

29

# My Karmabhoomi

THREE  
DECADES  
AT  
SNDT  
WOMEN'S  
UNIVERSITY

Kamalini H. Bhansali



**MY KARMABHOOMI:**  
**Three Decades at SNTD Women's University**

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Mumbai  
**SNTD Women's University**  
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*Dedicated to the  
Late Dr. Premlila Thackersey who made a  
difference to the lives of countless women and to the  
SNDT Women's University  
which gave my life a new direction*



# Contents

<i>Preface</i>	I
<i>List of Indigenous Terms</i>	II
<i>Source Notes and Acknowledgements</i>	III
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Early Years	7
Chapter 2: Journey through Different Phases	39
Chapter 3: Challenges Of Uniqueness	91
Chapter 4: Become Lamps unto yourself	113
Chapter 5: Intimate Reflections	127
Appendix 1: Historical Highlights	141
Appendix 2: Statistical Review	149
Appendix 3: Beacons Of The University	153
Appendix 4: Pride of SNDT	159
Appendix 5: Convocation Addresses	165
Appendix 6: Select References	173
Appendix 7: Process of Social Department for Equality of Women	179



## Foreword

*I am glad Prof. Kamaliniben Bhansali has undertaken this noble task of recording the various events in the history of the SNTD Women's University starting with its rich legacy, the Founder's vision and values in bringing about social change as far as the status of women and women's education are concerned. She undertook this labour of love as part of the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Dr. Premilila Thachersey. Blending the historical events with a personalized focus makes the presentation very lucid and interesting. A movement like SNTD Women's University has opened up new vistas for women's education and enabled women to be facilitators of women's education and their empowerment.*

*Prof. Kamaliniben Bhansali, as Registrar for 25 years, the longest tenure one can dream of, had the opportunity to put into practice all what she envisioned for the pioneer Women's University. She had the privilege to participate and witness the development process under the dynamic leadership of several Vice-Chancellors starting from Lady Thackersey. Finally, she herself reached the highest echelon of the University, being the Vice-Chancellor of the University between 1986-1989. The SNTD Women's University is a unique phenomenon in the history of women's education in India. In this movement, Kamaliniben's contribution has been eminent and critical for the rapid growth of the University at the crucial stage of its development, both as Registrar and later as Vice-Chancellor of the University.*

*These five chapters in the book reflect a sentimental journey from early years of the University till date. It preserves the records and events for posterity. It brings forth what can be achieved by women for women by patience and perseverance. I hope the current generation of staff and students will carry the torch forward and take the University to greater heights in the future.*

*Dr. M. A. Varghese  
Vice-Chancellor*

## Glossary of Indigenous Words

Ben	: Suffixed to a woman's name indicating respect; dictionary meaning 'sister'
Bhai	: Suffixed to a man's name indicating respect; - dictionary meaning 'brother'
Bapu	: Father of the Nation - Gandhiji
Hingne Stree Shikshan Sanstha	: Name of a society for women
Kanyashala	: Girl's school
Karmabhoomi	: Arena of one's action
Lady Saheb	: Title
Maniben	: Name describing traditional Gujarati woman
Mahatma	: Great soul
Maharshi	: Saint
Sakubai	: Name describing traditional Marathi woman
Shri	: Mister
Smt	: Mrs
Saheb	: Sir
Syndicate	: Managing Council / Governing Board
Vernacular	: Language of the region

## Source Notes and Acknowledgements

### Source Notes

In order to pen historical memories, one has to rely on several sources. I relied mainly on literature pertaining to the University and its Founders, in the form of souvenirs, annual reports, Vice-Chancellor's reviews, periodical overviews about University, Convocation Addresses, the learned papers commissioned on the history and development of the University and its constituents by faculty members, biographies of key persons - Maharshi Karve and Sir Vithaldas Thackersey - and special commemorative volumes.

In 1972-73, when the Birth Centenary Year of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey was being celebrated, one of the research programmes thought of was a library research on "S.N.D.T Women's University - a case study". However, in order to do justice to this important subject, small empirical studies about students, viewpoints of faculty, visibility of the University and its future role needed to precede it. After a year long preparation in conducting the studies and preparing papers, a "Round Table Discussion" followed, which was documented in the report: "Future Trends in Women's Education and the Role of S.N.D.T Women's University" (1975). The report is significant as it is the first work undertaken by the University documenting its development. Two other reviews followed as a renewal exercise and are reported in "Images of the Future" (January, 1989) and "Mission of Women's Universities" (April, 1989).

The next step was a proposal to record the history of the University. The manuscript on the "Developmental History of the S.N.D.T Women's University" was prepared by Dr. B.K.Sohonie, Dr. A.W.Oak, Dr. S.G.Malshe and Dr. Manjula Warty, all on the faculty of S.N.D.T. It was edited by Dr.Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Director of University Research Centre on Women's Studies. The study continues to be unpublished as the idea was to enrich the material collected through interviews. Unfortunately, this exercise could not be completed.

The second source has been my interaction with colleagues, who have grown with the University and were responsive to its changes.

## Acknowledgements

I am specially indebted to :

Dr. Mariamma Varghese, Vice-Chancellor, and the University for publishing this volume to commemorate the birth centenary of Dr. Premlia Thachersey;

Dr. Suma Chitnis, my successor as Vice-Chancellor, for motivating me to share my reflections about the University with a larger audience;

Dr. Neera Desai, Professor Emeritus in Sociology at the University for sharing her insights and analysis of certain aspects of the growth of the University;

Dr. Usha Thakkar, former Head of the University's Political Science Department for an ongoing interaction with me and helping me put issues in proper perspective;

Dr. Lena D'Souza, Head, Department of Education Management for helping me organise the text and for the detailed suggestions;

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and to many others who helped me in my journey down memory lane.

Above all, I am indebted to my husband, Harshad for meeting the day-to-day challenges of this arduous adventure, and all along supporting me in this endeavour, as he has done throughout my career.



# Introduction

The birth centenary commemoration programmes of Dr. Premlila Thackersey commenced on January 8, 1994, coinciding with the forty-third convocation of the SNDT Women's University, presided over by Dr. P.C. Alexander, Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of the University. Over 7,000 students received their degrees and diplomas on that day. The Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Suma Chitnis made this a special offering to the memory of Dr. Premlila Thackersey, exalting the students to draw strength and inspiration from her life and work. The occasion was specially significant as the Honorary Degree of Letters was conferred on Dr. Banoo Coyaji who has also dedicated her life to the service of the people and the advancement of women, ideals to which Maharshi Karve and Premlila Thackersey were committed.

With this centenary celebrations, the University has now completed paying homage to its three Founders - Maharshi Karve in 1958, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey in 1973 and Premlila Thackersey in 1994. The Founders have left behind a rich legacy of their work, vision and values, not only for the academic community but for the society at large.

When I left the University at the end of 1989, after a long association of thirty years, many friends urged me to record my memories of the institution. In any case, I was toying with the idea of writing a developmental history of the University and the impetus for undertaking of the task of recording my memoirs

## INTRODUCTION

came from Suma Chitnis's suggestion when she urged me to take up this work as a part of the birth centenary celebrations of Premlila Thackersey. I am very grateful to her, as without this suggestion, perhaps, my reflections and experiences would have remained confined to my own memories, at best shared with some of my close friends and family. In the normal course, memoirs are a personal record of events in the life of an individual; but these memoirs are written with a difference. They are the perceptions of my involvement with the growth and development of SNTD (as its Registrar and Vice-Chancellor) interfacing with its evolution. This period spanned over nearly three decades (between 1960 and 1989) which was also a time of consolidation and expansion for the University. Further, these memoirs would be a fit tribute to Premlila Thackersey, often addressed as Lady Thackersey, commemorating her birth centenary, as during the time-span mentioned above, hers was the hand that shaped the enlarged role of the University and she was the major force behind its expansion.

Although I agreed to take up this challenge of writing, it was with trepidation. I realized that this was not going to be a straight forward recording of events in the life of the University or about women's education. The process would entail bringing out the uniqueness of the University which has given hope to thousands of women by opening diverse avenues of education and providing equality of access to women. It would involve describing the courage of conviction of the pioneers in the face of difficulties if not insurmountable obstacles; and of narrating the influence of the University in moulding my life and work at SNTD and of my personal response to the challenging situations in the University's evolution.

I have enjoyed writing this narration, re-living the incidents and blending the historical context with a personalized focus. The University allowed me space and scope. I utilized both

these for institutional development as well as my own professional growth. These two strands are continuously and closely intertwined. However, since these are memoirs and not merely a chronological historical record, this interfacing, will surface again and again as the story unfolds. The narrative dips sometimes into the past and sometimes it moves into the future while linking it to the present. It has also not been possible to separate history from reminiscences as both are so closely connected. The reader may also wonder at the abundance of names of people associated with the University appearing in these memoirs. A span of thirty years is a long period and during this time, my interaction has been with many. It would be amiss if those with whom I worked closely are not remembered in such a document.

The first chapter, "Early Years" provides a backdrop to the events that took place at the University before I joined as its Registrar in 1960. It describes the struggle SNDT faced to retain its identity, often going against the mainstream to uphold the ideology of the Founders. It also records the contributions of the people whose dedication and commitment sustained the University and its transition, from one phase to another, when the University received statutory recognition in 1951.

The Second Chapter "Winds of Change" highlights the evolution and changes which took place during the different developmental phases of the University, particularly during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, a period which coincides with my involvement with the University's activities.

My strategy has been to lead the narration upto an important milestone and, in the process, introduce the activities and the key persons who have played a vital role in the University's growth during that period. My perceptions, experiences and contributions are woven into the narrative.

## INTRODUCTION

The Golden as well as the Diamond Jubilee of the University were celebrated during this period. With each phase, the motto of the University - of empowering women - was interpreted through a different but relevant focus matching the needs of the time.

Every institution faces challenges, threats and dilemmas during its journey. Some are common to the higher education system and others are unique to an institution like SNTD. Whatever be the case, universities have to respond to these situations. The third Chapter "Challenges of Uniqueness" describes the reaction of academia and society to these special issues and the University's response to them. I had to be selective in identifying the issues which were most relevant in view of the uniqueness and pioneering efforts of the University. These range from policy issues such as the need and relevance of a women's university to administrative matters related to the University's jurisdiction and structure, medium of instruction and general issues.

The Fourth Chapter, "Becoming Lamps unto Yourselves" describes the struggle for gender justice and the role of the SNTD in this process of social development, the impact of external forces on its work and the influences of the University programmes on the national scene.

The last and the fifth Chapter "Intimate Reflections" is an attempt to set forth the extent to which my *karmabhoomi* defined the course of my actions and the way in which I was able to influence its course; the values I imbibed from my parental and marital families and how I was able to take command of myself in pursuing my roles at home and at work. It describes the occasions which have left a lasting impression on my mind.

In the Reference section, I have included several appendices

like “Historical Highlights”, “Beacons of the University”, “List of Convocation Addresses”, statistical data and a select bibliography. These are not mere catalogues or lifeless records but a part of the pulsating history of the University to be used as a bridge for the future before they are lost to the new generation.

I hope this narration will help students and teachers of the University - of the past, present and future - as well as society, to appreciate its travails, its efforts, its pains and through these, its successes faced on its course of charting a new path for a fuller liberation of women.

SNDDT will complete a century in the year 2016. Hundred years in the life of an institution, as in the life of an individual, is a very significant milestone. I am sure this occasion will be utilized to write a full history of the University which has been a pace-setting institution, ahead of its times. Such an institution, going against the conventional stream and yet desiring to retain its special identity, will need to continue the struggle. At that time, I venture to hope that my effort will provide support for this great task.

At this juncture, I would like to refer to a dialogue I had with my grandson Hemal. For over a week, I was trying to put my thoughts on paper and to prepare a framework for my book. There must have been over half a dozen adults in the house. None had the curiosity to know what I was doing, maybe because they were used to seeing me submerged in papers; but my grandson, who was just twelve, wanted to know what I was busy with. When I explained my task to him, he was excited and concerned about the cover page, the illustrations, the time-frame for completion of the book and the purpose of writing it. Unfortunately, he was too young to have a serious conversation on the philosophical aspect and the feminist overtones; but this talk made me wonder what impact such a book would have on

## INTRODUCTION

the new generation which is facing a sea change of cultures and ideals while entering the 21st century. In the jet age, what will be the value of a historical record ? Would there be a reversal of moods and from the fast pace of the modern age will humanity return to a meandering life-style savouring life as it goes by? Only history can provide the answers.

## CHAPTER 1

# Early Years

### **Introduction to SNDT Women's University**

While reminiscing about the commencement of a long and adventurous journey with a pioneering institution, I will first dip into its past to trace its progress for a better understanding of the development of the University. Gaps here and there are bound to remain as what I have attempted is not a complete account of its history but putting down perceptions and insights of one individual, who was intimately linked with the institution.

These memoirs also unfold the growth of a trend-setting institution which went against the mainstream and about the people who played key roles in building and strengthening it. On the one hand, the deviation of the University from the beaten track resulted in a lot of heartbreaks; on the other hand, the history of SNDT is a story of the success of the initiatives of many individuals and contributions of a host of others. It is a story of the commitment of like-minded people to a worthy cause in the struggle to get recognition from society; a story of retaining its identity against all the hurdles and moving ahead to chart new paths and play a leadership role.

SNDT Women's University is a special institution started by Maharshi Karve. Dhondo Keshav Karve was a visionary and a social reformer who upheld with a burning zeal, the cause of women, for nearly three-quarters of a century, facing all obstacles courageously. So strong was his faith in women's education, that he identified the work of women's education as "deshakarya" - work for the nation and - "dharmakarya" - work

for religion.<sup>1</sup> However, Indian society in the early years of the 20th century was orthodox and did not readily accept changes. This surfaces vividly through an incident in the life of Karve. While crusading for women's advancement, Karve had to face anger from some orthodox elements. When he remarried a widow in 1893, and was bringing her home, it was a determined batch of women who stood in a row, each before her own house, as he walked down the lane in which he lived, to spit on Maharshi Karve for committing the crime of marrying a widow. This did not deter Karve but convinced him fully about the necessity of educating women and bringing them out of this decadent and ignorant mould. Karve brought about a silent revolution in the traditional Indian set up without challenging the accepted role of women in society; he helped them to liberate themselves through education and through this achievement these women found a new meaning and became strong, confident individuals.

Karve was a part of the social reform movement which emerged in the later part of the 19th century continuing in the early decades of the 20th century. He and other social reformers of his time attacked the inequities of their time. The conflict was mainly between orthodoxy and social reform. Karve, together with other social reformers (to name a few, Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, Gopal Ganesh Agarkar, Bhimrao Ambedkar, Jotirao Phule), started a social movement in Western India (now Maharashtra). This period also witnessed a galaxy of women who on their own steam or as their husband's partners, gave leadership in education and social service in the cause of women. Pandita Ramabai, Ramabai Ranade, Savitribai Phule, Rukhmabai, Naniben Gajjar were a part of this team. Then there was Karve's wife, Baya (Anandibai Karve) who was his partner for 57 years. She enabled Karve to meet his commitment to women's education with intensity and a single minded devotion, at great personal sacrifice. Godubai, alias Anandibai, as a



widow had studied in Sharda Sadan founded by Pandita Ramabai.<sup>2</sup> She was greatly influenced by her and had dedicated her life to the service of suffering and forsaken humanity.

