk to Delhi University and tell Sushila that she had better bring the Delhi University in and boost the even, all fixed within a week.

(missing corrected page 61)

When I had to mobilise the EC members and our stalwarts in the Association, I said participate karna pedega tayar ho jao. Roaring success. The whole thing was taken right out of Ram Reddy. I said you chair this meeting, Ram Reddy said, what do you mean talking about Humanities and Social Sciences, if this dimension has to get across to under-graduates we have to have a foundation course for all under-graduates of all faculties. Asok Mitra did his bit, Upen went off into long discussion on erudite versus organic knowledge and this and that and how women’s studies was really getting involved in and recovery of organic knowledge, so it was all very successful and as they were discussing on the second day I sat in the corner, writing down the recommendations, because I knew that the officer that they had sent me from the UGC was going to come to me to say, help me write the report. So I wrote the recommendation and I picked up the phrases that were coming from the various participants and put them down as objectives. Somebody had noticed, Vina seems to be writing down something, Vina what have you prepared, so I said I have written down what has been coming through from all of you as objectives and recommendations. Okay read it out, read them out, they said exactly this is what we wanted now we have got the report ready, report adopted.

Report adopted and UGC guy said I must thank my Didi I would have had the awful job of writing down the report of this very rich discussion and she has captured it all in about four pages. So voh to report leke chala gaya. And that report was used. Madhuri behn’s term was about to come to an end so what she did, before she quit and before the education policy was, it was still being in the ...

she put it before the Commission, got this recommendation of the seminar adopted as the guidelines, and shot off a circular to all the universities, new programme which UGC will fund, this is the organisational pattern, these are the guidelines, no separate departments, not separate institutions but catalysing units like Centre for Self(?). To start with this is the scale of funding that Commission will provide. Then Education Policy had to be straightened out. Anil Bordia had come over as Additional Secretary with the special task of formulating the policy. So at a meeting outside Devaki and myself both went for it. And Anil Bordia said an education policy cannot be adopted in the mid 80s without mentioning women's issues. I promise you I will do what ever I can. Then he landed up in my office one day. He said okay I have got my offers, I can say something on women's issues, now how do we go about it and what do we say.

I said, he came with a bunch of his colleagues, all women, and I had already sent for Sujaya, She was sitting there. I said, they were holding right now seminars on every specific theme, primary education, secondary education, vocational education. I said is par bhi national seminar hona chahiya. He said alright but before that you see when I by and large talked about the thrust that were developing I used education for women's equality and he told me very bluntly, he used Vinadi, he used to call me Gurubehn because both of us had been chelas of Naik saheb. He said Vinadi, equality bhool jao, yeh sarkar is not interested in equality, but I have been given to understand that I can say something on women's issues and asked CWDS to organize the National Seminar. I said oh no, people who are invited to this seminar must understand that Bharat sarkar means business. The invitation will go under the signature of Mr. Anil Bordia. CWDS will do all the donkey work, we'll identify people, we'll write background papers, we'll prepare kits and all that, but invitations will go from you'. The he said 'achha title for the seminar?', so I said Mr. Anil Bordia's understanding of women's issues, Vina Mazumdar and Sujaya's understanding of women's issues, and the unlettered peasant woman's issues, I doubt how much there will be in common. So why mystify? I don't believe in mystification, you know, neither did Naik saheb, and since you are Naik saheb's chela, why do you want to mystify? So he said 'what do you propose?' I looked out of the window and said 'Education for Women's Equality' and the entire bunch of his colleagues and Sujaya, burst into laughter told him, "you don't get around her so easily as with others and **we are very much afraid we are all with her**". All his joint Secretaries, Consultants, Anita Dighe was there, Adarsh Mishra was there, the whole gamut - they all said we are with Vinadi that has to be the title. So he was cornered, he said alright then you have to write the theme paper.

So we went about it this way. The National seminar took place made a whole bunch of recommendations. Before that I got another chance, UNESCO called me for a seminar on Women and Higher Education. I went only to see if I could bring back something to increase the pressure, and surely they had assembled some absolutely ghastly set of people; philosophers etc and nobody had a clue. There were two Portuguese women whom I had met in another UNESCO seminar earlier came to me and said "Vina these people all seem to be talking out of their hat - and some of them seem to be senile, you better do something". They came from Portuguese Commission on Women, and one of them had been a university professor, the President of the Commission. She said 'you did such a good job in the previous meeting, please for God's sake we must get solid concrete recommendations out of this. After that we swung into action. I said 'I will begin but you have to support'. There were a couple of African women they also supported so we got a strong set of recommendations. The Chief man from UNESCO, who had organised the Seminar was a philosopher. He had neither any idea about women nor about education. So he came and said you seem to have a lot of experience managing the seminar, so would you mind drafting the recommendations.

