5. Trivandrum

Saints and Lovable Rogues at the Centre for Development Studies During its Early Years.

K.N.Raj was a worthy successor to V.K.R.V. Rao at the Delhi School of Economics (DSE) during the late 1950s. It was during his time that some very bright young economists joined the DSE faculty. Among them were Amartya Sen who later won the Nobel Prize in economics, Jagdish Bhagawati and Sukhomay Chakravarty, to name a few. Joan Robinson, the sharp-tongued Cambridge Don, a regular visitor to the DSE at that time, was soon to describe these economists as the 'emerging stars on the neoclassical firmament'. The DSE went from strength to strength and was perceived – by many in India and some elsewhere as well – as a world-class institution for studying economics.

Abundance of intellectual brilliance leads often to dissension and factionalism in the academia. Intellectual differences lead to adversarial relations that hinder the smooth working of academic life. In any case, whether it was because of the brewing scholarly differences (that sometimes get carried over to personal lives) and their possible impact on students and the regular teaching programmes, or a fear about what they'd bring about in a larger sense to DSE within the Delhi University 'politics', Raj left the DSE in July 1969 to become the vice chancellor (VC) of the Delhi University (DU), a chair that perhaps he did not wholeheartedly want to occupy. Soon, ugly troubles began rearing their heads for the reluctant VC – nuisances or worse for which no satisfactory remedies were found by Raj, even with the counsel of V.V.Giri, the president of India, then chancellor of DU, who advised him, after a few visits to Rashtrapati Bhavan, to get by on his own as the unquestionable decision maker and not seek outside help (telling him indirectly: don't bother me with your daily complaints, I've other things to manage.).

Let me recount one story in this context that I heard from Raj himself. Subramanian Swamy (SS, the great all-India fighter for all the 'right' causes as we know him now, witnessing his daily acrobatics with the courts and the media) applied for a position at the DSE. Failing to get that, despite his Harvard Ph.D., he met Raj privately and said

threateningly: one day I'd become the prime minister of India, and then SEE YOU (suggesting revenge). A few years later, as the VC of DU, Raj had to face the Karmachari Union (a section of non-academic workers) of the university with some demands, led to Raj's surprise by none other than Subramanian Swamy affiliated by then to the Jan Sangh, a precursor to the now-blooming Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Raj was undoubtedly a great economist but he had no patience with administrative matters. Faced with the Swamy types outside and others – mainly from the academics - inside the DU with endless grouses (about working conditions and money matters) with no obvious solutions, Raj gradually came around to the view that it was idiotic to continue doing office work, practicing 'politics' and making arrangements to keep everybody happy by compromises of different kinds. To end this story: Subramanian Swamy is still around doing the stuff that he specializes in – going to courts and the media with questionable material creating trouble for his targets, helping none, not even his political party. All his antics die ultimately with no social consequence He is thankfully not in any power centre that matters now, having failed to get a good berth – not to speak of a worthwhile one as a minister - under the Narendra Modi dispensation. He is now a member of the Rajya Sabha – a lollipop offering from the BJP bosses to rein him in to some extent. He continues his noises as a court jester.

So, here was K.N.Raj fed up with the administration of Delhi University and unwilling to get back to the squabbles at the Delhi School of Economics. Let's go back home, he seems to have said to himself. Two fortuitous events aided his move to Kerala for the establishment of the Centre for Development Studies at Trivandrum (CDS). The first - well-known and documented - is that the then chief minister of Kerala, Achutha Menon, had an ambitious plan to establish in his home state some centres of excellence for higher studies in different sciences. To this end, P.K.Gopalakrishnan (PKG), then secretary in the ministry of planning was designing the blueprints. PKG met Raj when the latter was on a brief visit to Trivandrum. It was perhaps then that ideas about the CDS began to take shape. The second event, not known to many, was a meeting at Jagdish Bhagawati's residence in New York between Raj and T.N.Krishnan (TNK) who was then in the UN's economic policy division. TNK welcomed most enthusiastically Raj's plan to return to

Kerala to lead the institute and promised Raj that he would happily give up his UN job to join the new venture.