After his marriage, Karve established the Anatha Balikashram in 1896, to protect young girls. In 1898, he started the Widows' Home to give shelter and education to women - widows, married and unmarried women needing protection. This was followed in 1907 by the starting of Mahila Vidyalaya (school for girls) with 6 students. One of the aims, which Karve considered a priority, was to raise the age of marriage. Karve was convinced that education was a means to this end. His reformist views were much beyond his times. For this purpose, he started the Brahmacharya Fund to help needy girls to take education and remain unmarried till the age of 20. The culmination was the starting of the Indian Women's University, when Karve gave shape and form to his vision on June 3, 1916. The Mahila Pathshala (Women's college) was established on July 6, 1916 and located at Hingne in Poona, on a plot of land given to the Hingne Samstha (Association) for Karve's Anatha Balikashram. The College was managed by the Hingne Association in the early years. There is a close link between the institutions described above as a part of the evolution towards the establishment of the University.

The story of this unique institution is fascinating. The early goal was to give women an opportunity to 'come out' and join the mainstream education in order to enhance their status through a system which was suited to their life. This goal was expanded in the 1950s and 1960s through adding new dimensions to traditional ones. In the 1970s and 1980s the University came under the impact of advances in science and technology. The 'come out' stage was replaced by one where 'no woman should miss the bus' through wider access to training for economic independence, for newer job markets, creating confidence

and equipping for a modern philosophy of gender equality. The 1990s are witnessing newer changes.

When I joined SNDT as its Registrar, I had not the slightest inkling that I would be an active participant of this exhilarating journey. I was a person who came from outside having no previous connection with SNDT. It would be a legitimate question to ask: What attracted me to SNDT?

When I was a small girl, my grandfather Dr. Tulajaram Khandwalla, a contemporary of Maharshi Karve and in his own rights a social reformer who believed in equipping a girl and a boy equally for life would put before me the models of my aunts Jaya and Kapila, who pioneered in the fields of medicine and education, respectively. In his autobiography, he describes the effect the age of 'Indian Renaissance' had on his young mind. It manifested in his avowal of liberal ideals in respect of advancement of women, widow remarriage, social and religious beliefs and so on which led to his being excommunicated along with his family. He faced the social approbation with the courage of his conviction.<sup>3</sup> In Karve's biography it is recorded that he paid Rs. 10/- every month to Karve's Brahmacharya Fund. Being close to him, his philosophy must have left a deep impression on my subconscious mind. Till I joined SNDT, I was not in any way deeply involved in women's issues; nor did I belong to any social movement concerning women. When Jyoti Trivedi, who was closely connected with the nursing programme of the University, first brought to my notice the vacancy of a Registrar at the SNDT in the early part of 1960, I was not inclined to look for a change of jobs. I felt well settled in my career at the Bombay Municipal Corporation's Education Department where I had been working for some years. However, on further thought, I felt that the work at SNDT would be more challenging. When my interest in the position came to be known, I received advice for and against; but my greatest

moral support came from my father-in-law Narbheram who could foresee the possibilities of my professional growth in an academic institution rather than in an administrative set up which by its very nature, was more bureaucratic. My husband Harshad was also keen that I should widen my horizon and has always been very supportive in my work. My two children, Paulomi and Sunil were attending school by then and that gave me more time for the new challenge.

The interview for the post of Registrar for which I appeared has left a lasting impression on my mind. I saw around the table, mostly unknown faces; at the head of the interview panel was Dr. Premlila Thackersey, the then Vice-Chancellor of the University. She was clad in snow-white khadi clothes, an embodiment of dignity and grace. This was my first meeting with her, but it left a lasting impression. She was the only member who did not ask me any question but her piercing gaze missed nothing and conveyed a lot to me. Even though I had not met Premlilaben before, I had heard about her as she was well-known for her commitment to the cause of women and for her close association with Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba when they were alive.

I apparently fared well at the interview. Since the University decided to appoint me as the Registrar, I opted to join from October 1, 1960, and was invited to attend the Convocation in September of that year so that I could familiarize myself with the process. Shri Gobind Ballabh Pant, the then Union Minister for Home Affairs had been invited as the Chief Guest. Unfortunately, he could not attend the Convocation and his Address was read out.

The graduates receiving their degrees and diplomas were clad in white sarees with blue borders, wearing the usual black gowns, a tradition that had continued for over a century since the

time university education was introduced in India.

I made a mental note to introduce a more comfortable and appropriate dress code. As I sat through the ceremony, I also wondered why the degrees of this University were known as BA and MA (as they were in all other universities) when in several other matters the Founder had broken new ground with a focus on indigenous thrusts. As I delved into questions of history, I learnt that the degrees of this University in the Faculty of Arts were earlier known as GA (Graduate in Arts) or Grihitagama, that is, one who has acquired knowledge, and PA (Master of Arts) or Pradeyagama, that is, one who is ready to impart knowledge. Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, the first Chancellor of the University had coined these new terms to mark them out from the traditional nomenclatures of BA and MA. In the early stages of university education, only men belonging to clerical professions were expected to take these courses, and as clergymen, they had to remain unmarried. Ramkrishna Bhandarkar did not approve of the nomenclatures of "Bachelor" and "Master" for the graduates of this University.<sup>4</sup>

However, in 1951, when the University gained statutory recognition, the nomenclatures of the degrees of SNTD had to be changed to BA and MA as they had to conform to those of other universities for the sake of acceptance and recognition. This was a part of the dichotomy between deviation from normal path and recognition by others.

During the Convocation, several other apprehensions surfaced in my mind. Was I leaving an interesting and action-filled job to attend to routine work? Was I narrowing my universe? Was I willing to associate with a university which had a limited appeal? The general view about this university, even after forty-five years of its existence was that it was a university for 'manibens' and 'sakubais'. This was repeatedly pointed out to

me by several persons and especially since I was an alumni of the University of Bombay, I did have some initial reservations. How unfounded were my apprehensions! But then these were the anxieties of change and fear of the unknown when getting into a new situation. I requested the Municipal Corporation to give me permission to keep a lien on my job in its Education Department. This was not granted. On the other hand Smt. Sharda Divan, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at SNDT told me in her forthright style that since I would be on probation and since no lien was granted, it was upto me to take the final decision. She also cautioned me that university administration was intricate, needing managerial skills and it could be several years before I would grasp these. It was truly a tough decision.

Fortunately, I had the confidence of youth on my side and having made up my mind to join SNDT, I did not want to retrace my step, whatever the consequences. It was a challenge. In fact, Shardaben's advice spurred my decision to succeed. My spontaneous reply to her was : "Shardaben, give me six months time, you will have no cause for regret" - and I worked hard to prove this point. Only Shardaben can say whether I came up to her expectations. In fact, this appointment became the most important milestone of my career.

### **Scope, Constitution and Jurisdiction**

The genesis of the University can be traced back to 1886 when Karve started the Hindu Widows' Home. He was then less involved with the cause of women's education and more concerned with obliterating social injustice heaped on women, especially widows and it was only after retirement from Fergusson College in 1914, that he began to concentrate more on women's education. He had toyed with the idea of a Maharashtra Women's University for over 10 years; but he thought he was being over ambitious. The turning point came in August 1915 when he received a pamphlet giving an account of the function-

ing of a Japanese Women's University founded in 1900. It made a tremendous impact on him. He realized its relevance for the future of women's education. Later he learnt that the pamphlet was sent to him by Babu Shivprasad Gupta, the founder of Kashi Vidyapeeth in Benares and Prof. Binaykumar Sirkar from Calcutta. When he was invited by Sir Narayan Chandavarkar to preside over the National Social Conference in Bombay on December 30, 1915, he decided to focus on the Maharashtra Women's University as the principal theme of his Presidential Address.

In his address, he specified two principles of women's education - use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction and recognition of women's functions as distinct from those of men. At the same time, he did not want to prevent women from availing those opportunities available to men in the educational field which existed at that time. On the basis of these principles, on the platform of the National Social Conference, he presented his plan to the public for a separate women's university. The four premises that Karve put forth were: generating confidence in women as responsible human beings; equipping them to contribute in building the nation by making the family strong; promoting the idea of nationalism among children and for those women who did not wish to marry, preparing them to contribute to the welfare of society or to get an opportunity to earn and live a life of dignity. The early aims and objects of the University described in the Annual Reports were:

1. To make provision for the higher education of women through Indian vernaculars as the media of instruction;
2. To regulate pre-university education to start, aid, maintain and affiliate institutions for such education and to formulate courses of study specially suited to the needs and requirements of women;

3. To make provision for the training of teachers for primary and secondary schools;
4. To institute and confer such degrees and grant such diplomas, titles, certificates and marks of honour in respect of degrees and examinations, as may be prescribed by the regulations; and
5. Such other objects, not inconsistent with these, as may be added from time to time by the Senate.

The constitution of the University was first passed by the Hindu Widows' Home Association on February 13, 1916. It was revised by the Senate of the University on June 9, 1917. It was again revised by the Senate on June 19, 1921.

Since social reform was the basis of educational activities started by Karve, while launching a major scheme like the University, the question of money did not deter him, even though he had no financial backing at that stage. The Hindu Widows' Home Committee passed a resolution on December 23, 1915 to start the women's university for Maharashtra to impart education through the medium of Marathi with English as a compulsory subject. On February 13, 1916, when the Hindu Widows' Home finalized the constitution of the University, a Provisional Committee was appointed which prepared a scheme to form electorates. Two separate electorates of graduate voters were formed. The first consisted of those who paid an annual subscription of Rs. 10/- and the second of those who paid Rs. 5/- every year or a donation of Rs. 150/-. In this way almost 1200 members registered for the Graduates Electorates from whom 60 Fellows were elected to the first Senate which included 5 women. The first meeting of the Senate, held on June 3, 1916, considered the draft constitution and courses of studies to be conducted within the parameters of the aims and objectives of

the University. The distinct characteristics of the University were: teaching through the medium of mother tongue, acceptance of private students, a wider jurisdiction that extended over the entire country and introduction of a curriculum suited to the needs of women and the goals of the University. The constitution was revised on June 9, 1917. Unlike the other Universities, neither was legislation passed by a local government nor a definite fund collected. In all likelihood, a Bill for a separate Women's University, with a focus on mother tongue as the medium of instruction at that point of time, would have been instantly turned down. The University, thus started in a unique way without Government sanction and was known as the Bharatwarshiya Mahila Vidyapeeth (The Indian Women's University). It was inaugurated on June 3, 1916 by Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, its first Chancellor. Karve could not have found a better person than Bhandarkar for this position. He was a great scholar and a staunch supporter of women's education and advocated widow-remarriage. For his reformist views, he had to face social boycott. Dr. Raghunath Paranjpye was the first Vice-Chancellor and Hari Ramchandra Divekar was the first Registrar. The University was popularly known as the Karve University. Karve was the first Principal of the Mahila Pathshala, the first colleges of the University. Very soon, preoccupied as he was with raising resources, Karve handed over the Principalship of the college to Narayan Mahadev Athavle. It is interesting to note that although the University was established for women, all the main office-bearers were men. In the beginning, the idea was to restrict the jurisdiction of the University to Maharashtra, but due to advice of many eminent persons, particularly Annie Besant, it was decided to extend the jurisdiction of the University to an all-India level.

The constitution needed a change again when Sir Vithaldas Thackersey gave a donation of Rs. 15 lakhs to the University with certain conditions. This was effected by the Senate on June



19, 1921. The salient features were: change in name, re-emphasizing the aims and objectives, defining electorates, laying down qualifications, categories and number of Fellows. Qualifications were laid down for becoming fellows of the university. These were: holding a degree for more than 10 years, being an ordinary fellow of any Indian University or a person of special distinction. Five electorates were defined. They were:

- \* The electorate of Associations
- \* The electorate of Patrons
- \* The electorate of Graduates
- \* The electorate of Educated ladies
- \* The General Electorate

This scheme of electorates allowed the University to secure support from a large number of individuals and institutions. The electoral roll of patrons for the 1930s shows the support received by the University from a number of princely states and public trusts. The roll includes the Maharajas of Bansoda, Bharatpur, Bhavnagar, Gwalior, Mysore, Porbandar, etc, the Nawab of Cambay, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Maharanis of Dharampur, Indore, Limdi, Phaltan, Porbandar, Wadhwan, etc and the Ratan Tata Trust, the N. M. Wadia Trust, India Benefit Trust (London), India Club (Tokyo) etc. Both the electoral rolls of graduates and the general electorate indicate the support given to the University by professional lawyers, doctors etc and the intelligentsia. (e.g. Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sir Ramaswamy Iyer, Sir C.V. Mehta, etc).

The number of ordinary fellows was to be 80 of which 65 belonged to the five categories mentioned above and of the remaining 15 seats, 10 were to be filled by the Senate and 5 to be nominated by Vithaldas Thackersey and after him by his male heirs. This frame-work, with changes and deletions, continued till statutory recognition. However, the uniqueness contin-

ues to be reflected till date. The most recent Act of Universities in Maharashtra passed in 1994, also sets the SNTD apart from other universities in the State. After 1921, the University extended its activities to Gujarat and other areas and in July 1931, the first college of the University was started in Bombay. Sir Sitaram Patkar, a judge of high standing, was Vice-Chancellor of the University in 1930-31 and held office as Chancellor from 1931-32 to 1945-46, till his death. This was a critical period for the University as differences of opinion arose between the University authorities and the trustees of Vithaldas's family. Sitaram Patkar steered the University through this crisis with great wisdom and a reconciliation was reached. Thereafter, the University headquarters shifted to Bombay. As the Chancellor of the University, he spared no effort and paved the way for the University to receive its charter from the then Government of Bombay. At the request of the Senate, the Chancellor Diwan Bahadur K. M. Jhaveri, wrote to the Provincial Government to recognise the University. The Government appointed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Sir H.V. Divetia to prepare a draft Bill, describing terms and conditions for giving statutory recognition to this University. The members of the Committee were Hansa Mehta, Diwan Bahadur K.M. Jhaveri, Principal A.B. Gajendragadkar, Principal V.K. Jog, Sharda Divan and Lila Wagle Dhume.

Sharda Divan often narrated that questionnaires were circulated, several meetings and interviews held and discussion saw many rounds until, ultimately, the Committee recommended recognition to the University.

The committee submitted its report in 1948. After considering the report of the above Committee, the Government concluded that statutory recognition be given to the "Society". ('Society' meaning the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University registered under the Societies

Registration Act, 1860, conducting the University) by passing the required legislation.