And so recommendation nikal ke pocket mein leke vapas agaya, before the Education Ministry seminar and circulated it to all the participants.

AA: Who was the President at that time Vinadi? Who wrote the speech? I am just curious about it.

VM: President was Zail Singh,. The speech is always written by the government - the Prime Minister's Secretariat. It was a commitment coming from the new Prime Minister. Everybody was jubilant, Khosla said "shall we catch the straws in the wind and see if we can start a fire? Or shall we wait for thing to happen"?. I said 'by all means Mr. Khosla let's start a fire. He said in that case my dear you better come and let's put our heads together. What are the new thrusts that we can work on?. So I went and I told him **education policy**. When I explained what I was about he said 'oh my god you are thinking 25 years ahead - the next generations of students who will come out of such changes in the education system. will have different mind sets. You have been continuously telling me that programmes are there, allocations are there but I can't get my bureaucracy to act. Who is going to give you the resources to reorient your bureaucracy? Aaj ka ek set up reorient karoge, kal aur ek set aah kar usko bigar dega, and its not just the bureaucracy, Mr Khosla, its your politicians, its your managers, its the teachers, everybody is the product of that one mother system". Alright my dear, I'll buy that. What next?. Vina Mazumdar - CSWI's recommendations on women panchayats went into cold storage, do you think its possible to revive that discussion? So Sujaya, Jt. Secretary was asked to 'dig up that file study it, then we'll proceed.Okay Dr. Mazumdar. Third?" V.M - the working group on employment of women had recommended, a special component approach, that instead of always thinking in terms of separate programmes for women, you adopt a special component approach like the scheduled caste and the scheduled tribes so for every sectorial plan they have to come up with some things on women and they have to earmark certain funds. This had been rejected by all the Planning Commissions since then'.

He said 'okay done. I think, Sujaya these three should be enough to keep ourselves busy'. Then I said Mr Khosla I want this education thing, I brought a note and I want your thappa on that. he said why I said because I am going to Lubljana to finalise a Non-aligned report and Vida Tomsich has written she is thoroughly dissatisfied with the education chapter. She wants me to help her revise it. I want to be say that I have some backing of the government of India". Education was not in his portfolio, but he signed my note and said "I better go and speak to Anand Swarup, (the Education Secretary) that I have committed myself". I believe that's why Anil Bordia (the Additional Secretary, Education), got the orders to say something on women's issues, in the policy. "Madhuri behn this is where you as the President of the Indian Association for Women's Studies, as well as Chairperson of UGC, need to write a letter to the Minister. They are going to formulate a new education policy, please get in, right in the beginning. She said you draft the letter, letter draft karke bhaje do".

AA: And how did we get this training, just to digress a little bit

VM:Naik saheb, I think he taught himself. He had been a freedom fighter, my dear. JP Naik was not even his own name it was his underground name, which he retained for the rest of his life. Oh once I start talking about Naik saheb, but he had said you have to move on all possible fronts, you cannot leave out any potential ally, after all that the way your society is organised, you are not a political party, yet you have mounted what is a political movement so you have to work with everybody. Alright so that what I have done. And I as I said I found plenty of honest sincere bureaucrats who were ready to respond, ready to join hands and who took the issues that we brought before them, they shocked them you know, nobody knew that things had gone to such a pass. Srinivas, its only because of you women, you are so damn busy that Bharat sarkar and the academia think all the women are like you. Now I better go and sit around.

VM: So those where the three basic new thrusts.

AA: 86?

VM: 85. 84 the elections took place and this address came in January in 85 to the new Parliament so from 85 onwards, some of us started working in three directions. Iske beech mein voh ICPE study, voh non-aligned conference, then the Seven Sisters decided just as they had held a discussion, consultation with the Planning Commission before the sixth five year plan aab seven five year plan se pahele aur ek consulation ho jayae. And this time it was a much bigger meeting.

AA: And Vinadi, those Seven Sisters are the same Seven Sisters of today, the same group.

VM: Basically the same group, I tell you what changes have taken place. In the initial stage the Indian Federation of University Women's Association of which Binadi, our Binadi (Bina Roy) was, she was our treasurer, and she was also the India President and she was Vice President of the International Federation and she had come in as a signatory but after that, that organisation went moribund., then Binadi gave it up.

AA: Which Bina is this.