I have a story to tell in this context. At the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, where we were colleagues in the mid-1960s, Krishnan and I often rued the absence in south India of a good institute for research studies in economic development: he told me before leaving Calcutta in late 1966 to join the UN that one day he would come back to such an institute. Not stopping at the possibilities for a centre in the South, Krishnan and I speculated on the roles we could play there, and worked through different possible names for such a centre. We decided that "Centre for Development Studies" was the best choice. In that fantasy, we chose Cochin/Ernakulum as the best site, rejecting the more obviously possible places in the south: Madras, Bangalore and Hyderabad. I suppose Krishnan wanted to go back home to Kerala, as much as Raj did, but perhaps propelled by altogether different reasons. His aging parents were then living in Ernakulum.

For Raj, who had seen and done it all as an economist and a builder of teaching and research teams in Delhi, it was just the right time to make the move to Kerala. His wife Sarasamma's sisters and their families lived in Trivandrum and his mother was in Kerala too. Living close to all of them in Trivandrum would be a bonus apart from the realization of the academic goals behind the move. Good fortunes galore aided the quick setting up of the CDS. First of all, PKG got a nine-acre plot in Ulloor Panchayat just outside the boundaries of the city for the campus. More importantly, an arrangement for collaboration between CDS and the Kerala University, more precisely its Economics Department (KUED), was successfully worked out. By this plan, faculties in these two places would collaborate in research and teaching. In fact, some of my colleagues and I taught courses every year in the department. The best part of this arrangement was that PGK Panikar, the head of the KUED would assume charge as honorary Director of the CDS. Raj later explained to us (colleagues) the underlying logic: Only a local person could deal without fuss and as matters of routine numerous interpersonal and hierarchy-related issues that typically arise in Kerala with the persistence of certain feudal aspects of society.

Raj was right about that. Panikar presided over a trouble-free CDS for over a decade, a period during which the Centre quickly gained a national and international reputation. He was truly a gentleman of a vanishing breed, but that tells us nothing about how well he could bear burdens of different sorts and attend to the nitty-gritty of the building of a new institution. He had the capacity to solve problems with appropriate interventions and no noise. Finally, he was careful not to advertise his own substantial academic work.

The most deciding fortuitous event was Raj getting Laurie Baker to design and build the CDS campus. Baker, a migrant from England with a serious social commitment, had a long history of working with the poor in India helping them in their health and housing needs. He, moreover, was an artist - supreme as an architect for creating beauty out of stone, mud and whatever else was available locally, at very low cost. The savings from using Baker's designs in effect led to Raj's justified broadcasts to the world: we save on bricks and buy books instead. Indeed, the CDS library grew fast.

Raj persuaded I.S.Gulati (a specialist in financial economics) to move from his comfortable perch in Baroda to share the Trivandrum adventure. Gulati agreed and the nucleus of CDS was formed. Krishnan came back from his UN position to join the Kerala University to begin with and later moved on to the CDS. By 1972 the centre's research agenda was taking shape. I joined the centre in January 1973.

This is how it happened. During mid-1972 I went to Coimbatore on some official work. On the day I was scheduled to go back to Calcutta via Madras, the Coimbatore-Madras flight was cancelled due to some trouble at the Madras airport. So, instead of spending a day in Coimbatore doing nothing, I decided to fly that day to Trivandrum, finding a convenient flight for the purpose. Over a full day at the CDS, I met Raj, Panikar and Gulati discussing possible research agendas for the Centre. Gulati asked me, besides, some searching questions about the logic and modalities for deciding financial allocations to individual States by different criteria. He was of course then seriously concerned with this problem as a member of the Finance Commission. I did not realise then that Krishnan had already told them that I'd make a useful addition to the faculty, providing essential research support in quantitative methods. In retrospect, I

suppose I was being sized up to see whether I'd fit in. So, I was a bit surprised to get warm letters – soon after I got back to Calcutta – from Panikar and Raj asking me whether I'd be interested in joining them. Initially I wasn't very enthusiastic about the prospect (being well-set at IIMC), but the loss of our little daughter Malati to cancer in September 1972, after much pain and worse she suffered over several months, made it necessary for us to move away from Calcutta to begin a new chapter in our lives.