The "Statement of Objects and Reasons" signed by B.G. Kher, which started the process of recognition, was published in the Bombay Government Gazette of September 16, 1949. It read as under:

"Government accepted in general the principle of granting statutory recognition to the SNTD Indian Women's University and appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Harshidbhai Divetia to report on the question of statutory recognition of the said University. The Committee submitted its report in 1948. The report was published. The SNTD Indian Women's University as well as the Bombay and Poona Universities were consulted in the matter. The suggestions received have been considered in framing the present Bill. The general scheme of the proposed university follows that of the new universities of Poona and Karnatak with such changes in the constitution of bodies as appear necessary. As in the case of other universities, a provision has been included in the bill permitting institutions in the province of Bombay as well as outside to apply for being admitted to the privileges of the new University." The Bill No. LX of 1949 (a Bill to recognise Women's University in the Province of Bombay to be known as the "Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University") was introduced by B.G. Kher in the Legislative Assembly on September 30, 1949. After three readings in the Legislative Council, it was passed into law on October 13, 1949. [The Bombay Government Gazette, Part V, L A Bill No. LX of 1949 : Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University Bill.] On the passing of the law, the society was dissolved and the Bombay Act No. LI of 1949 recognized the Women's University as the 'Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University' on November 23, 1949. The

University received its charter when it was put on the Statute Book in 1951. This process between the passing of the Bill and receiving the charter for Statutory Recognition took nearly two years.

Sir Maharaj Singh, the then Governor of Bombay Province, nominated Premlila Thackersey as the first Vice-Chancellor of the University. She was reluctant but he persuaded her and she decided to take up the challenge. The first Registrar nominated was Lila Wagle Dhume. In her reminiscences "As I Look Back" published during the Golden Jubilee of the University, Premlilaben acknowledged the contribution of Sir Sitaram Patkar, deeply regretting that he was not with them to share the joy of this significant development when recognition was granted. When the States of Maharashtra and Gujarat were separated in May 1960, Premlila Thackersey was the Vice-Chancellor. She was deeply concerned about the status of the University specially because it had colleges in both the States. She met Gobind Ballabh Pant, the then Home Minister at the Center, who assured her that the status of the University would not be affected in any way. The University Senate and Syndicate decided that SNTD would be governed by the University Act of Maharashtra. The special features of the University in respect of jurisdiction, structure and electorates continued and, in that sense, and also being a University only for women, it retained its distinction and uniqueness among the other universities in Maharashtra.

I have participated in the process of revision of the University Acts on two occasions - the University Act of 1974 and the new draft Bill which was approved as the Maharashtra Universities Act, 1994. With each revision, it is my experience, that the identity of a distinct University like SNTD slowly gets eroded. The latest Bill has enacted a single Uniform Act for all universities in Maharashtra. Fortunately, some of the privileges

of SNTD related to its jurisdiction and identity have been retained even in the latest Act after a conscious effort, in a separate Chapter titled "Special Privileges for SNTD Women's University".

### Structure

When I took charge as Registrar, I found the University had a distinct structure with conducted and affiliated schools and colleges under its umbrella. This I realized was due to historical reasons.

In the Annual Reports of the University during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, statistical reviews indicate more high schools affiliated to the University than colleges. How did this paradoxical situation come about ?

Prior to 1952, Universities conducted their own matriculation examinations for entry into the university portals. When SNTD was founded, it held the first Entrance Examination (similar to matriculation examination conducted by the University of Bombay) in June 1916. Six girls from Mahilashram of Hingne in Poona appeared for the examination and four, who were successful, joined the Mahila Pathshala (the first college), the fifth student enrolled had passed the Matriculation Examination of the University of Bombay. Gradually, other schools started sending their girls to appear for the Entrance Examinations, popularly known as 'Karve Matric'. These schools came to be known as affiliated schools. Karve toured the regions around Poona, Satara, Belgaum, Sangli, Wai, Sholapur, all towns of what is now Maharashtra, and encouraged establishment of new schools or affiliation of the existing schools to the SNTD. The graduates of SNTD worked in these schools on small salaries but acted as catalysts, spreading women's education.

At the invitation of Gandhiji, whom he had met in Poona in

the beginning of 1916, Karve visited Ahmedabad and at a meeting presided over by Bapu, spoke with zeal about the aims and objectives of his Women's University. Enlightened citizens, men and women interested in social service, started coaching girl students in Gujarat and Saurashtra to prepare them to appear for the Entrance Examination of SNDT.

The first college to be affiliated to SNDT University from Gujarat was the Mahila College in Ahmedabad in 1921. This was started at the initiative of Sharda Mehta and Vidyagauri Nilkanth, who were the first women graduates of the Bombay University. This was followed by colleges at Surat and Baroda in Gujarat and later at Bhavnagar in Saurashtra and then others followed.

Gradually the Entrance Examination was conducted in four languages - Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi and Telugu. This examination differed in some respects from the matriculation of Bombay University, particularly in view of its liberal requirements, permitting students to appear without the subject of English. When the University received its Charter, in 1951 the Entrance Examination was discontinued.

Unlike the traditional universities, when SNDT started, it did not have a cluster of colleges under its jurisdiction. Again, going against the mainstream and having its special characteristics, initially, the University had to look inside for its growth. The Mahila Pathshala, which was looked after by the Hingne Samstha was transferred to the University in 1920 and shifted to its Campus at Poona in 1923 when the first building was inaugurated. This college, now known as SNDT College for Women became a "conducted college" of the University. The school started by Chiplunker in Poona was also transferred to the University, and the SNDT Kanyashala at Poona became a "conducted school." In this way, the University assumed dual

responsibility of teaching and affiliation, directly supervising conducted colleges and overseeing the work of affiliated colleges. Post-graduate Departments, gradually developed from the undergraduate University colleges unlike conventional universities which had affiliated/constituent colleges with disciplinewise post-graduate departments, functioning directly under the University administration. This broad structure still continues, with the University having three campuses and managing conducted colleges, University Departments and having affiliated colleges in Maharashtra and Gujarat.

### **Clientele**

It was in the early part of 1960s, a few years after I joined SNDT, that the office bearers of the Women Graduates Union (WGU) came to meet Premlila Thackersey for a donation. She asked them why our students were not recognized for scholarships or other programmes of the WGU. The reply was that they were disqualified because they studied in a regional language medium, and hence, were assumed to be weak in academic achievements. On hearing these words, as the Registrar of the University, two feelings surfaced within me: a feeling of anger and a determination to improve the image of the University. Fortunately, with the passage of time, students and faculty came to be recognised on their own merits and a close relationship developed between the University and the WGU. The Founder of SNDT had great hopes of admitting a large number of students; but the first few batches faced several difficulties. Maltibai Bedekar, one of the earliest students of SNDT, in one of her interviews mentioned about the struggle for employment mainly due to non-recognition of the University. The earlier Annual Reports of the University indicate that the clientele of the University comprised of daughters of pensioners, married women, agriculturists, girls belonging to upper castes but from economically less advantaged sections. Thus, while access was given to those groups which would have otherwise been denied

the advantage of higher education, since these castes and classes were going against established conventions by sending their women folk into educational institutions, enrolments were, naturally, limited. A small survey undertaken by the Founder in 1928 revealed that while Bombay University graduates were employed in Government organizations, SNDT students got employment in private organizations. This gratified the Founder as he was worried about the future of the students. The freedom struggle had given rise to new aspirations. Several participants, who were mature women, graduated by taking advantage of the private studies system and later worked in educational and social organizations. After the Charter, in 1951, the University had two types of students. A majority of the students studying for B.A. degree, for several reasons were keen on the degree but did not always opt for a career, several were first-generation learners; for many this was a 'waiting period' before marriage. The other group of students, a much smaller one as yet, who joined the newly-introduced professional courses, was keen on being equipped for work and career.

It was this new clientele for whom both diversification and a new approach to education were needed. At the same time, crossing the technical hurdle and receiving Government recognition did not mean a solution to the University's problems nor did it radically change its status. The first concern was to adjust its courses and teaching to bring it on par with other universities. At the same time it had to consolidate its position, keeping the spirit of social reform intact. Moreover, the pioneering and unique features which set this University apart from other universities, were being introduced by the other universities as well. Again, girls and their parents considered attending co-educational institutions more prestigious. These were some of the constraints which affected the response from society and, in order to retain its identity and open up new avenues for women, the



University needed to advance in those areas where the felt needs of women could be met.

I did not come across any scientific study undertaken at this stage about the reasons for which students joined this University, their expectations, educational and occupational status of parents, experiences at this University and so on. This would have been an interesting exercise and a benchmark for comparison with later studies, which are available. In spite of the ongoing efforts of faculty members and university authorities to provide relevant education, it was often mentioned that students joining this University were academically weaker than those of other universities and lacked fluency in English and general knowledge. This was attributed to teaching through vernacular languages and giving concessions like permitting students to join the University without passing English at SSC and not offering Science, Mathematics or Sanskrit.

When views of faculty members were sought at a later date on this issue, their opinion was that if this was a policy laid down with conviction as a facility for expansion of women's education, it should be accepted and they quoted the decision of the Founder who was firm in his conviction that the mother-tongue of the students was the best medium of learning and he stuck to this principle. Many other universities have to-day followed SNTD.

It was also strongly felt by the faculty that the function of the University, justifiably, was to offer as many facilities as possible to reduce the gap between the education of boys and girls and between the educated and the uneducated. In spite of the foregoing views, faculty members were conscious of the need to improve the performance of students and to raise the standard of the University.

It was this background and my experience with the officials of WGU which made me forever alert about the need to try and give the best to students of this University. At that point of time the advice of Durgabai Deshmukh gave greater strength to my determination. She once told me “Do not wait for others to recognise your University. Your goal should be to take it ahead through better performance”. Her advice was very valuable. Happily, the situation has changed today and the University programmes are attracting the best of students for the diverse courses offered by the University.

The spectrum of SNTD alumni indicates that they used the facilities of the University through different channels. The SNTD provided higher education through regular studies and private studies. One stream of alumni has been throughout the product of the regular stream. The second stream consists of private students who did not have opportunities to join the regular programme or were mature women with a thirst for learning.

The in-between stream, was partly regular and partly private. This flexibility was then permitted only by SNTD. I have met several private students who have come out as strong and bold women with motivation and commitment, those who are not afraid to enter untrodden paths. It is heartening to learn about their contribution and to know that they are willing to pass on the benefits of this advantage to others.

Another stream consists of students coming to SNTD from other universities and at one point or another, using it as a bridge for further mobility. If SNTD had not offered this opportunity, their career graph would have remained stagnant. I have met several from this group who have risen to eminence and, when opportunity comes their way, they acknowledge with gratitude their debt to their second alma mater.

The names of few of the illustrious alumni from among the more than a lakh and a half who have passed through the portals of the University are listed in Appendix 4.

### **Teachers**

When I joined, I was impressed by the service ethos of faculty members which was part of the traditional philosophy of the University which had been carefully preserved and, hence has continued to this date.

Teachers came from within the system, being alumni of the University and from other universities, but both categories held the same values and contributed equally. An important characteristic of the faculty, which became obvious, was their complete identification with the ideology of the University. During my long tenure with SNDT, I came in touch with three generations of faculty members. The senior group left no stone unturned to take the University forward, in spite of restricted resources. There was a sense of belonging to the University, and fortunately, politics had not infiltrated into the system. Quite a few of the teachers who were with the University as well as those who are with it today had the choice of selecting an institution of their liking where they would have been well accepted; but having once joined SNDT, they chose to stay with it and grow with it. Migration was marginal and this became a special feature of SNDT faculty. This was particularly appreciated by the visiting members of University Grants Commission on various occasions.

A question was often put to me, whether the Women's University had men on the faculty. My impression was that about 20 per cent of faculty were men. Eminent men scholars, to name a few, K. L. Joshi, Vaman Malhar Joshi, R.K. Lagu, N.R. Pathak, J.J. Anjaria, G.L. Gheewala, C.C. Shah, rendered their honorary services to the University in the earlier decades. When

## EARLY YEARS

the University started an Arts College in Bombay in Mhatre Building in 1931, the first Principal of the College was Himatlal Anjaria who looked after its progress and development very devotedly. I wonder whether in the new women's universities which have recently been established, constitutionally debarring men from faculty positions is a relevant step in today's time and context. Some time back, the Vice-Chancellor of Padmavati Mahila Vishvavidyalayam narrated the struggle she had to face to permit male faculty (even though it is a very small percentage of the total) in specialized disciplines where well-qualified women faculty were not available.

Names of some of the eminent faculty members, including Principals will be seen in Appendix 4. It has been possible to include only an illustrative list which represents hundreds of faculty members who have been mentors of the students of the University over the years.

As far as the administrative team was concerned, I found to my surprise that except my Personal Assistant Veera Sorabjee, all senior officials were men - I.N. Kaji, P.K.Thakkar, D.R. Udeshi, Pendse, Kelker and later Y.J. Merchant and S.S. Barodia. Most of these officers were with SNTD before I joined and several would leave after me. This caused me some apprehension. Would I be able to get work from them according to the way I visualized the administrative tasks ? Would they accept changes in the functioning style with administration becoming more complex ? How would we break fresh ground to meet demands of new challenges of modern management ? Fortunately, these apprehensions were unfounded and we could develop close understanding and worked as a good team.

### **Pattern of Course**

The first degree programme was of three years with a University examination at the end of each year, leading to the

examination of the degree of G.A. (Graduate in Arts or Grahitagama) and thereafter a programme of two years, leading to the examination of P.A. (Proficient in Arts or Pradeyagama) which was instituted in 1925. The P.A. degree was first awarded to a lone student in 1927, Smt. Godavari Ketkar who qualified through research, presenting a 400 page thesis on “Sanskrit Dramaturgy of Bharata”.

A major feature of the University was to permit students to study privately, even by appearing for examination at their home town under supervision of the University and with the prior permission of the Syndicate (today’s Management Council). Records show, that although this facility was available from the year 1922, the first batch of private students appeared at the University examination only in 1930. Gradually this alternative mode gained popularity.

The main objective of the G.A. curriculum was to give the student a sound preparation for her future life as the guardian of her household and a citizen.

With great foresight, the University’s curriculum for G.A. consisted of four compulsory subjects and one voluntary subject to be selected from a large variety of options. English was a compulsory subject in all 3 years. The compulsory subjects included a Modern Indian Language, History, Sociology, Domestic Science, Physiology and Hygiene, Psychology - subjects which had a greater bearing on women’s lives, thus meeting the objective laid down by Karve. It was a well balanced programme with a mix of humanities, social sciences and biological sciences with emphasis on command over the mother-tongue. This pattern influenced the course of studies till the University received its Charter in 1951. At that time, the Government appointed a Committee to look into existing courses and suggest changes to bring them on par with other univer-

sities. Since universities in western India (old Bombay Presidency) had a four-year degree course leading to the B.A. degree, the Committee felt it necessary to add one year of Pre-Degree. Nevertheless the old pattern continued till 1958. For the first forty years, the post-graduate programme did not receive much attention in view of lack of demand.

The year 1959 was very significant. In this year the pre-degree course called Pre-University, was added. As a natural consequence, the undergraduate courses were revised.

Along with the revision of the undergraduate courses the M.A. courses were also revised and were brought more or less in line with other universities.

This was the prevailing academic pattern when I joined the University.