VM: This is Bina Roy and that was one change and Joint Women's Programme came in later so the its first memorandum was signed also by the ISST but ISST dropped off, the Federation of University Women's Association dropped off and Joint Women's Programme came in. And earlier we had treated the coordination Committee of Women's Workers, the CITU Women's Wing as a separate wing, later we started treating them as a part of AIDWA. So that how oh yah Mahila Dakshita Samiti joined later. So thats how the AIWC and NFIW AIDWA, YWCA, CWDS, these five have been constant. So in all these we were trying to build this in these three strategies. Even the Women's organisations were not too certain about the women's panchayats, do you think the government will ever agree. I said we have to keep on pushing, somehow you have to keep pushing and you push it in your own parties also.

So by 86, as I said we lost one major battle, which was the Muslim Women's bill, which praise be the six High Courts have virtually declared as not constitutional only the Supreme Court mandate is left. The victory was on the Education policy front, because once we got the phrase in, Bordia was also unhappy because government was retreating from constitutional and then he brought in the lot. He called it Education for Equality, first category women, second category, scheduled caste, third category scheduled tribe, fourth category minorities. Ek chapter mein le aya. And the rest of the education policy, as you know became pretty controversial, because all kinds of things have been pushed in. In the NDC, the National Development Council, I was told later, Jyoti Basu was sharply critical. The major thrusts of education policy, but he picked this thing and said now this part is very positive, this is the only constructive forward looking part in the education policy and this is something that we could support.

But you know in the Parliament they were a very small group, but the reports reached me from friends in the Planning Commission, that NBC meeting mein Jyoti Basu had, but there were lots of changes from the original draft that Sujaya and I had prepared based on the Seminar's recommendations which ran into four pages. Then sujaya called me frantically and said I have just seen the final draft the Mr Bordea has placed before the Minister. There are only two paragraphs under the head of women in polity and Vinadi I am afraid all reference to women's studies have been dropped. So I sat down and wrote it. It was 8th march. I sat and wrote a long letter to Margaret Alva saying this seminar was initiated by the Ministry of Education and all along your department collaborated with us in organising this. This draft was prepared by me in consultation with officers of

your department and I understand that this has now been reduced in two paragraphs and there is reference to women's studies. I suspect that the resistance does not lie with the Minister because here is a copy of the convocation address that Mr Narsimha Rao delivered just one month back at the SNDT university congratulating them on having pioneered women studies, which of course Sujaya had drafted, so I suspect the resistance is somewhere at the level of the bureaucracy so may I seek you help.

Margaret took the whole bunch, walked into Narsimha Rao's room and plunked the entire lot on his table, saying what is this, you gave me all the assurance, you will put in all the things that the women studies people want and here this is the draft I saw, and how can your secretaries alter the draft without even referring to me. She had not seen the draft, she just said that. And so Narshima Rao said alright alright Margaret I will look into it, then he summoned Sujaya. He said tell me what do you mean by women's studies, do you want separate institutions. Sujaya was frantically, no no sir no no sir, no no women studies people are very adamant, it is not a separate discipline and they do not want separate institutions, they do not want courses, they say it is a dimension, a perspective which has to be built into all existing disciplinary courses.

So Narshima Rao well that makes more sense so that does not mean a great deal of money is required. So why should we have any objection to that, it will satisfy the women's lobby. Half an hour later I get a call, Bordea se, aap ne mere bara sikayat ki. I said hain kiya naam nahi liya, mugar shikayat kiya, because we both had been taught by the same guru that if you lose the battle at one level then go to the next higher level so. He said alright Vinadi i am going to read out to you the finally approved paragraph which has been just approved by the Prime Minister. So there was that one sentence that women studies will be promoted as a part of the existing disciplines and existing in institutions and that positive intervention is, the national education system shall play, all that part had been written from the original draft. I wrote to Margaret that this is rhetoric, the women's studies paragraph explains the how of it, because without that how the educational institutions will be totally at sea. Anyway, with that bit also we managed to get that one sentence in. It still did not make sense to most educational institutions but it can be used and at that point of time I think I could say that no other country in the world had given a mandate, like this to their educational institutions. Things have been happening inside, individually in institutions under pressure from their faculty and their students. But a sort of a Parliamentary mandate voh nahi aya tha.

The Panchayat won it took a little longer but Khosla had done and Sujaya had done their work so when Margaret started this exercise at the National perspective Plan, that the old recommendations and whatever noting had taken place voh saab gussa diya us mein so National perspective plan mein in the chapter on Political participation, they said not women's panchayats but one third reservations for women in all elected bodies from Panchayats to Parliament, but there was an...., that in the initial years this may have to be, seat may have to be filled by nomination. The Seven Sisters none of them had been consulted for this exercise and even Sujaya was kept very clearly out of that core exercise instead handled by team of consultants, all bacchas with no idea on how the government functions and what it is the government can do and what it cannot do, so they called up various people to write up the review paper. They were not bad, it was only when it came to recommending strategies and thrust that they were haywire.