A.Vaidyanathan (AV), with a vast working experience in the Planning Commission, joined the CDS in 1976 or 77, after an assignment at the World Bank. I'd developed with him a wonderful working partnership that has endured despite my leaving the CDS in 1979. He and I differed on methodological issues (especially in analyzing data on Indian agriculture). But he had – and still has - remarkable persuasive powers. He said: Let's put down on paper our approaches, different as they are, and see where our students and we go from there. We did that and AV still talks about that as a model of collaboration. Indeed, practically all my students used to consult him and vice versa. I've never had such an experience before or after; here in Hyderabad, research students are specifically asked by their supervisors not to discuss their work with any others lest they spoil the themes already worked out for them by the guides themselves. (I can't resist telling a relevant story. N.Chandramohan, a delightful character, known for his cigarette–cadging ways, finished a Ph.D thesis draft that Vaidyanathan said could pass, but asked him to show it to me. I suggested a few revisions. Later I was told Chandramohan went berserk that evening, calling me unmentionable names, saying: who's this effing NK telling me to do this and that, after my own guide has passed the draft?)

More on AV later, but to get back to that faculty team during its early years: Ashok Desai joined us for a brief period in the late1970s. With his interests in foreign trade and Indian industry he gave a certain balance to the team. Unfortunately however, he did not stay long: that was his usual peripatetic way. He also had (and still has) a sense of humour that often goes off the rails. For example, he'd say, 'Dismiss all the Research Associates; they are good for nothing" – ruffling many feathers instead of getting simply ignored as nonsense.

Apart from the senior faculty mentioned so far, the CDS recruited several young prospective research scholars, mostly just out of the universities with their master's degrees in economics, statistics and so on. They were all appointed as "research associates" in contrast to the usual practice of taking in such fresh graduates as "research assistants". Thereby hangs a tale. Malcolm Adisheshaih, a grand old man in the economics profession, who was Raj's teacher at the Madras Christian College during the 1940s, and later headed the UNESCO, and now a member of the Governing Body of the CDS suggested this change in nomenclature. He said there was a tendency for such appointees to stagnate at that level, doing nothing but providing assistance, mastering specific tools relevant to the seniors' work; on the other hand, we as a new institution should device ways of developing them as "independent scholars". Sadly however, the plan did not work very well, for many reasons. In the event, most of them took several years to get their Ph.D theses done – some as long as 15 years or more. In my opinion this was the biggest failure of those early years. Left to work on their own, they had to navigate blind alleys most of the time.

The CDS started a programme for M.Phil in Applied Economics (the degree to be granted by the JNU, through an arrangement worked out with the help of G.Parthasarathy (a senior diplomat, close to the powers that be in Delhi, then Vice Chancellor of JNU, another of those who matter in political circles, and to whom Raj was very close) in 1975. Raj's idea, on which there was some disagreement in the faculty, was that such a course should be open to master's degree holders in any discipline, so that knowledge of basic economics would add an extra dimension to research work in their own discipline, be it politics, sociology, or some other. This concept was novel, exciting in principle and worth experimentation. However, it did not work very well during the initial years of the programme.

Let me say why, referring to my own experience. I first thought that teaching basic statistics – for looking at published data and/or organizing small-scale village level field studies – to the expected motley groups would be a challenging task that I could enjoy doing. That proved to be very difficult and had the negative effect, in the long run – for generating my unintended dislike for model building in economics. (A word of

explanation: The repeated use of simple tools to analyse data and the good results one gets by it does lead to skepticism about the routine use of sophisticated models. In my case, I found in addition that with the availability of personal computers and easy-to use- software, a rampant misuse of models has come about. Good model-building requires econometric model software only at the very end of several thought processes and much preliminary data exploration.) We had in our first batch of 6 M.Phil students, a lawyer, a historian, another one with a degree in forest science/management, apart from the other three with economics backgrounds, coincidentally all from the JNU. Chandan Mukherjee, my younger colleague with training in statistics similar to mine at the ISI, and I devised ways to tackle the heterogeneity among students by focusing on 'distributions' arising from natural variation (such as those of heights or weights among adults) and man-made inequalities (such as household income or size of firms) and doing the relevant measurements This was a clearly chosen alternative to the usual beginnings of a statistics course with probability and so on.. We drilled the students with exercises, and then went on to introduce some basic concepts of statistical inference through examples of sampling from given empirically constructed distributions. All of which was greatly applauded in the classroom and outside. But, sorry to say, the effort had no impact at all later on the work of the non-economics group of students. The economics group, on the other hand, with some earlier exposure to statistics and econometrics, would resent the infantile stuff we were dishing out for this course, their expectation of mastering sophisticated models not getting realized.