### **In Pursuit of Social Relevance**

The dream of Karve to start a separate university for women, evoked varied responses from society. On the one hand, the progressive sections did not see any need for a separate university; on the other hand the conservative sections disapproved such a step as they felt this type of separation would affect the role of women and the culture of society. There was hardly any support forthcoming from officials. In this venture, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Annie Besant, C.F. Andrews, Margaret E. Roberts and William Wedderburn were supportive. In fact, Gurudev advised Karve: "It is far better that you should win the Government recognition at the end than pray for it in the beginning." Karve followed this advice. R.P. Paranjpye's suggestion was to hasten slowly. Natrajan thought the activity retrograde, although later he changed this view. Lokmanya Tilak did not support the venture as according to him, educated women's scepticism would destroy happy family life. Even when the

University was a few years old, opinion persisted that teaching of higher education through regional languages diluted standards. The separate curriculum offered by SNTD which was 'General' as opposed to 'Honours' courses offered by other universities at the graduate level, re-inforced the belief that women's intelligence was inferior.

Karve vehemently refuted both the pronouncements and continued to advocate strongly these principles. Recent developments in higher education have proved how prophetic his action was. The period between 1916 and 1920 was a period of struggle for Karve's University. In spite of this initial stress, through his University, Karve set up an agenda for the future of women's education. The hard work put in by the University for secondary and higher education in the mother-tongue slowly but steadily substituted criticism by public sympathy for the cause. This was evident when, in 1920, support came from Vithaldas Thackersey, a benevolent industrialist from Bombay, who made Karve's dream a reality through his unexpected and generous donation to the University which put it on a sound financial footing.

Vithaldas, sharing Karve's views, believed that, for a nation to progress, its women must be educated. He put before his wife Premlilaben, the ideal of Ramabai Ranade who viewed emancipation of women as a challenge to patriarchy and stressed self-reliance.

Vithaldas and Premlilaben had met Karve at the Hindu Widows' Home in 1917 and were impressed by his work. Since then they had set their heart on doing something constructive for women's education. After their visit to the Women's University in Tokyo, the institution which had inspired Karve to establish his Women's University, and lengthy discussions with Sitabai Annigeri, the graduate of the second batch of the Indian

## EARLY YEARS

Women's University, who had accompanied Premilaben and Sir Vithaldas on a world tour, the idea crystallized. On their return from the tour, Vithaldas offered Karve a donation of Rs. 15 lakhs on certain conditions. The University was then named after his mother as Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University.

Premilaben used to take me with her when she went on official visits for University work, during her tenure as Vice-Chancellor. After dinner, she would narrate incidents from her young days, her grooming by Sir Vithaldas, about the building up of the University and various other matters. I was curious to know what she felt when Sir Vithaldas offered the large donation to Karve. She was very happy. In fact, it was a joint decision after being convinced about its value. The decision to name the University after his mother was also a joint one. This action reflects the societal mores of those times.

Reverting to Karve's philosophy, in his 'Atmavritta,' Karve had suggested that instead of getting discouraged by the challenges of educating fifteen crores of women, every educated person should educate fifteen women. The graduates of the University in the 1920s and 1930s took this message seriously and acted as catalysts, spreading Karve's mission while working in girls' schools in different parts of the country.<sup>5</sup> As many as 40 out of the first 60 odd graduates of the University opened schools for girls in their localities, which was a matter of great pride to Karve.

The Hartog Commission in 1929 while reviewing the progress of women's education recorded the good work done by the SNDT Indian Women's University for the higher education of women in the Bombay Presidency. The main obstacle, it was further stated, was non-recognition of the University's degrees



which was due to 'an anxiety on the part of the University to avoid control over the curricula and conditions of examination'.

The first Congress Ministry in Bombay Province with B.G. Kher as the Chief Minister, recognized the degrees of this University on par with those of other universities in 1934, thus opening up employment opportunities for graduates of this University in government and semi-government services. The University also got recognition of its entrance examination by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. In spite of this development, other universities continued to ignore the graduates of this University, although by now, it had begun to attract students from all corners of the country.

In 1939, as per the desire of the Senate, Premilaben invited Mahatma Gandhi to deliver the Convocation Address. He could not refuse her. He agreed on condition that he would not utter a single word at the Convocation and that B.G. Kher, Chief Minister should deliver the Convocation Address. Moreover, the Registrar should read the report in Marathi or Gujarati. This last request typified the Gandhian tenet that in education regional language should replace English. On the dias with Karve, Sir Sitaram Patkar and Premilaben were Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel, Sarojini Naidu, Subhash Chandra Bose, Chief Minister B.G. Kher, M. Viswesaraiya, Hansa Mehta and Meeraben. B.G. Kher delivered the Convocation Address. Sharda Divan was the Registrar. What a momentous event in the life of the University!

B.G. Kher at the Convocation emphasized that the merits of the University's services could not be judged by the number of matriculates and graduates leaving its portals but by the aims and ideals for which it stood and the principles which it practiced.

## EARLY YEARS

I could not help asking Sharda Divan what her feelings were on that occasion. Although her heart was full of trepidation, spirited as she always is, she read the report in Gujarati with confidence. She recalls fondly the presence of her husband and children at the memorable function.

I asked Premilaben how she could persuade Bapu to attend the Convocation. She told me she had first met Mahatma Gandhi in 1915 at Jaiji Petit's house when he returned from Africa and then again in 1924 and in 1928. In 1933, after the famous Harijan fast, she was hostess to Gandhiji at her residence 'Parnakuti' (which, in fact, was comparable to a palace) for twenty one days. Several national leaders, including Rabindranath Tagore, Subhash Chandra Bose were her guests during this period. Subhash Chandra Bose was so impressed by her humility and graciousness that, in a letter to her, he mentioned : "You have that unique quality whereby you can draw even a stranger towards you." Being close to Bapu, she was greatly influenced by his philosophy which inspired her to dedicate her services to the underprivileged. Her simplicity and her attitude towards constructive work was largely due to Gandhiji's influence. In turn, Bapu had a lot of confidence in her. When Kasturba died, the Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust was set up. Bapu nominated Premilaben as the Chairman.

Karve, too, while concretising the goals of the University had sought Gandhiji's advice. Bapu blessed the venture particularly as instruction was to be through the mother tongue and paid Rs. 51/- annually to the fund. Gandhiji therefore was familiar with the University's cause when Premilaben invited him.

The University had come a long way from 1916 when it started with five students and meager resources.

In 1942 the University celebrated its Silver Jubilee. It is

interesting to note that this event “Silver Jubilee of SNDT Women’s University” to be celebrated on January 29, 30 and February 1, 1942 and the visit of Gandhiji (July 3, 1939) were reported in the media and were reproduced in the Times of Indian Archives in 1991 when the University celebrated its Platinum Jubilee.<sup>6</sup> Presiding over the Silver Jubilee function at Poona, Jayakar paid glowing tribute to the Founder Karve and his vision.

In spite of receiving the Charter, the struggle continued. Having entered the second phase of its development, the University found that the demand of this period was not only expansion of facilities for women’s education in traditional fields but opening up new vistas. It was the obligation of the University during this period to achieve a balance between the diverse demands. This role of the University, to change with changing times, by adopting a flexible approach, was appreciated by society and there was a steady demand for its courses. The 1950s saw the addition of new disciplines, namely Home Science and Nursing. Till such time as the University received statutory recognition, it had only the Faculty of Arts.

The University Grants Commission, during the Second Plan Period brought the University under the UGC Act. This recognition gave a lot of impetus to the University in its future development.

Karve’s birth centenary was celebrated by the University on April 18, 1958. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, was the Chief Guest. The highest award of Bharatratna was conferred on him on his 100th birthday; the nation, thus expressing its deep sense of gratitude for his single-minded devotion and service to the cause of women’s education.

## LASTING MEMORIES

After I joined the University, the first Syndicate meeting in October 1960 was held on the Campus at Pune. That was also my first visit to this site. The campus had the Karve Kutir, College Building and the Mulraj Khatau Hostel. These were constructed soon after the campus site was purchased when Sir Vitthaladas Thackersey was alive.

My most significant experience after joining was meeting Karve for the first time as he was present at the meeting. He was 102 by then - frail but fully alert, a small man with a white beard, unassuming but with a magnetic force, having devoted his life to the cause of womanhood. Although it was my first interaction with Karve, I was familiar with his mission and the various first steps he had taken while espousing the cause of women, facing courageously the obstacles which came in the way. At that moment, the words of Ayn Rand came to my mind: "Throughout the centuries there were men who took the first steps down new roads armed with nothing but their own vision. Their goals differed but they all had this in common, that the first step was first, the road new, the vision unborrowed and the response they received - hatred. The great creators - the thinkers, the artists, the scientists, the inventors - stood alone against the men of their time."

Looking at Karve, it was difficult to realize his strength and mission. That moment made me appreciate the exciting journey I had begun in an institution which had Karve, Sir Vitthaladas and Premilaben Thackersey as its strong pillars, individuals who had laid the foundation both with foresight and idealism for a worthy cause.

Till I joined as the Registrar, most of the earlier Registrars worked in an honorary capacity. The convention of having lady Registrars, started with the appointment of Dr. Iravati Karve.

She worked as an Honorary Registrar from 1931 to 1936 when she resigned her post as she could not leave Poona when the headquarters of the University were shifted to Bombay. In that year, Sharda Divan took up the position of Registrar from 1936; she continued till 1944 and accepted only an honorarium. Smt. Laxmi Thackersey my predecessor worked only on a Rupee a month from 1944 till I took over in 1960.

This reflects the commitment of society to educational and social ventures. Today, professionalism has replaced voluntarism and with it the concept of work ethos had changed.

Very often Sharda Divan being a sports lover would mention that she and Laxmi Thackersey would utilise the lunch hour to play badminton. When I took over as a full-time Registrar, the University was expanding fast and such diversion was unthinkable. The challenge I faced, I realised, would need rigorous handling. Expectations from me of my superiors and colleagues would also not be the same as before. My perception of work was different. I tried to analyse the distinct culture, tradition and values that went with SNTD to take advantage of foundations laid and to move forward from that vantage point.

While laying down the parameters describing my experiences at SNTD, I had mentioned I would dip into the past. At times, I will also touch on incidents which happened after my tenure. Suma Chitnis, Vice-Chancellor of SNTD (1990 to 1996) organised an International Round Table as part of the Platinum Jubilee of the University in January 1992. I was invited to participate in the deliberations and give a review of my long association with the University. On that occasion, Suma Chitnis had invited Dr. Takako Aoki, President of Japan Women's University.

It was a wonderful feeling to have the head of the Women's

## EARLY YEARS

University from Japan, the country which over 70 years back had inspired the Founder to establish this University in 1916. It was a link between the past and the present. In 1915 it was an inspiration to establish a unique institution. 1992 witnessed the assessment of SNTU and similar institutions around the world. Through this effort, the Vice-Chancellor was keen to define an agenda to get ready to meet the challenges of the next century. The President Takako Aoki brought with her a newspaper cutting describing the visit of Karve to her University. This incident made me wonder how Karve and Premilaben would have relived this moment. For me it was a rare occasion.

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# **Winds of Change: Journey Through Different Phases**

## **View Points**

During the Round Table Discussion held on December 15, 1973 to review the University's role and give new directions to its programmes, Sulabha Panandikar, an eminent educationist and member of the SNTD Syndicate, linked the action taken by the University with the changing role of women in social and economic life of the country. This significant exercise was one of the programmes to commemorate the birth centenary of Vithaldas Thackersey, principal supporter of Karve, which was celebrated during 1972-73.

According to her, the first phase of 30 years in the life of the University stressed the role of woman at home as a wife and mother. However, the role of the housewife did not find a place in the early curricula as according to the philosophy of the Founder this was instinctive and natural to a woman. The curriculum concentrated on teaching languages, humanities and science. The next 25 years in the University's development emphasized the woman's role as a contributor to the nation's economic and productive development and family's income and, to meet this demand, career-oriented courses like home science, nursing, fine arts, library science were introduced, and at the same time the programmes offered under the discipline of education were re-oriented to modernize the course. The early years of 70s saw new dimensions of continuing education for enlightenment, and enhancement of technical skills through the polytechnic, which

combined liberal and vocational aspects. Further, with the advent of changing feminist perspectives, the University geared itself to meet the new challenges through its academic structure.<sup>1</sup>

During this period Dr. Neera Desai, Head of the Department of Sociology and the first Director of Research Center for Women's Studies, in her paper "A Struggle for Identity - a Case Study of SNDT Women's University" described the trials and tribulations of the University in its effort of trying to retain its identity through four broad phases. These phases according to her corresponded with important milestones of the University, namely, period of gestation (1916 to 1951), gaining acceptability (1951 to 1966), period of innovation (1966 to 1976) and meeting newer challenges and identity retention (1976 onwards).<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Usha Thakkar, Head of the Department of Political Science and Dr. Harshida Pandit, former Head of the Department of Psychology, in their paper "History of SNDT Women's University" have described the progress of the University as 'a fascinating and exciting journey' in three broad phases - gaining acceptability (1916 to 1951), expanding horizons (1951 to 1966) and looking forward (1966 to the present).<sup>3</sup>

. Each of these commentators have been closely associated with the University. While weaving their individual perceptions describing the struggle, the growth, the dilemmas, the strengths and the future of the University, they have documented various aspects of the University's developmental growth which will serve as useful backdrops while compiling its history at a future date.

Mine is an attempt to enrich this framework through my personal experience and my contribution to the development of the University during my association of nearly three decades. I have seen it expand quantitatively and advance qualitatively. My



attempt has been to describe this evolution through programmes, coinciding with important events and milestones of the University and introduce readers to some of the personalities with whom I worked and who helped build up the University brick by brick during the different phases of the University's growth.

Apart from the physical expansion registered through increasing enrolment, staff, number of institutions, change and evolution were evident in the academic programmes offered, the development of relevant curricula and general direction of expansion for quality of access as well as equality for status and economic advancement of women. Dr. Zakir Hussain, in his Convocation Address delivered in 1964, substantiated this role. He observed; "Let us begin by asserting that our men and women are free and equal citizens of our country. It follows that women's education must provide for the cultivation of every aptitude and talent..., there must be no bar on their studying what they want..."

### **The Early Impact**

When I joined the University, Premlila Thackersey was the Vice-Chancellor and Sharda Divan, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. Both had given many years of service to the University, Premlilaben since 1920, when she was nominated on the Senate and Sharda Divan, since 1936, when she assumed charge as Registrar of the University, when head quarters shifted to Bombay. I soon realized that both were different individuals. Premlilaben, fondly known as Lady Saheb, was soft spoken, and a caring person but with a tremendous inner strength. Sharda Divan was decisive with a forthrightness and would not hesitate to call a spade a spade. I was quick to see that, in spite of the diverse personalities, their common goal was the interest of the University which they pursued with perseverance. I geared myself to work with them and to learn from them although at

times, I had apprehensions about adjustment with them and about the situations which would arise.