And this comes in 88 by which time Rajiv is already in trouble, with the defamation bill, with the Muslim Women's bill, Srilanka, whole gamut of it all. By 88 his position was very shaky. Seven sisters were already angry, none of us knew what was coming in that document then Nandita Haksar wrote a sort of fairly longish 1200 words or so piece in the Hindustan Times, because she was made a member of the National Committee under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister which was to consider this document and give it their approval and Nandi began saying first of all I don't know

why I have been made a member of this Committee because i have not specialised in this area, though I am a member of the Indian association of Women's Studies and I keep, I consider myself as an individual I am a part of the women's organisation but where are women's organisations who have been fighting on the women's cause, where are the scholars who have been doing the research. Once Nandita began Gita Mukherji picked it up and she blasted. She said this document has not been prepared in consulataion with all these people. Poor Margaret had to say no. So Gita well how can be endorsed it we do not have the expertise. I read that Hindustan Times, I called up, called up the Seven Sisters, I said bhai ajao emergency meeting.

I said this is what Nandi has reported and without asking your permission I have asked Nandita to come to this meeting, so we can get a full report. And Nandita arrived on the dot and she brought her copy of the document that had been given to her. She put that down before us, she said here is the copy the only copy that I have had some time to read and it is full of things that you people will not like at all. And I was not asked to take any secrecy oath and I bought it as my contribution to this meeting and then she stood up and acted out with great gusto how that discussion in that meeting took place. What was the Prime Minister attitude when did he smile, what did he do, what did so and so say. I mean it was a superb performance. By the end of it, without reading the document the whole group was wild, how dare they. I said okay merely getting angry is not going to do anything we should issue a press statement, what do you want to say.

So they, there must be a national debate before any such major policy. so what we put there is that this document should not be finalised as a policy, stressing to the year 2000 without a national debate so that was all a simple press statement, saying that we as a national orgainsations that we have not been consulted in preparing this perspective plan we have not been shown a copy of the document so we demanded that it should first be subjected to a national debate, before its placed before the parliament or any national agency. Just at that point the Central Social Welfare Board wrote letters saying they wanted to hold a consultation on the NPP so they wrote to the normal network of Women's organisation that takes grants from the CSWB and some how one letter came not to me but to Kumud Sharma, because Kumud Sharma had just completed a case study on the Central Social welfare Board. So okay ayaa, again we met and Ivy said we have not recieved any invitation. So Sushila Gopalan said call Margaret now.

AA: What was Margaret?

VM: Margaret was the Minister Women and Child. Sushila said call Margaret that we are all coming to take part in this consultation and we should by right recive invitations otherwise we are coming anyway, so hurriedly the invitations were delivered at home that night. Then they went and in that meeting, they, by that time Ivy spent 7000 Rs getting that document xeroxed into seven copies so she gave one copy to each so hurriedly they managed to read through and they went and thrashed those two page and separate working group bana diya, each chapter was discussed threadbare and again they recommended unanimously all the other grantee institutions also agreed, you see that there has to be a national debate and we need more time and that document should be circulated widely to promote a national debate. We waited one month no response from the government, either to the press conference or, then we decided the Seven Sisters, okay we will hold a national debate, but this time we can't ask the Women and Child department for any support and nor are we going to ask any UN agency. Before that they had taken UNICEF support. But no donor agency this is our battle so each of us have to try.

So each of us wrote to all states, all of them covered their own branches plus other organisations saying that we have no money, to pay for your travel but if you come we will arrange for your hospitality here. That each of the Seven Sisters contributed to that getting the hall. Then before that

we set up the working group on each chapter with representatives from all the Seven because they said it will be too costly and too time consuming to distribute copies of the entire document so let us prepare short summarized precise and then for each working group a kind of a discussion paper, critiquing that what is the NPPE so voh saab tayar ho gaya working groups kaam suru kar diya then I had the entire gang descending on me saying you have to write the overview. I said you have three of my colleagues working groups and you want even more. They said hain overview aap ko likna padega based on the kind of discussion we have had and so this went before the, We didn't give anyone travel support but we had 149 organizations participating from all states, no state was missed out.