I don't know how and with what level of success others who taught basic economics or development theory and history dealt with students with mixed backgrounds. I must add here that from the mid-1980s (after I left the CDS) the faculty put in a lot of effort to address this problem and kept honing the course content to make the M.Phil at the CDS one of the best of its kind anywhere. Students who have passed out of the portals of CDS have been doing extremely well in their chosen professions (be it academics or journalism or NGO work). Some have climbed to the top of the relevant Mount Everest; CRammanohar Reddy who gave up academics and later became the editor of the prestigious *Economic and Political Weekly*, Mihir Shah whose work in a remote region in Madhya

Pradesh ultimately led to his becoming a member of the national Planning Commission and formulating a comprehensive water policy for the country; T.M.Thomas Isaac who went into politics and is now the finance minister in the Kerala government; Nata Duvvury acclaimed for work on gender questions now teaching at a university in Ireland; the irrepressible Sanjaya Baru economist and economist turned journalist of the *Accidental Prime Minister* fame. Many others have climbed to lesser heights.

International applause for the work at CDS came quickly and was the result of a landmark document produced at the centre in 1975. Entitled "Poverty Unemployment and Development Policy – A Case Study of Selected Issues with Reference to Kerala", it was commissioned by the Committee for Development Planning of the United Nations, chaired then by Professor Jan Tinbergen and was to look at redistributive and other development policies for the improvement of the lot of the poor, given the international experience of the failure of trickle-down expectations in several countries. Raj (a member of that Committee) agreed to do such a study for Kerala.

At the CDS we talked a great deal about what to do to fulfill the promise. Raj's admirable idea was that the whole academic staff should combine and contribute to this effort. Both Gulati and I felt that we should work with an accepted draft outline, getting juniors to join in or assist when required. In the end Raj's idea prevailed, along with his draft outline for the whole report. This adventure in collective writing went off successfully with a few minor hiccups and Raj carried the finished report just done at the last minute as he was off to the UN in New York. The work of all contributing scholars was duly acknowledged in the final published report.

Both Krishnan and Panikar knew a great deal about the economy and society of Kerala, particularly about the universal access to primary education and health care. Raj had at the DSE supervised some doctoral work on land relations in Kerala and closely followed the land reforms of the 1960s and their economic and social impact. A study by P.R.G.Nair of the Kerala University on primary education suggested an emerging decline in fertility rates as a possible explanation for the observed gradual decrease in the enrolment at the primary school level. All this and the all-

too-evident benefits to the poor conferred by the public distribution of food (which has had a long history in the state) clearly pointed to hitherto undocumented strides Kerala was taking towards a certain type of social advancement.

The report submitted to the UN elaborated these themes and had besides some references to food intake, unemployment levels and a few other factors relevant to the Kerala economy. I wrote the last chapter in the draft report, which the UN found unsatisfactory. So, the revised final chapter was written by Raj; it contained a discussion of the essentials of what is now described as human development (later, following the acclaim for the Kerala study, fully developed by Amartya Sen and Mahbub Ul Haq). In my opinion Raj is the father of the concept. It was refined and its measurement developed by others and it led to a plethora of such indices. Another fact worth noting is that nowhere in that report the phrase "Kerala Model" was used; nor was the experience suggested as something that could be replicated elsewhere. All that came later, mostly in studies by scholars outside CDS, although several studies were done later at the CDS in continuation of the theme of social development without adequate rates of economic growth and its long-term financial sustainability.

Coincidentally with the completion of the UN study at the CDS a state of political Emergency was promulgated by Indira Gandhi in June 1975, which shocked Raj as perhaps nothing else did in his life. In the past he had advised Mrs Gandhi on economic issues and felt he was close to her in some vague sense. So this was a personal affront as he saw it, made worse by the fact that two of his friends hung around Mrs Gandhi in full support of the emergency and its suspension of all democratic and civil rights. These two, P.N.Dhar and Sukhomoy Chakravarty, at that time with the Prime Minister's office and the Planning Commission respectively showed moreover, when Raj met them subsequently, no signs of discomfort with their questionable behavior. In the weeks that followed Raj spoke in public opposing the Emergency and launched a signature campaign against it, trying to rally behind it some eminent Indian citizens including V.V.Giri, a former president of India, Satyajit Ray the famous film-maker and many others. Giri refused to sign for reasons I've never known, not being told by Raj. Satyajit Ray also did not

sign saying that he wholly depended on the government for the supply of material for his work, and could not risk courting official displeasure. (I know about Ray's refusal because I took the campaign letter to Calcutta to be signed and Ashok Mitra in turn met Ray to get that disappointing no for an answer.) I've no idea what finally happened to that letter of protest and who among those in Raj's design actually signed it. All to no avail in the end, and Raj expected to be put in jail for his anti-emergency stand and began drilling us on what we all at the CDS should do in his absence. (In fact, he wasn't arrested.) He became overenthusiastic, organizing seminars and programmes, pushing us all in different directions; we held our breath and the CDS continued to work as before.