I also observed that the Syndicate was supportive of Premilaben and there was no discordant note. Her counselors were senior Syndics Shri P.G. Shah, Justice B.N. Gokhale and Shri C.C. Shah, the latter two belonging to the profession of law. Their wisdom and foresight helped the University on many occasions to meet new challenges and overcome crisis situations. B.N. Gokhale was the Chairman of the D.K. Karve Felicitation Committee when the University and Hingne Stree Shikshan Samstha, celebrated Karve's birth centenary in 1958. The University could always rely on his advice. C.C. Shah had taught the students, when the College at Bombay was established in 1931 in Mhatre Building. Since the time I joined the University in 1960, I interacted with him whenever a legal problem arose and his guidance was always sound. I came to know that during my appointment, C.C. Shah was concerned about whether a modern person (his opinion) like me would fit into the traditional culture of SNDT. As time went by and he was convinced about my commitment to work, he often appreciated my work publicly and attributed it to a happy family background. I could not agree more with him.

Shri B.D. Karve, son of Maharshi Karve, was a representative of the Karve family on the University and served on the Senate and Syndicate and was thus a link with the Founder. I remember, he would meticulously do his home work before coming to any meeting and I, as the Registrar, had to be extra careful not to miss any detail. The representatives of Government's Education Department on the University bodies and Selection Committees were always helpful and appreciative of the work SNDT was doing.

Smt. Tarunica Dehejia had a long association with SNDT.

Her father H.L. Kaji was the Vice-Chancellor of the University between 1944 and 1946, prior to the University receiving statutory recognition. Like Sharda Divan, she continued her association with the University till it celebrated its Platinum Jubilee and was always supportive of the new programmes the University undertook.

Smt. Jayshree Raiji, sister of Smt. Hansa Mehta, well known freedom fighter and eminent educationist, though with an unassuming personality, made every effort to strengthen the social service ethos at SNDT . I carry happy memories of working in an atmosphere of supportive culture which enabled me to put my heart and soul into the work of the University.

My first close association with Prémililaben came a few months after joining SNDT, in January 1961. I accompanied her to Belgaum where she was attending the Vice-Chancellors' Conference at the University of Dharwar. Since we were driving down, we spent many hours together. She asked me searching questions about my family, my background and work experience. The journey was the beginning of an affectionate association with a very humane person which lasted till her death in 1977. Premililaben was born in Rajkot on January 8, 1894 in a devout Bhatia family. She was named Bachoo by a fond father, Dharsibhai. He gave her the modicum of education received by girls of her time. She lost her mother Ratanbai at a young age and was brought up by her grandmother Zaverbai and aunt, Valibai. However, her real education started when she married Vithaldas Thackersey in 1913 and imbibed wisdom from 'the university of life'. She drew strength from her illustrious husband; she gained knowledge from the various tutors engaged for her; her association with great leaders of the country influenced her values of life and above all her own experiences, insights and practical wisdom helped her develop a unique personality. Her association with the University com-

menced in 1920 when she was first nominated to the Senate. After her husband's death in 1922, she remained detached till 1926 when she was elected to the Syndicate. When the University was put on the statute book in 1951, Karve and Premlilaben were made permanent members of the Senate and Syndicate in the newly promulgated Act in recognition of their services to the University. Premlilaben's permanent membership continued in the 1974 Act. Her association with the University ceased only with her death in 1977.

The way Vithaldas had moulded her, the deep sorrow of his untimely death in 1922, although leaving her bereft, did not make her lose faith in the Bhagwad Geeta. Her sister-in-law Smt. Sunderbai Thackersey, was also a young widow like her. Instead of spending their time in temples and rituals like many traditional and orthodox rich Bhatia women, they decided to find solace in reading the Bhagwad Geeta together every day. This decision gave a direction to their lives. Both decided to channel their wealth and energies for spreading women's education which they did with great foresight. I soon realized that she was not a person who was embittered by misfortunes. She had the capacity to change unfavourable circumstances into positive ones, not by words but by deeds. As I came in closer contact with her, I experienced her capacity to gauge human beings as if she had a sixth sense and of instilling confidence in those whom she trusted through her warmth and affection. I understood her ambition for the University and her ambition became my goal. I decided to leave no stone unturned for the progress of this distinctive institution.

Since the 1950s the University office and the Arts College were functioning in the Gordhandas Khetsey Building which had just a ground and three floors. When the University had shifted to Bombay, the college and University office functioned from Mhatre building near Chowpatty. Premlilaben often told

me how they purchased two plots of land measuring 3,483.71 sq. yards with two government bungalows on it at a cost of Rs. 2,26,441/- with the help of His Excellency the Governor Lord Brabourne in 1936 on Carnegie Road, off Queen's Road (now Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Marg) near Churchgate station. In October 1937, the University office and college were both shifted to these new premises. The combined plots of land previously purchased were not large enough. Two additional plots of land adjacent to the previous one were purchased at a cost of Rs. 2,62,888/- in the year 1941-42. The total area of the four plots came to 7,200 sq. yards. At this point the University was fortunate in getting a timely donation from Seth Gordhandas Khetsey Trust of rupees one lakh for construction of the building.

The University, through the donation from Khetsey Trust, grants from Governments of India and Bombay and donations from the public, was able to start construction of its own building in 1950-51. The work was completed at a cost of rupees 10 lakhs. This is the building where the University offices are located to-day. The building was declared open by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then Vice-President of India, on August 28, 1952, and was named after Shri Gordhandas Khetsey, by Shri Dinkarrao Desai, the then Minister of Education, Government of Bombay.

A new building opposite the Gordhandas Khetsey Building was under construction. Premlilaben who at that time held honorary position of Vice-Chancellor, as did other Vice-Chancellors at that time, used to come to the University around 3.00 p.m. Her first activity was sitting with the contractor, Burjor Major, outside the building and checking on the work, not superficially but brick by brick, stone by stone. At the Poona Campus of the University also she took the same pains when construction work was going on. My work with her would start only after supervising the building work was over. The three roads around the

University premises are named 'Maharshi Karve Road' (old Queen's Road), 'Shreemati Nathibai Thackersey Road' and 'Sir Vitthal Das Thackersey Marg.'

While accompanying Premlilaben to the various meetings, including high level conferences of Vice-Chancellors, I got an opportunity to gain insight on the thinking of academic stalwarts, the problems of higher education and issues concerning the Indian academic system. This was an excellent exposure which few Registrars were fortunate to have. During these meetings, I met many Vice-Chancellors, Government and UGC officials - Dr. C.D. Deshmukh, Dr. Mohan Sinha Mehta, Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, Dr. K.L. Shrimali, Dr. D.S. Kothari, Dr. N.K.Sidhanatha, Sir A.L. Mudaliar, Dr. Malcolm Adiseshiah and many others. It was enlightening to listen to their expositions which helped me discharge my responsibilities more forcefully. On the other hand, the frequent tours upset the tenor of my family life. When I joined the University I had not expected that I would have to travel so often. My children were still young. My daughter Paulomi was not even ten and my son Sunil even younger. The dual role situation affects every working woman and I was not an exception. In spite of a liberal home atmosphere and an understanding husband, I faced several stressful occasions, specially when the children were ill or the work pressures were very heavy. At such times I wondered about my priorities and those of working women who had even fewer facilities. Often, I was filled with guilt. Did I neglect my children? What effect would it have on their growing up; but then, at other times I had the satisfaction that even though I was able to spend less time with them, I could give them quality time and I knew that my mother-in-law was always around to give them security, a boon of living in a joint family. Today, when I look back I have no regrets.

### **Farewell to the Founder : 1962**

November 9, 1962, was a sad day for the country and particularly for the University. Maharshi Karve left this world at the age of 104. His prayer at the end of his biography eloquently described his dedication to the cause of women's regeneration. To quote: "If there is any truth in the theory of rebirth, I would wish to be born again in this country and dedicate myself once more to the achievement of the cause of women's regeneration, to repay men's debt to women." What a wonderful tribute to the women of India !

Karve's contribution to women's education is unparalleled. A study undertaken by Dr. Aloo Dastur and Dr. Usha Mehta reflected that a comparative exercise of the social reformers who worked for the emancipation of women, foremost among them was Gandhiji and the second and third positions went to Maharshi Karve and Raja Ram Mohan Roy. However, so far as education for women was concerned, Maharshi Karve stood first, followed by Ramabai Ranade and Naniben Gajjar.<sup>4</sup>

In a resolution passed on the death of the Founder, the Syndicate, at its meeting held on November 11, 1962, described him as a contemporary of great men like Tilak and Gokhale, who lived a rich life and saw fruition of many dreams. In the case of Karve, the dream was giving dignity to Indian women.

Smt. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, while inaugurating the Golden Jubilee of the University in 1966 paid glowing tributes to Karve and his work. She saluted the University not only as a pioneering institution and a centre of enlightenment but as a gift from Karve. She said: "Karve was rightly regarded as Maharshi. As with our rishis of old, the light of faith and reason burned steadily in him. His achievements were won after long years of undeflected quest and with toil and preservice... Such was the dedication, which inspired your University."

### **Meeting of the Inter-University Board of India, Ceylon & Burma: 1963**

My first big challenge came in 1963 when Premilaben agreed to host the meeting of Inter-University Board of India, Ceylon and Burma (now known as the Association of Indian Universities ) at SNTU. The University had limited infrastructure facilities for hosting an international meet. My experience of SNTU administrative system was very brief. There were hardly three or four senior officers. The meeting would be attended by about fifty academics at the helm of university education. On the other hand, it was expected that such a meeting would give a lot of visibility to the work the University was doing for women's education. Again, by then I had gained Premilaben's confidence and Shardaben's support. I knew with their guidance, I would be able to meet the challenge.

The meeting was scheduled for February 1963. The venue was the Conference Hall of the new University building on the sixth floor which was still under construction. The lifts were yet to be installed. I do not recall the number of times I must have climbed the six storeys to see for myself the progress of the work. Fortunately, in spite of all obstacles much of the work could be completed in time for the meeting and the arrangements were appreciated by all the delegates. The deliberations were thus flagged off to a good start. Being the only woman Registrar of an Indian University at that point of time, gave me many advantages.

The meeting of the Board in 1963 at SNTU and the tenure of Premilaben as its first woman President in 1967 and thereafter member of the Executive Committee gave me many opportunities to become familiar with the functioning and role of the Board and interact with academicians of repute.



## **Consolidation of Programmes and Emergence of New Strands : 1960s**

### *Nursing*

In the decade of the 1960s, programmes which had started as a challenge to meet the new role of the women after independence in the 1950s were getting consolidated. The department of Nursing, which had started in 1952 as a Department under the Faculty of Arts, culminated in the establishment of the Leelabai Thackersey College of Nursing in 1964. In the early years, it was an uphill task of removing prejudice against the nursing profession and getting recognition from the Maharashtra and Indian Nursing Councils. Suitable faculty for the programme was also scarce. In view of these difficulties, enrolment came down and the University had to subsidize it, to a large extent, from its funds. Doctors gave their honorary services to build up the college. Dr. Jyoti Trivedi, later Vice-Chancellor from 1980 to 1986, started her association with SNTD mainly through the Nursing Department. Dr. V.H. Joglekar, Dr G. Ganjawalla, Dr. Bansari Maniar, Dr. Kanu Patel and others spared no effort, often climbing five flights of stairs (when the lift would not function) to meet their obligations for a much needed course for the health of the people. I recall the Syndicate and Senate members demanding closure of the course on several occasions. Premilaben with a resilience and faith in what was good for the University and women's advancement held on resolutely, requesting members not to consider finance to be a bar to the continuation of the programme. It was equally difficult to find trained teaching faculty for the course. V.H. Joglekar helped the University tide over this difficulty by taking charge as the honorary Head of the Department prior to 1963. The first full-time qualified nurse to head the Department who joined in 1963 was Ms. S.P. Ratnam, a strong personality but dedicated to the cause. Overcoming many difficulties, she gave the college a functional structure. The Maharashtra Nursing Council recog-

nized the first three years of the B.Sc. Nursing course in 1964 and final year in 1965 and Indian Nursing Council recognized it in 1969. Later Smt. Gladys Sigamany succeeded Ratnam and currently Dr. Naina Potdar is the Principal. Naina has been a product of SNDT throughout her career, first as a student, then a member of the faculty and finally, as Principal. The Post graduate course leading to M.Sc. in Nursing, was added in 1976. Today, the Leelabai Thackersey College of Nursing is considered as one of the foremost in the country which provides training through graduate and post-graduate courses as well as super-specialities to match the growing advances in medicine. I have found that the students are not only very disciplined but inspite of long hours of work, always eager to participate in co-curricular activities.

I also recall that in the late 1970s or early 1980s there was a proposal to affiliate the Government Nursing College to SNDT. However, the proposal did not go through. A major difficulty faced by the students of the University was lack of medical colleges and attached hospitals at which they could get practical experience as well as complete their practical teaching. The practical programme, therefore, depended to a great extent on the cooperation from medical colleges and hospitals attached to the University of Bombay. Ultimately, an operational structure was worked out with the Municipal Colleges of Greater Bombay. Today, there is a great demand for these courses from all over the country and the University has to disappoint many students and parents because it is unable to admit all those who apply.<sup>5</sup>

### *Education*

Departments of Education were set up under the SNDT College of Arts for Women, Bombay, and Poona in 1951 offering a one year part-time course, leading to the Degree of Bachelor of Teaching, which later got converted to Bachelor of

Education at all the universities in Maharashtra. The B.Ed. Department at Bombay was converted into Premcoover Vithaldas Damodar Thackersey (P.V.D.T.) College of Education for Women in 1959. The part-time B.Ed. course was converted into a full time course in the same year. Shakuntala Mehta, a graduate of SNDT, pursued her studies in USA and returned with fresh ideas. She came back to her alma mater as Principal of the College. I can well realize her frustrations, at the beginning of her career, with lack of facilities; but she persevered and her College came to be rated as one of the leading colleges of education, imparting education through Marathi and Gujarati. The M.Ed. course was instituted in 1958. The UGC, satisfied with its performance, sanctioned five special departments to the college in 1973. The Department of Special Education was added in 1977. These new dimensions have enriched the thrusts of the college. The College was fortunate in having a strong team - Urmila Lakdawalla, A.W. Oak, R. Gangal, Bhanu Shah, Rajni Asher, Yashu Mehta and others under the leadership of Shakuntala Mehta.

The B.Ed. Department at Poona was converted into SNDT College of Education for Women, in 1964 offering B.Ed. and M.Ed. courses (introduced in 1963) under the able leadership of Dr. B.K. Sohoni followed by that of Dr. Vinaybala Mehta.

Currently, in addition to B.Ed. and M.Ed. the University offers M.Phil and Ph.D in Education and Special Education. B.Ed. degree programme is also offered in two affiliated colleges, one each in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

One may wonder at the names of the Nursing and Education Colleges at Bombay. As per the social norms of those days, of re-marrying soon after the wife died, Premlilaben was the third wife of Vithaldas Thackersey. The first two were Leelabai and Premcooverbai, both of whom died at a young age.