And the CSWB's consultation with air fare paid and all that including only 60 persons, we had bodies like the Indian Association for the Women's Studies, voluntarily coming in, apart from the few of us who were already there, they sent more people from different states, so it turned into a very productive very fruitful, because of the preliminary exercise that had been done. These working papers for the working group on the basis of that we each worked very hard for three days and produced very clear cut recommendations and after that CWDS was given the responsibility to put it all together. We were the only ones with the kind of office establishment, the other was the YWCS. Ivy said I don't have people to put it all together, only the CWDS can do it so its number. As we were organising this Sujaya calls up, Vinadi hurry, please hurry and then she gave me a list of 27 individuals, Planning commission, this Ministry, that Ministry that ministry etc and in the meantime we had a marvelous press, tremendous press support including editorial, if the government of India thinks that this is a petticoat war they are very mistaken, because between them, these organisations command a formidable amount of knowledge as well as years of experience of hard struggle. Very good, very good coverage, but press also said pura document chaheya, so Suja said hurry hurry. So with great hurry we did together six xerox copies I sent off first to 27 and then to all the editors were writing like mad and calling me and saying where is this full document. Our reporters are only getting back bits and pieces from the report, even from that and your working papers on the basis of that we have been doing all the writing but we have to have the full report so I said again another blast from the press.

Then in Parliament all the women MPs got together, Ila Bhatt bought them all together cutting across all parties saying you people have to take some position on this thing because if the government goes ahead and places it before the Parliament you people have to decide. At that time it was other Congress women who took told Margaret Alva don't place it before the Parliament now. She said achha for so many years, you know I was complete person non-gratis with Margaret Alva. She is coming out of it now, since the Select Committee and the 81st Amendment, after that she is now very friendly, but she didn't talk to me for years. A because she thought that Sujaya had leaked out the thing to us. No no it was not Sujaya but Nandita. She trashed Sujaya CR badly, badly damage kar diya. The other thing was that these organisations have politicised the whole affair. You see she was doing she was calling in eminent women, people who were Vice Chancellors, merely because they were women who had never had anything to do with women issues, scientists doctors people like that so that press statement could be issued by the Ministry saying that all these women came and endorsed the NPPE.NPP(?)

Renuka Roy the old freedom fighter she issued a contradiction saying that this is all nonsense I was called certainly, so how could we endorse. It created a bit of a scandal. That's why the Statesman wrote that some people may think this is a petticoat war, Bhaskar Ghose got into trouble because we had called a press conference and he sent the Doordarshan team to cover the Press conference, Margaret hauled him over the coals. So he had to say ma'am I had no instructions that I was not to cover. These are all national organisations and it was an important and ofcourse I did not know what

they were going to say. I mean it was carried on to that state DG Doordarshan having to give an explanation as to why these women had been given so much publicity.

So they that's when in that critique as soon as they read that recommendation, 30 percent reservations, in all elected bodies, its backed that they must be filled by nomination for the first few years, straight off the debate said we reject this is subversion of democracy, subversion of the Constitution, all designed to promote Congress hegemony(check spelling). But we strongly recommend one-third, by that time the Bommai Committee had come out with the another, so one third reservations for the women in the Panchayats and municipalities with due representation for the Dalit and the Adivasi women, but to be filled only by the process of elections and Sushila Gopalan added the ground rule sentence, she said this will help to throw out a new kind of leadership from below. I have always felt very proud about it. At that stage we don't want state Assemblies, we don't want Parliament, only grassroot, but only through elections. Okay then that got built into Rajiv's 64th Amendment, Panchayati Raj Amendment and the Janta party started Rajiv said 30 percent, janta party said one-third, went on and finally in 89 elections in National Front manifesto made it one of their commitments and that's how the 64th amendment lapsed because he couldn't master a majority and on the issue of the State _Centre autonomy broke down. So when it came in the 73rd .

AA: It came in the 72nd first.

VM: 72nd, but because something else got passed in that it was delayed, it went to the Select Committee and some bargaining went on among parties but it went through and nobody took the slightest notice because it came two weeks after the Babri masjid, so I was telling Nirmala Buch, she had come by that time, a Secretary Rural Development and she was responsible to getting the bill ratified by the required number of states. She told me aap chup raho aap shor mut machao. I have already got so many states, I need only two more to agree to authorise me to get the Presidential notification out. So ratification ho gaya before the state bureaucracy could wake up to its implications and before the politicians could realise what a tremendous transformation this is going to make, let me get the ratification done. 19 April she shot out the Presidential notification then she said aab jitana shor machan hai macho. You see now its practically done the rest you know.

AA: No, we have to have one more session. Now I will force you to finish in this session.
TAPE ENDS....

(The last 5 pages are not corrected or edited by Vina Mazumdar)