On the whole, we at the CDS rode those times well making sure of no interruption to scheduled work. But Raj was no longer the person he was before the political disaster as a leader of the small CDS community. Let me explain a bit on how he organized the work and other activities at the centre from its beginnings. The academic programme was worked out collectively through a series of meetings of all the Fellows and Research Associates (RAs). We formed groups based on individual research interest (such as on agriculture, education, unemployment, social welfare, and so on) to formulate an initial research agenda that could be gradually modified. Apart from commitment to such an agenda, individuals would be free to pursue their own interests. The expectation was that there would be enough time for both types of activity. There could be no better design for academic work; this one has the merit of evolution by mutual consent – something that couldn't happen in other similar institutions. Raj thought that we should follow a similar pattern for organizing life on the CDS campus (that housed academic and non-academic staff, besides a growing student community), creating a model of cooperation that seemed ideal in all respects.

I was a very enthusiastic about this model of work organization. I was then reading Carl Riskin's work on China. He describes how simple cooperatives were formed all over China immediately following the implementation of land reforms after the revolution in 1949. Under these cooperatives, individual ownership of land was recognised and left intact, but work all over a village was organized on a cooperative basis – through an exchange labour system to benefit individual owners,

supplemented by agreed work for common purpose. It worked very well until the party cadre gradually wrested control to form collectives, and later on to the commune system under which individual ownership was derecognized. This certainly was a factor behind the ultimate collapse of the whole rural economy. Perhaps I was mesmerized enough by the Chinese simple co-op history to see a model there for emulation in other cases, to mobilize labour in the common cause.

Thus it was that Chandan Mukherjee and I were put in charge of the staff/student cooperative canteen; someone else in charge of the guest house, a group made responsible for receiving visitors at the airport, and so on. This was bound to break down sooner or later without adequate paid staff to do the day-to-day work in all such non-academic activities. It did break down in a couple of years. Chandan and I supervised the buying of vegetables and other supplies for the canteen, maintained accounts, and so on. To cap it all we had to listen to complaints daily about undercooked rice or over-boiled fish.

Let me contrast this with an experience of mine at IIM, Calcutta. During late 1965, K.T.Chandy the director asked me to look after the student canteen. There was paid staff to do all the jobs for the running of the canteen, and an officer to maintain accounts. My job was to oversee the subsystems to ensure smooth service of meals to students and keep an eye on the finances. I had to spend only a few hours a week to fulfill this responsibility.

In retrospect, I think this pattern of work organization at CDS was – whether willfully designed or not - a modified joint family system, with a grand patriarch at its head. Such a system, as also it's many variants including the *jajmani* and other patron-client systems, works only with mutual trust and/or recognition and acceptance of the underlying power relations. Whether or not this view approximates the truth, surely it was a systemic failure that led to the gradual disintegration of the original faculty team. Gulati was the first to quit (1977 or 78?); I left the CDS in 1979. Ashok Desai joined the exodus soon after. Vaidyanathan hung around a few more years, to move on to Madras, bidding a regretful good bye to a Baker-built beautiful house.

Apart from my disappointment with the way things have been shaping at the Centre, I had other personal reasons for the decision to leave it in 1979. My wife, Neela, was providing free medical service to practically all on the campus, with the occasional mid-night knock on our door by a student or someone else in distress with an ache, a fever or a bleeding wound. This went on for 6 years and yet in 1978 another doctor was appointed as a part-time medical officer on the campus. A second reason: my daughter Vijaya failed to get admission to a decent school despite my appeals for help to the powers that be at the CDS. In contrast, two of my colleagues got their respective daughters admitted to a well-preferred school, pulling strings in Trivandrum and Delhi. Nobody pulled those strings for me. Vijaya eventually went to Patha Bhavan in Calcutta, a clone of the original Patha Bhavana established by the great Tagore in Santiniketan. This one in Calcutta, housed in a ridiculously small building, nevertheless gave my daughter skills that endure and have fashioned her success in life.