The Colleges were named in their memory, when Premlilaben offered donations to these Colleges. This action clearly highlights the generosity of Premlilaben, which is rather rare these days in similar circumstances. Her own name was a combination of Premcoover and Lila, given to her by her husband Vithaldas Thackersey.<sup>6</sup>

### *Home Science*

The discipline of Home Science gained a lot of importance in the country around 1955 through a contract between the Government of India and Technical Co-operation Mission of U.S.A. The University responded by setting up a Department of Home Science in 1956, and under the Government of India's Technical Co-operation Mission, commenced its association with the Tennessee University in U.S.A. The year 1960 saw the introduction of the degree course in Home Science. Nirmala Kher was the first Principal, after being trained under the TCM programme. She gave it a solid foundation, and left no stone unturned for its growth. In 1962, the Department became a college named after Sir Vithaldas, as Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College of Home Science. The College was fortunate in having forward-looking dedicated Principals following Nirmala Kher in Kumud Patwa, Mariamma Varghese, Ranjan Parekh, each one adding to the stature of the first Home Science College in Maharashtra.

The need to establish a second Home Science College at its Poona Campus became evident as the demand for this subject increased. In 1964 the SNTD College of Home Science started functioning at the Poona Campus with Freny Tarapore as its first Principal. She continued in this position and till her retirement in 1996 was responsible for the building up of the College and introduction of the innovative post-graduate programme in Mass Communications Media for Children with assistance from UNICEF.

In the 1960s, and 1970s, the Home Science courses gained popularity all over the country, gradually shedding the myth that it comprised mainly cooking and interior decoration, establishing it as a discipline equal to other disciplines. This took a lot of effort - lobbying by home scientists, restructuring the courses, shifting the emphasis to the diverse aspects of sociological and economic developments of the time, giving it a more focused career-orientation. With these changing trends, specially through research and varied specializations, it has assumed a professional dimension.

At SNTD, with assistance from the UGC during different Plan periods, the colleges have expanded vertically as well as horizontally. An array of courses, ranging from diplomas to degrees, leading upto Ph.D. degree as well as post-graduate diplomas, catering for professional opportunities, are offered. Today, SNTD turns out a large number of Home Science graduates including doctoral candidates. Students in Home Science make up almost ten per cent of the total enrolment.

Currently, in addition to the two conducted colleges of Home Science, four Home Science colleges are affiliated to the University. During my Vice-Chancellorship, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College was recommended for autonomous status to enable it to experiment and innovate and thus enrich the programme with greater flexibility. The programme could not go through at that point of time due to administrative hurdles at Government level. Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College of Home Science in 1995, has been declared the first autonomous college under SNTD. When the UGC introduced the programme of autonomous colleges, universities in the South accepted it and benefited through it. In the capital and the north there was reluctance. The faculty viewed it with suspicion and the debate remained inconclusive. Maharashtra, too, lagged behind due to financial constraints and the feeling that the programme would

become elitist.

As far as my personal view is concerned, if the faculty and management are ready to accept this change, the potential is great and the challenge would be exciting. The statutes related to autonomous colleges are accepted for universities in Maharashtra but the impact of the autonomous colleges, on the university system in Maharashtra remains to be assessed yet.<sup>7</sup>

### *Library*

When I joined as Registrar, to orient myself about the University, I visited the library, which was at that time housed in the basement of the office building. I was pleasantly surprised to meet Smt. Vidyut Khandwala, University Librarian who had been my classmate at Elphinstone College. Under her guidance, and that of Shri M.K.R. Naidu and now Ms. Harsha Parekh, it is one of the outstanding university libraries with branches in Pune and Juhu. In 1985 the University was awarded the challenging task of providing information services to academics in the country in special subjects. The use of computers in this activity developed. The library entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with IDRC (International Development Research Centre, Canada) during my tenure as Vice-Chancellor and through this programme is training other librarians in the use of computer software applications. The Hansraj Pragji Thackersey School of Library Science was established in 1961 to provide theoretical perspectives with intensive training programme and, currently, the course which started as a diploma, is offered at graduate and post-graduate level through a timely donation from Sunderbai Thackersey. Premililaben and Sunderbai continued their objective to use wealth for educating others, which they had vowed to do when their husbands died.

If we notice the evolution of most of these colleges, they started as Departments under the Arts College mainly due to

lack of physical facilities and were gradually converted to independent colleges which progressed and flourished. I have seen these institutions develop and progress. The UGC, during the various development plans, gave encouraging guidance and assistance, particularly to the Education and Home Science colleges. I recall the many dialogues the faculty and I, under the leadership of Vice-Chancellors, had with the UGC officials. At that time, the UGC teams consisting of eminent academics, used to visit universities to discuss the proposals. This gave them an opportunity for a first hand experience of the progress of programmes and activities. This strategy changed. When I became the Vice-Chancellor, I had to lead my team to the UGC office.

I also remember about the change in State Government policies of matching grants, which during the Sixth and Seventh Plan brought the University into great difficulty in respect of faculty positions causing a financial stress and instability among faculty.

### *Humanities*

Shri D.S. Phatak was the Principal of the SNTD Arts college, the second conducted college of the University, established in 1931. Shri Phatak took everyone under his wings and helped them to flower individually and through their institutions, making maximum personal adjustments. While writing these memoirs, I miss him. His wise counsel was unstintingly available to me. He would come every day, even for a few minutes, to ask me how I was and whether there were any problems I wanted to discuss with him. He was a trusted member of the SNTD family. If he were alive today his help in filling in the gaps in writing these memoirs would have been invaluable. Later on the Commerce wing was added to the College. The College offered instruction in three media, Marathi, Gujarati and English. On the Arts side, to give relevance to education, several restructured courses and enrichment programmes became part of the curricu-

lum. In the 1970s, the post graduate departments of the Arts college were separated out from the undergraduate programmes to strengthen research. Unlike other Universities the work of all these 13 post graduate departments is co-ordinated by a Director. The courses offered are Masters, M.Phil and Ph.D in Humanities, Social Sciences and Fine Arts.

### *Student Services*

The student services programme was started in 1968 to help students have a well-rounded life. The idea emerged from a Seminar held at the University by United States Educational Foundation in India (USEFI). Dr. Olive Reddick, Director of USEFI, enlightened participants about the need of this focus in the University system. In 1966, I was selected by USEFI to be a member of the group which visited the U.S.A. to learn about student services which could then be adapted for the Indian situation. This was my second visit abroad. In 1965, I had been invited by the West German Government to be a part of the two-member delegation to visit educational institutions in West Germany. I accompanied Dr. V.N. Gadgil, the renowned educationist and politician. It was a learning experience in more ways than one.

On my return from U.S.A., I placed my proposal for setting up the Department of Students' Services before the Vice-Chancellor and through her before the deciding authorities (Academic council and Syndicate) of the University. By then Bhanu Shah and Harshida Pandit also received an orientation for this programme in U.S.A. The programme was approved and Dr. Kalindi Randeri was appointed as a full time Dean of Students' Services after some time. Till such time, I looked after the activities, in addition to my administrative responsibilities as Registrar and developed the programme. SNDT was the first University to have this office of Dean of Students.<sup>8</sup>



Gradually, the importance of student services was recognized by other universities and when the University Act was revised in 1974, a statutory position was given to the Director of Students' Welfare. The nomenclature created serious problems for the University. The position of Dean of Students, though practically undertaking the same activities, was not accepted by the Government for grant purposes. It was unfortunate that the University, while treading new ground, had often to face hindrances which took a long time to overcome.

During this period, three colleges from Maharashtra and four from Gujarat got affiliated to the University. The total enrolment of number of students and staff increased tremendously. In spite of this, the struggle continued but there was a difference. The University was receiving greater acceptance, growing from strength to strength through the years, "a testimony to the power of faith".

### **Golden Jubilee of the University: 1966**

The University was nearing completion of 50 years of its existence. Plans were afoot to celebrate the Golden Jubilee which marked a turning point in the University's expansion and growth. Several innovations and initiatives were triggered during the year. Premlilaben invited Smt. Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India to inaugurate the celebrations. I had accompanied her when she met Indira Gandhi. The meeting lasted hardly a few minutes since the Prime Minister accepted her invitation immediately. Indira Gandhi knew Premlilaben since she was a little girl, studying in Poona. Premlilaben had played host to her mother Kamala as well as her father Pandit Nehru at her residence at Parnakutir.

For the function, a big shamiana was built between the two University buildings. The ground overflowed with people from all walks of life - academics, students, public figures, industrial-

ists, representatives of women's organizations and many more. There was great enthusiasm among the faculty. Dr. P.V. Cherian, Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of the University presided over the function. Shri V.P. Naik, Chief Minister was also present and he publicly announced the granting of a plot of about 21 acres of land at Juhu to the University in 1964 for its expansion programmes. Premlila Thackersey, Vice-Chancellor, recollected her association with the Nehru family and paid her personal tributes to the work of Karve. She said : "A small seed, sown by Bharat Ratna D.K. Karve in 1916, has grown into a big tree with its branches spread over the whole of India. Karve had no easy task when he started the University in 1916. In those days opinions differed and people turned their back on him; but Karve a great social reformer and a staunch believer in women's education, did not give up his idea as he was a fighter. Today we see the realization of his great dream. It is a matter of satisfaction that God gave Maharshi Karve life long enough to see the fruits of his hard labour."

The University decided to celebrate the Golden Jubilee with a dual purpose - to create a greater consciousness among the public to fulfill its responsibility towards the progress of women's education and to review and reconceptualize the goals of the University to meet the growing aspirations of the newer generation by diversifying its activities. At the crossroads of half a century of its existence, the enrolment had gone up to 8,000 students, 16 institutions, 336 faculty members and budget of Rs. 35 lakhs. Compared to other universities the size was quite modest; but its modest size and compact structure enabled the University to alter its programmes and through collective effort, make a conscious commitment to meet the growing concerns faced by women.

On this occasion, Premilaben saluted Smt. Sharda Mehta who was present at the function even at the age of 85. She had

been instrumental in establishing colleges affiliated to SNTU in Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat and thus extending the University's jurisdiction.

Responding to the Vice-Chancellor, Indira Gandhi, after paying her tribute to Karve, spoke about other outstanding men like Rammohan Roy, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Gandhi who espoused the cause of women which was furthered by her father Pandit Nehru after Independence, giving a "direction to social change, bringing women into the economic and cultural front as a recognition of the worth of the Indian women". She quoted her father who while speaking about the independence struggle remarked: "Most of us menfolk were in prison. Then a remarkable thing happened. Our women came to the front and took charge of the struggle. There was an avalanche of them, which took not only the British Government, but their own men-folk by surprise". Nehru attached the greatest importance to the adoption of the Hindu code which was as important to him as the building up of parliamentary institutions. Over the years since independence, the working woman has come into her own. In spite of this progress, social equality is lacking as yet.

The President of the Golden Jubilee Celebration was the Union Minister for Railways, Shri S.K. Patil. Under his leadership and that of Premlilaben Thackersey a number of activities were planned. The Golden Jubilee Convocation was addressed by Shri M.C. Chagla, Union Minister for External Affairs, on December 29, 1966, highlighting the vision of Karve, linking the progress of the country to the education and position of women. He pointed to the advance of women in political, social and economic spheres. His message to the students at this special convocation was that they should enhance the dignity of womanhood by preaching the gospel of education to women who were not as fortunate as the graduates of this University.

The concluding function of the Jubilee was held in 1967 and was presided over by Dr. Zakir Hussain, President of India. The highlight of the function was the release of the Golden Jubilee Commemoration Volume at the hands of the President.

The Volume is a memento of an important milestone in the life of the University as well as a scholarly contribution in the field of women's higher education. Dr. Madhuri Shah, Chairperson of the Golden Jubilee Commemoration Volume Committee, in her introductory remarks, brought to focus the 'range and depth' of the tasks of a University and specially a university like SNDT, being in a unique position of being the only women's university in India. She further mentioned that the demonstration of confidence by society after 50 years of intensive work should exert a sobering influence and at the same time, be an inspiration for greater effort to produce true "university women in as full a sense as can be found anywhere in the world". Premlilaben's satisfaction at the growth of the University is evident in her expression in the article "As I look Back - My Fifty Years' Association with the SNDT Women's University", published in the Commemoration Volume. To quote - "When I see from my wide open office window, hundreds of young girls - Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Christian - in a variety of their characteristic, regional dresses, chirping merrily in Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi and English, on the whole campus, in fact as busy as a beehive, a feeling of inexpressible satisfaction soothes my heart."<sup>9</sup>

The first college to be affiliated to the University was started by Hingne Stree Shikshan Samstha on July 6, 1916. In 1920, this college was taken over by the University and shifted to the Campus at Poona and came to be known as SNDT College for Women. The Golden Jubilee of the College was also celebrated in the same year as the Golden Jubilee of the University and the function was presided over by the Governor and Chancellor of

the University, Dr. P.V. Cherian. Today on the Maharshi Karve Campus at Pune, three Colleges - Arts, Home Science and Education - are functioning, together with the Premlila Thackersey Kanyashala. Like D.S. Phatak, Dr. Sharyu Bal was a dedicated Principal of the Poona College, when I joined. Dr. K. S. Kelkar and Dr H V Inamdar who succeeded Sharyu Bal kept up the tradition set by her. In their scale of dedication, it was observed that the institution was placed before self.

### **The New Campus : 1968**

The University was expanding fast. The physical facilities at Churchgate and Poona campuses, the authorities felt, would soon be insufficient for the growth of the University. Premlilaben started negotiating with the Government for land for a third campus. In fact, the process had commenced in late 1950s. The plot of land near Juhu which was offered was a creekland with a deep stream flowing through it. When I was young, I lived at Santacruz and had often seen the plot filled with 6 to 8 feet of sea water during high tide. When I first saw that land, I wondered how a University campus could be developed on such a plot. After several negotiations with the Government of Maharashtra and the Bombay Municipal Corporation, 21 acres of undeveloped land was granted to the University for its future development 'revenue free'. When V.P. Naik, Chief Minister of Maharashtra announced this, the University could look to the future development with greater confidence. About the same time, the University of Bombay acquired over 300 acres of land in Kalina. Compared with this vast area, SNDT had a limited new area but then SNDT was much smaller than Bombay University and those of us who belonged to SNDT were happy with our acquisition.

Several technical details had to be attended to before the plot could be developed. I remember the number of times Premlilaben would take her problems to Shri N.V. Modak, a

member of the SNTD Building Committee and formerly the Chief of Engineering Department of Bombay Municipal Corporation. His guidance at every point had been most valuable and I learnt many lessons from his wisdom pertaining to buildings and development of the campus. This learning stood me in good stead later when neither Premlila Thackersey nor N.V. Modak were there to guide me. No sooner than one hurdle was crossed, another obstacle sprang up before the authorities. No developmental activities could take place before the land was filled. Where was the money and who would donate without a name being associated with the project?