Notwithstanding my premature exit and the reasons behind it, I greatly enjoyed my six and a half years at the CDS, working with reputed colleagues as well as the inexperienced ones, and above all with a group of very talented young students. Apart from all that, I carried on with my own work in probability distributions and on the Indian economy. The effort of those years established my status in the profession as a statistician with interests in Indian economic problems. Working with students and supervising their doctoral studies widened my own intellectual horizons. Let me refer to one important aspect of this development. Very curiously, most of my students tended to go into historical questions relevant to the topics they chose for research. So I had to study the historical material along with them, and as a consequence emerged as a passable research guide in economic history. Some examples: C.Rammanohar Reddy, beginning with a study of the incidence of agricultural labour across regions went into the colonial history of the Berar (now Vidarbha); Nata Duvvury, studying tobacco markets, looked at the historical evolution of the cultivation and processing of tobacco under foreign cigarette companies; Thomas Isaac, after doing an enormous amount of work on the coir spinning sector gave it all up and wrote his dissertation on the history of the coir factories from the colonial times. Mihir Shah, another scholar whose work I supervised,

did an outstanding thesis on the historical evolution of land and labour relations in Chingleput district of the Madras province. AVJose working on Kerala's agrarian economy referred to a lot of historical data.

In contrast, only one student of mine used quantitative methods (in which lay my own strengths) to any significant extent: Chandan Mukherjee, who had his statistics education at the Indian Statistical Institute, where I got mine too. He did an interesting thesis that had implications for capital replacement theory.

Rogues

The CDS of those days abounded in curious and funny characters. There were many lovable rogues, Vincent Panikulangkara the prince among them. He charmed Raj with his work as a lawyer in the public cause. He was known at that time for his public interest petition in the Kerala High Court against a longhair prohibition rule imposed on male students by a college authority in Ernakulam. An impressed Raj got him into our M.Phil programme. One of the first things Vincent did was to give me (then coordinating the M.Phil course) a note about some obvious discriminatory practices in dress codes at the CDS: He said: we are providing uniforms to all the so-called class 4 employees (khakis for men and blue saris for the ladies) and giving free short pants and shirts in khaki even to those working regularly in the open garden land for daily wages. He asked: Why are we denying the faculty and other staff this dress subsidy? He went on to suggest different types of uniforms in different colours for research associates, and senior fellows and suggested we should debate about what the director should wear – with perhaps a cap on his head as a scout-master. That was certainly not such nonsense, as it'd appear on first sight. Think about it a bit to see the sense: give the poor money, not short pants.

Vincent once took the campus stray dogs – with improvised collars - to a dog show at the famed Kanakakunnu palace grounds in Trivandrum. He must've been chased out, but his reappearance at the campus without visible injuries testifies to his survival and legal abilities, but also, in a transparent manner, to his social concerns about the idiocy of dog shows. He was a Marxist by self-advertisement – in fact, his beard was fashioned so that he'd resemble Marx to some extent – and stood for all the right

(that is 'left' for Vincent) causes. So Vincent was partial to visitors to the CDS with leftist leanings. My friends Nirmal Chandra, Amiya Bagchi, Krishna Bharadwaj – among others – were always greeted by Vincent with a good supply of tender coconut water. How Vincent managed the stealing of campus coconuts in broad daylight is a mystery. Much later the authorities put numbers on all the coconut palms and other trees on the campus, but how such numbering could prevent stealing coconuts is unfathomable. How also, at that time, a whole bunch of bananas and some ripe papaya fruit were stolen from the Gulati garden is another mystery unsolved to this day. This crime happened when the Gulatis went on a holiday to Kodaikanal – away from all heat and worries. The stolen fruit was distributed – as I learnt later – to all the deserving hungry souls in the hostel. A rumour has it that it was engineered by a faculty member.

Vincent's best caper I'd remember forever was his organization of a cricket match between a CDS team and a Medical college outfit. He persuaded Panikar, our director, to part with a couple of hundred rupees to defray the expenses of the match. In those days cricket was as unknown in Kerala as apples and cauliflower, not to speak of a decent place for non-Malayalee food. We mobilized an unbelievable team, roping in a few enthusiasts who never played the game before, with the hope that they would crouch near the boundaries to stop the ball crossing over. In the event, one of them had to stand straight behind the wicket keeper – an unheard of fielding position in the history of cricket. We had good batting and bowling. I was captain of the side and had had vast experience in such vitally trivial matches. We had, besides, Chandan Mukherjee and Venkatesh Athreya with equally vast unforgettable cricket behind them. And to add to our strength was the formidable batsman Lalit Unniyal (an itinerant from the distant north, seeking truth and falsely hoping he'd find it in our remote Ulloor corner), as well as the famed Goanese all-rounder Gerard Da Cunha (an apprentice architect under the great Laurie Baker, later married to and divorced from Arundhati Roy, the novelist and political activist of repute). We batted first and made 100 plus before boldly declaring, with two batsmen that never held a bat in hand (and never would) sitting out. The lunch of beef and paratha – with rum flowing from Vincent's bottles was enjoyable to one and all. We went to field after lunch, with Vincent policing the boundaries with liquid refreshment for the thirsty souls. Chandan and I took most of the

wickets and the medico team folded up, getting nowhere near the winning target. It's said in retrospect that the medicos had larger supplies of the firewater. We won, and that's all that matters.

Note on Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR)

JPNaik, a Gandhian and a distinguished educationist, then secretary of the newly established ICSSR visited the CDS during 1973 with a team of academics to formalise the status of CDS as an ICSSR-supported institution for financial aid. After that visit, for reasons best known to himself Naik saab liked me enough to take me under his wing for work at the ICSSR: for assessment of academic projects involving ICSSR financing. This meant that I went to Delhi often thereafter and stayed in the IIPA hostel where the ICSSR offices were located then. Naik Saab himself roosted in one of the rooms there, cooking simple meals – dal, rice and vegetables - for himself and occasionally for guests (like me) as well. What I found most remarkable about Naik Saab was not his Gandhian way or his astute approach in handling the central bureaucracy but his ability to bring the young and old together. For example, I sat on some ICSSR committees alongside the likes of Professor MLDantwala (belonging perhaps to the first generation of reputed Indian economists after Independence), not to speak of Raj Krishna and Dharm Narain (who were professors at the IEG when and where I was a lowly research assistant some years before). These committee meetings helped me immensely in learning how to put forth well-argued views without fear before any audience, ignoring the hierarchies in the profession..

JP of course did not single me out for his experiments in mixing the old and the new for producing some heady brews. There were other young people he gathered about himself: Kalpana Bardhan and Harsh Sethi among others. That was also the time when Vina Mazumdar was putting together at the ICSSR her landmark report on the status of women in India – for which she justly became famous. Vinadi (as we, younger colleagues, referred to her) was quite a remarkable person in many ways. As it happened, her elder brother Bejoy Mazumdar was an administrative officer at IIM Calcutta when I worked there. Indeed, despite the vast

difference in our ages Bejoyda and I were close enough to share bottles of beer he sometimes brought on Sundays at lunchtime to my place. Vinadi firmly believed from those early days that in her work she should not restrict her collaboration to women only and that many men do support women in fighting for equality. She counted me as a friend along with the likes of Asok Mitra (the ICS man, not Ashok Mitra my friend) who was responsible for highlighting the low female to male ratios in the Indian population and the possible factors behind them – including gross neglect of and discrimination against girls and women in all vital matters: access to food, education, health care, and so on. Her report truly activated the women question and the feminist movement as never before, whatever their historical beginnings and progress. I'd remained a friend and collaborator of Vinadi; I played a small role in her setting up The Centre of Women's Development Studies under the ICSSR umbrella in Delhi. Many years later Vinadi and I put together a slim volume in the memory of Asok Mitra entitled "The Enduring Conundrum" – a collection of essays on trends in the sex ratio in India.

I can't resist telling one more story about Vinadi. She, as I too, was a heavy smoker, When both of us were going through the travail of giving up smoking, she being periodically monitored by a factotum while in her office, and I in her company itching to light up one from the few sticks secretly held in my pocket, she'd say when no one is looking, "light up one and pass it to me for a few puffs". Thus we two, comrades in distress, defied the wretched prohibition. She, and her friend Lotika Sarkar (a well known writer on women's legal rights), another life-long smoker, lived meaningfully, well into their eighties before they left us.