During the Silver Jubilee of the University in 1942, Jaykar had referred to Premlilaben as the 'third Royal Beggar' after Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Malaviyaji. How appropriate was his comment! Premlilaben, once again, started the donation drive taking advantage of the Golden Jubilee of the University. Her strategy was to start filling the kitty from her Charitable Trust. Then she would go with the begging bowl to others. Her contacts with industrialists and business people were as strong as her contacts with national leaders. She would take me with her when she went to see members of Birla, Tata, Mafatlal and other industrial houses. Everyone held Premlilaben and the cause she upheld in great respect. The money collected was used for land filling and to build a wall to stop encroachment. The land was a Golden Jubilee gift to the University. Further development could take place on the campus under the developmental Plans of the UGC only because of this first crucial step. I clearly recall the effort put in by Shri Shirish Barodia, Deputy Registrar, a lover of trees, in greening the campus. He must have brought truckloads of saplings to the campus. The green fringe of the campus which is a source of joy to all today is a consequence of his enthusiasm.

For some years thereafter, there was no visible progress on

the campus. Premlilaben invited internationally famed Shri Charles Correa to give a plan for its development. According to his philosophy the same building should provide academic, welfare and residential facilities for continuous interaction. The University Grants Commission during the Fourth Plan period approved a composite building to be constructed on the new campus to house the Home Science College, the Education College, the Library and the Hostel. Endless hours were spent by the faculty, particularly by Nirmala Kher, Kumud Patwa, Shakuntala Mehta and Vidyut Khandwala in planning details to match the requirements. On many occasion there would be divergence of views and heated debate on aesthetic versus practicability and, often, I had to step in to arrive at a meeting point. The building took a long time for completion but has a special significance on the campus.

During the Birth Centenary of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey, Premlilaben gave a donation of Rs. 10 lakhs for constructing the auditorium on the new campus. Unfortunately, due to financial constraints and Premlilaben's sudden death in 1977 it is still incomplete. I remember very vividly her last visit to the Juhu campus. She went inside the auditorium and had detailed discussions with Burjor Major, a representative of the building contractors Shapoorji Pallonji. She told him to go ahead but her wish remained unfulfilled.

Although the Vice-Chancellor and members of the Building Committee took the major decisions, as the Registrar of the University, I had to co-ordinate work with four different architects and, at times, it was a difficult task.

### **Seventy-fifth Birth Celebrations of Dr. Premlila Thackersey: 1969**

In 1969, Premlila Thackersey Felicitation Committee was set up under the Presidentship of Shri Madhukar Rao

Chaudhuri, Minister of Education, Government of Maharashtra. Nearly 30 women's organizations sponsored the celebration jointly with SNDT on September 27, 1969. Her services as a "pioneer and architect of women's education in the country" were recognized by one and all. Her mission in life was aptly described as "constructive and creative, dedicated to those things which are enduring and which outlast life." Madhukar Rao Chaudhuri compared her life to "a poem of dedication to the cause of women's education and emancipation. The promise she had made to herself though a difficult one, when Sir Vithaldas placed before her the ideal of Ramabai Ranade and explained to her that wealth was to be used for the welfare of others, was kept intact, till she passed away". She not only collected large sums of money for the development of the University, but added to the original donation of her husband from time to time for the University and other causes.

1969 was also the year when she retired as the Vice-Chancellor after being at the helm of the University for 12 years; but as Shri V.K.R.V. Rao, Union Minister for Education and Youth Services, in his Convocation Address (September 26, 1969) rightly observed, "We know that Lady Thackersey can in a sense, never retire from this University which will ever live in the softest corner of her heart". How true were these words! The function she attended before she passed away was the Convocation of the University held on November 29, 1977. Her words to me before she left the University were: 'Kamalini, is there any work?' It was a great shock to me and a personal loss when I learnt that she left this world in the early hours of the next day on November 30th, as if choosing the birth date of her husband, Vithaldas Thackersey. Her life was like a splendid torch which burnt brightly till the end.

#### **After Premlila Thackersey : 1969 onwards**

On the retirement of Premlila Thackersey, Sharda Divan was



elected the Vice-Chancellor. She was born into a family of legal luminaries and married into a family deeply involved in the national movement adhering to the philosophy of Gandhiji. The two lifestyles were very different but she had the strength to adjust to both.

Sharda Divan was a close associate of Premilaben for many years. In 1936, she took up the Registrarship of the SNDT Indian Women's University when its headquarters were shifted to Bombay. She started her career at SNDT in Mhatre Building at Chowpatty and then shifted to the crumbling military bungalow where the Patkar Hall building stands to-day. A banyan tree grew outside the military bungalow. It continues to be the centre-piece of the campus, a symbol of the University, spreading the branches in all directions. On many occasions, she has referred to this phase of her career with nostalgia, remembering fondly the three clerks, Pendse, Kelker and Kale, with whom she ran the University when the College and University administrative unit shared the bungalow. Enrolment in the late 1930s was over 100 and the budget was a mere Rs. 1.5 lakhs. It was, indeed, an uphill task, but being a strong and courageous woman she treated these challenges with optimism. In our conversations, she would often mention being fortunate in being a part of the history of this pioneering University which gave a special meaning to her life.

She often recalled her debut at the Wilson College, where she was the only female student in History and Economics classes. This was in stark contrast to the SNDT campus where thousands of girls moved freely. She did not find this a constraint in any way due to her liberal and enlightened families on both the sides. In fact, she completed her graduation and post-graduation after marriage.

Sharda Divan was Vice-Chancellor from 1969 to 1975. This

period, following the Golden Jubilee, was an active one for the University. All concerned were excited about scaling new heights, opening new vistas, adding to the distinctive identity of the University. Just as Premila Thackersey depended heavily on B.N. Gokhale and C.C. Shah, Sharda Divan received excellent support from Smt. Sulabha Panandikar, Dr. T.K. Tope, Shri Pravinchandra Gandhi and Dr. D.D. Shah. Her personal contribution in the development of sports and library was substantial. She was a lover of sports and a strict disciplinarian. Once in the courtyard of the Churchgate Campus, while taking a salute from the N.C.C. cadets, it started to rain. She pushed aside the umbrella brought to protect her and stood erect, pointing to the soaking cadets. Even to this day, at the age of ninety three, she stands erect, a role model instilling discipline and good values in those around.

Soon after she became Vice-Chancellor, the Government of Maharashtra decided to revise the University Acts. The Registrars of the Universities formed a Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. A.U. Shaikh, the then Education Secretary to undertake the first exercise. The dialogue continued for a long period. Although this was my first initiation into the process of revising University Acts, it was an important exposure to the legal aspects of university management.

The Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of Universities in Maharashtra, Dr. Ali Yavar Jung, took a keen interest in University affairs and was not merely a ceremonial head, having been a Vice-Chancellor earlier. He presided over the meetings of the Joint Board of Vice-Chancellors. Often, these meetings were held at SNDT. Generally, the Registrars would prepare the background materials and brief Vice-Chancellors on important issues. One such matter was the recommendations of revision of Acts of Universities. At that time,

the concerned Secretaries of the state Government and sometimes the Ministers would also join the discussion.

When Acts of Universities in Maharashtra were finally revised in 1974, we were surprised and disappointed to see many changes from the recommendations made at Vice-Chancellors meetings. There was a feeling of frustration, after the time and energy spent on this exercise, keeping the needs of Universities in the forefront.

As far as SNDT is concerned, inter-alia, the new Act had two important impacts on the appointment of Vice-Chancellors. In the earlier Act of 1949, at SNDT, the Senate elected the Vice-Chancellor and the name was sent to the Chancellor for approval. There was no age bar. Vice-Chancellors of all non-agricultural universities in Maharashtra were ex-officio members of the Senate of all the universities. The post of the Vice-Chancellor was honorary and also a part-time one.

The Acts of 1974, promulgated a uniform procedure to be followed at all universities for the appointment of Vice-Chancellors through a Search Committee to be finally approved by the Chancellor. In addition, the revised Acts made it mandatory for all universities to have a full-time Vice-Chancellor. Sharda Divan was caught in the period of change over. Her term which expired in 1972, was extended in view of the revised Act coming into force soon. Thus, when the 1974 Act was promulgated Sharda Divan became the first full-time Vice-Chancellor.

What was my reaction to this change after 14 years of working with honorary Vice-Chancellors? Initially, I wondered what the full time Vice-Chancellor's role would be, particularly in a small and compact University like SNDT. Would it curtail the freedom I enjoyed in my work? Would my relations with the faculty, which were very close, change? How would I adjust to

the transition? When the time came, I was able to face the change without any difficulties.

Going back to the time Sharda Divan became Vice-Chancellor, during her tenure, in 1971, the Department of Continuing Education was established at the University. It was a new dimension. Dr. D.S. Kothari, Chairman, University Grants Commission whenever he visited Bombay would stay with Premilaben. Both had several common interests culturally and traditionally. I had, therefore, many opportunities to meet him and seek his advice. On one such occasion around 1970, he drew my attention to the new programme of Continuing Education under extension work, that the UGC had launched. He felt a women's university like ours could contribute much through this outreach dimension. In fact, the seeds of this activity were actually sown in the past. In 1930, B.D. Karve, son of the Founder, under the SNTD College at Poona, organized "A vacation course in Education" with the help of distinguished educationists. In 1939-40, due to the efforts of Mr. Trollip, Mr. Mandlik and Shri C.C. Shah, a series of lectures on Reforms of Hindu Marriage Law and Divorce Bill were arranged at SNTD College, Bombay followed by a lecture series on Law and Religions in 1944-45. It is on record that a number of prominent personalities visited the University and its colleges and gave lectures on various subjects. The University authorities had the vision to transcend their ivory tower existence and to think of an agency like the present Department of Adult and Continuing Education and Extension Work and to throw open its doors for community work.

In view of the suggestion of D.S. Kothari, I did some research on this new area, discussed the proposal with Premilaben Thackersey and Shardaben who was the Vice-Chancellor and forwarded it to UGC. The Department of Continuing Education, the first in the State of Maharashtra, com-

menced work in 1971 after a needs survey. In view of my keen interest in this area, Sharda Divan would take me with her to conferences which were convened by the UGC to help in organising and conducting this new venture particularly by Dr. Mohan Sinha Mehta, Vice-Chancellor of Rajasthan University, who was an eminent academician deeply involved in adult education and greatly respected by his colleagues. The country owes a lot to his initiatives at the UGC level for extension being accepted as the third dimension, in addition to teaching and research, of the system of higher education.

Since the University had not found a person to head the Department, initially, the programme was co-ordinated by Smt. Mamta Desai of TISS and I was looking after the organizational details with the involvement of Shakuntala Mehta, Neera Desai, Suresh Dalal, Harshida Pandit, Kusum Dangle and many others under the guidance of Sharda Divan. This interaction brought in many advantages. During these programmes the University's work received a lot of visibility and society appreciated this new thrust as an innovative function which was not as yet thought of by sister universities.

There was interaction not only between academics from various disciplines and also with representatives of the community and voluntary organizations. These programmes made the faculty more aware of new needs of society and many being members of Boards of Studies, they restructured their courses, injecting greater relevance, incorporating practice into theory. The University gradually spread the programme by starting sub-centres at its Poona Campus and at its affiliated college at Bhavnagar and also a sub-centre in Hyderabad. The programmes were supervised by Smt. Freney Tarapore, Shri Jayendra Trivedi and Dr. Perin Vakharia, respectively. It was a network operating through an informal structure.

SNDT had thrown its doors open to the community since the 1930s as this outreach dimension was accepted as one of its important obligations. In view of this convention, when initially awareness-generating programmes based on social problems and short courses were planned, they were kept open to men although the focus of the programmes was on women. Many a times, hardly any men participated in them, except when the area was of interest to them. Later, some programmes for updating knowledge and in service type of courses were kept open but with a proviso that these being non-statutory efforts, the certificates would be awarded by the Department of Continuing Education. The authorities were very clear about the university's statutory and non-statutory roles.

Later, when adult education policies crystallized at national level, adult literacy programme was added to continuing education. This programme has also seen much transformation but the aspect which stands out is the inclusion of students in the literacy programme, making them aware of their responsibility towards the community. I have been associated in policy formulation of continuing and adult education at the all India level since the programme took off in the seventies and helped give it an operative form. The UGC took a bold step in 1977 when it accepted extension as the third dimension equal to teaching and research.

My interest and contribution in this field continues to this day as a member of UGC and University Committees. I have recorded my experiences in this area in a book titled "Signposts for a Learning Society", which has proved useful to other universities starting this new department. The adult education programme at UGC was at its peak when Madhuri Shah was the Chairperson. At that time, I had many opportunities to work with stalwarts in the field like Prof. Ramlal Parikh, Dr. R.G. Takwale, Dr. M.L. Mehta and others and to concretize the con-

cept through special reports and manuals. The UGC report "Extension as the Third Dimension" where I was a member of the UGC editorial panel, is considered an important reference document even to this day.

During my association with this programme, I have been a witness to several obstacles faced by the functionaries working in this field in being accepted by the academic community as their equals. In spite of UGC recognizing extension as the third dimension, many academics even today are not ready to accept the need of this dimension. This is a part of the eternal struggle between conventional and new values and importance attached to change. Although the Maharashtra Universities Act of 1994, has given some recognition to the programme by establishing a Statutory Board to overview academic and extension activities, the Department continues to be isolated, hindering its integration in mainstream disciplines. It is quite evident that in the coming decades, non-formal education will have a significant role to play, particularly in a fast changing society, in strengthening national and economic development through an educational alternative for future society.

### **Birth Centenary Celebration of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey: 1973**

It is clear that the University's role was expanding exponentially. Changes took place as a result of outside forces and as a response to fresh aspirations from inside; but with such expansion came stress, dilemmas and greater complexities, reactions to which were varied.

These emerged clearly at the Round Table Discussion which took place in 1973. This was the first major exercise undertaken by the University to examine the relevance of a separate Women's University and the role of SNTU. Sharda Divan was

the Vice-Chancellor. A year long preparation had preceded the Round Table. Besides a working paper, special papers on pattern of courses, development of the University, entrants to the college of SNTD and on the role and relevance of the University in changing times, which included views of the faculty, were used as background material.

I have very happy memories of this stimulating experience, particularly with Shakuntala Mehta, Neera Desai, Vidyut Khandwala, Dhairyabala Vora and Suma Chitnis in planning and preparing for the Round Table, in bringing faculty together from different disciplines and giving them an opportunity to express their expectations from a unique institution like SNTD. The Report of the Round Table has been found useful by many scholars, researchers and faculty keen to learn about the progress of SNTD. As a positive outcome of the Round Table, when a donation was received from the Thackersey and Kapadia families, the Research Unit on Women's Studies was set up. Later it was converted into a Research Centre for Women's Studies.

In the year following Sir Vithaldas Thackersey's Birth Centenary, in recognition of Premlilaben's services to women's education, the Government of India conferred the Padma Bhushan on her in 1974. I had accompanied her to the function held at Darbar Hall in Delhi. The President of India, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed, stepped down from the dais to hand over the award to her. This was a respect paid not only to her age but to her dignity.

### **Diamond Jubilee of the University : 1976**

#### *Entering New Arenas*

The University was getting ready to celebrate its Diamond Jubilee, falling in the year 1976. Madhuri Shah succeeded Sharda Divan as a full-time Vice-Chancellor in 1975.



My association with Madhuri Shah began when I was undergoing training for the Bachelor of Teaching programme. I vividly recall my first meeting with her when she came to observe my practical work as a student of Bachelor of Teaching (B.T.) I was surprised to see a stout, traditionally dressed person as I had heard so much about her excellence. As soon as the lesson was over, I saw excitement sparkling in her eyes and her few encouraging and humorous remarks made a lasting impact on me. This initial acquaintance blossomed over the years into affection and deep respect. She became a member of the Syndicate of the University in 1961. Some faculty members were her students or had interacted with her and, hence, she was familiar with SNDT.

While preparing for the Golden Jubilee, when Madhuriben was the Education Officer at the Bombay Municipal Corporation, I used to meet her and seek her guidance. In between her busy schedule, with officers and public continuously in and out of the room, she would not only find time for me but with affection and in a relaxed manner, discuss my plans for the Golden Jubilee.

When she joined the University as the Vice-Chancellor, we were looking forward to a dynamic approach through innovative programmes as her expertise and interest covered a large canvas of operation. The University in its earlier phases of development, had geared its programme to the changed concepts of women's education, enabling women to pursue different careers suited to their aptitudes. The reflections of some of the eminent people deeply involved in the educational process, the International Women's Year and the International Women's Decade and the new interpretations of women's position and status have given a direction which has had significant influence on the paradigms of a University like SNDT as was visible in its courses and activities, particularly as its Diamond Jubilee Year coincided with the International Year for Women. Once again,

Indira Gandhi inaugurated the Jubilee at the University's first campus in Pune on December 11, 1976, which was dedicated to Maharshi Karve and named after him as Maharshi Karve Vidya Vihar. The Juhu Campus bears the name of the donor and is named Vithaldas Thackersey Vidyavihar. Thus the University paid homage to the two individuals to whom it owes a lifelong debt.

Dr. Ali Yavar Jung was the Chancellor of the University and had given his personal attention in planning the celebrations. It was a sad day for the University as the Chancellor passed away that very evening. The University lost a friend.

The Diamond Jubilee of the University was a watershed for advanced and fresh developments. As Madhuri Shah mentioned at that time, it was a period of 'seeing progress', not only to anticipate the needs but even to alter the future through a 'scientific attitude'. The journey so far had been long and arduous but the achievements were worthwhile. New programmes offered tried to adjust to altered needs in an effort to give the best to society. It was a tremendous challenge to work and plan for a future which would give a new vision to women's education.

#### *Innovative Venture : 1976*

The first institution to function on the Juhu Campus, the Women's Polytechnic commenced its work in 1976. It was in the 1970s that the need of vocational education for women acquired importance. The University wanted to set the pace in providing vocationally suitable training programmes for women which would enable them to enter non-traditional fields through vocational diplomas. Courses related to Medical, Ophthalmic and Food Technology, Electronics, Apparel Manufacture and Fashion Designing, Secretarial Practices and others were planned and offered. Expert Committees worked on these courses for a long time to give them a modern utilitarian thrust.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike other Polytechnics which came under the purview of the State Technical Education Board, this Polytechnic was under a University. After a lengthy dialogue with officials of UGC and support of R.K. Chhabra, secretary UGC and G.K. Chandiramani, Education Secretary, Ministry of Education, who were both keen to advance women's education, an exception was made by the UGC and the Ministry of Education, as the Polytechnic would be under a women's university which was expected to give leadership in introducing vocational courses suited for women. This gave us a lot of autonomy in planning and updating the curriculum to keep pace with growing demands. This strategy has borne fruit and the best of students are attracted to join the Polytechnic. At times, there is frustration at the lack of links with the mainstream. Wherever possible, the university has established this link with advanced University programmes. The degree culture continues to persist and, often, mere diplomas and certificates, though more meaningful for careers, are not accepted easily by society. The University authorities were keen to associate the name of Premlilaben with the Polytechnic. Since the Polytechnic building was constructed from grants from UGC and State Government, this could not be automatically done. The UGC normally did not permit universities to associate names of individuals with buildings unless the person was a national figure. The University wrote to the UGC forwarding the proposal and the UGC recognizing Premlilaben's contribution to the University, to its development and women's education, approved the proposal and the Polytechnic came to be known as the Premlila Vithaldas Polytechnic for Women. Today it offers nearly 10 middle level vocational specializations. Since its inception, Kalindi Randeri headed the institution with vigour, till she retired in April 1996.

### **The Years after the Diamond Jubilee : 1977 and onwards**

Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College of Home Science which

was established in 1964, was functioning at the Churchgate campus of the University. The University was keen to see it expand since it was the first Home Science college in the state of Maharashtra. It was decided to shift it to the Juhu Campus which offered more facilities. Accepting a new habitat was a struggle but, with a firm hand, Madhuri Shah saw the transfer through in 1977. Having gone there and experienced the facilities of a new campus, acceptance of the new locale was easy. The college offered several specializations at graduate and post-graduate level. The UGC recognizing the achievements of the programme, conferred the Department of Special Assistance (DSA) status on the two departments of Family Resource Management and Food Science and Nutrition. National and international linkages were developed through co-operative programmes.

Under programmes supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, the Post-graduate Department has extended its services to an urban slum in Andheri, Bombay, where students and faculty work for improving the quality of life of the community through an integrated focus on literacy, health, social awareness and income generation, exposing the students to realities of life through extension work.

Changing the habitat, while it caused anguish to faculty in the beginning, was in the long run a godsend as witnessed by its rapid expansion.

The P.V.D.T. College of Education was also to be shifted to Juhu. Later, it was realized that since new colleges of Education had been established in the western suburbs, the College will meet a better need from the Churchgate campus. The space that was available was utilized to house the Centre for Women's Studies and the Department of Distance Education. In spite of

these expanded facilities, the pace of growth is so rapid that the problem of space continues.

The Pharmacy College - C.U. Shah College of Pharmacy - which today offers courses leading to B.Pharm., M.Pharm. and Ph.D. facilities for post-doctoral research commenced work in 1980 at the Juhu campus. Since the University did not have a medical faculty, as a first step, it established the Pharmacy college which is a priority field for women after medicine. The first principal of the college was Dr. Malti Baichwal followed by Dr. S G Deshpande.

To Madhuri Shah goes the credit of the introduction of new offerings in science and technology, commerce and special education. A significant contribution was the 'Open University Programme' which she introduced with courage and foresight, bringing higher education to the doorstep of women desirous of learning through a flexible approach. The programme has provided opportunity to many women to join mainstream through this bridge course. In addition, she intensified the correspondence course programme, strengthened the Research Centre for Women's Studies to help women determine their role towards attaining equality. Her great concern was making education relevant by introducing restructured courses and reforms in examinations.

Working closely with her was often a strain. It was difficult to keep pace with her and her expectations. Her working style was quite different from that of previous Vice-Chancellors. Through this experience, I was influenced by her new orientation in education and specially women's education. I imbibed her modern outlook and this influenced my work. I was particularly impressed by her philosophy of life-long learning which has become the philosophy of my life too, which I continue to pursue with commitment.

One of my main concerns in my long journey at SNTU was to offer the best opportunity to the students, whatever their level. On occasions, when I was frustrated, Madhuri Shah would give her rationalised view. She firmly believed that talent existed in every human being, maybe to a greater or lesser degree, and the role of a university like SNTU, was to offer adequate opportunities to exploit this strength. The progress of the individual was best measured through advance made by her between entry and exit points and not through comparisons as in institutions which were highly competitive. This nurturing process would be the measure of success of the faculty and the University and a matter of deep satisfaction to all concerned. This advice of Madhuriben made an everlasting impression on my mind.

Madhuri Shah's association with the University drew talented faculty to its doors. Suresh Dalal, well-known poet, was one of them who not only gave a new direction to the Gujarati Department of the University but motivated many outside his discipline to become creative writers.

During Madhuriben's tenure, Prof. A.N. Kothare, a retired stalwart and a veteran scientist from the University of Bombay, started his involvement with SNTU. He had been Madhuriben's Professor at St. Xavier's College and had a very high regard for her and great confidence in her capacities. The offering in Analytical Chemistry was started in 1978 under the SHPT College of Science mainly due to his intervention. At the SNTU Campus, he was a friend and philosopher to all from the Vice-Chancellor to the people in the administration. It was a matter of great satisfaction to him and to the University that hundreds of women science graduates could benefit from the special M.Sc. programme offered through this college to women science graduates to move further in their career. Kothare Saheb belonged to the Bombay University; but when he came to be associated with SNTU, it became equally dear to him.

Shri Vijay Merchant, nephew of Sir Vitaldas Thackersey had, for some years, been closely associated with the affairs of the University as a representative of the Thackersey family. During Madhuri Shah's Vice-Chancellorship his support and involvement were even more. Prof. Ram Joshi came to be associated with the University after Dr. T.K. Tope, prior to their becoming Vice-Chancellors of the University of Bombay and this association brought the two universities closer. Shri Pratap Gandhi and Shri Boman Behram were other stalwarts during her tenure, and that of her successor, to whom the University could look upto for legal advice.

### **Towards Further Vocationalization and Professionalisation : 1981 and onwards**

In 1981 Madhuri Shah was appointed the Chairperson of University Grants Commission, the apex body of higher education. She was the first woman to hold this high office and was the second person after Dr. C.D. Deshmukh from the State of Maharashtra in this position. Dr. Jyoti Trivedi succeeded Madhuri Shah as Vice-Chancellor.

Jyoti Trivedi's task was a difficult one. Madhuri Shah had introduced a number of new ventures. These needed to be consolidated and this task fell heavily on her shoulders. She met this challenge in good measure during her tenure from 1981 to 1986, and added new dimensions. She came from the medical field and knew SNTD well, since she was a Syndicate member since the 1950s and had contributed significantly to the nursing programme, particularly, during the teething period after its establishment in 1953.

Her main concerns were making the technical stream of the University strong and expanding in different directions, particularly at the Vitaldas Thackersey Vidya Vihar at Juhu, sustaining and strengthening the Pharmacy courses and distance education

programmes, establishing the Department of Computer Science, in 1985, which today trains students for Diploma and Master's programme and initiating the programme of Education Management. It was under her tenure that the programme of Library Information Centre took shape. She took lead to start an Institute of Technology for Engineering courses. When I succeeded her, this plan was approved by the UGC and the State Government but unfortunately, later, the entire project had to be postponed. Dr. H.J. Nain and Dr. M.G. Phadnis extended unstinted support to Dr. Trivedi in strengthening the technical programmes.

The University Act of 1974 governing universities in the state of Maharashtra was operative for nearly a decade; but there was dissatisfaction at different levels. The main lacunas were that the objectives of the Acts, which mostly had common provisions, were not defined, the Act was election oriented, some of the authorities too unwieldy and so on. A Committee was appointed during 1983 under the Chairmanship of Ram Takwale, the Vice-Chancellor of Poona University to prepare a draft Model Act; Jyoti Trivedi was also a member. Several meetings were held at SNDT and the secretarial work fell on me as the Registrar. This was a time-consuming and a strenuous exercise but a necessary one. The members went through each section, made new suggestions with comments which were reviewed at the next meeting.

While this draft Model Act was being debated, a proposal was made by Jyoti Trivedi to allow men in SNDT in a few unique, informal courses not available at other universities and which the University had pioneered. However, since the main objective of the Act was to impart higher education to women, the suggestion was not accepted. The uniform Act of 1994, for universities in Maharashtra, continues to honour the special focus of the university. Every exercise related to the University



Acts gave me a greater insight into statutory intricacies. While being associated with these revisions, I came to appreciate that correctly interpreting clauses of the Act needed similar acumen as required by judiciary as an action could be easily challenged and would ultimately be decided in the court. Vice Admiral Shri Latif, Governor of Maharashtra and Chancellor of the Universities took keen interest in the University. Considering changes in the Acts was a critical area and since Jyoti Trivedi was Chairman of Joint Board of Vice-Chancellors, the secretarial work once more was assigned to me. When I became Vice-Chancellor in 1986, a Committee of Vice-Chancellors of Universities in Maharashtra was appointed to prepare a draft revising the 1974 Act. Finally, in 1994 the Maharashtra Universities' Act of 1994 was promulgated after receiving the Chancellor's assent to it.

### **The Role Change: 1986**

The University could boast of eminent Vice-Chancellors before and after it received statutory recognition. Prior to recognition, some of the outstanding Vice-Chancellors who guided the University were Raghunath Paranjpye, D.K.Karve, Sitaram Patkar, Sharda Mehta, H.L. Kaji and Hansa Mehta.

During this period, since the University was functioning under the Society's Act it nominated its own Chancellor. After 1951, when the University got statutory recognition, the University's constitution fell in line with other universities and the Governor of the State was the Chancellor of the Universities in that region. The Vice-Chancellors were nominated by the Chancellor. [The list of Chancellors (prior to recognition) and Vice-Chancellors is given in Appendix-3]. After recognition, since 1951, except for K.M. Jhaveri, I worked as Registrar under all the four Vice-Chancellors who preceded me - Premlila Thackersey, Sharda Divan, Madhuri Shah, Jyoti Trivedi. In the preceding pages, I have tried to highlight their contributions

during their tenure and my involvement in these developments. Even as the Registrar, I was involved in policy making and was an active participant in pioneering ventures. This was a rare opportunity for a Registrar, who is often seen as a mere custodian and an administrator of day to day affairs. When I visited universities abroad and discussed my operations with colleague Registrars and administrators, it was difficult for them to accept my role in academic affairs. The straight jacketing of functioning within their structure, made it difficult for them to comprehend this flexibility.

Each of the four Vice-Chancellors under whom I worked had a distinct personality. Their tenures covered a span of time of more than 30 years. Ideologies were changing fast; though I must admit when a programme was good for the University, tradition was not a bar on accepting a new advance. Every Vice-Chancellor I found had an open mind.

In the earlier years of my career at the University, I had to meet the expectations of honorary Vice-Chancellors. I enjoyed quite a lot of freedom and my initiatives were generally endorsed. With fulltime Vice-Chancellors, after the 1974 University Act, the climate changed. The work philosophy of fulltime Vice-Chancellors was substantially different. I had to readjust not only my work pattern, but there was also a personal role shift to meet the new demands. My role, which hitherto was more of a supporter to the management and facilitator to the faculty, shifted to that of liaison, mediating for a smooth interaction. Were these changes difficult to absorb? Yes; I often found certain situations stressful. In the short period available with the full-time Vice-Chancellors, they wanted to fulfill their vision for the progress of the University as quickly as possible. Time was running short. Often I had to point out procedures necessary in a statutory institution. This created dilemmas. May be I was considered an unimaginative bureaucrat at times.

However, these never became serious issues of conflict as there was a subtle understanding on both sides and institution's well-being had a priority.

Under the regime of all the Vice-Chancellors, while introspecting, I can say that the most important facet of my role was keeping the SNTD team strong and intact - a matter which I value to this day.

In a nutshell, about the Vice-Chancellors with whom I worked, I found them totally identified to the goals of the University. Each one has made a lasting contribution of taking the University to ever increasing heights leaving an indelible impact on its growth leading to its present stature.

I took over as Vice-Chancellor of the University on October 4, 1986 after being its Registrar between 1960 and 1986. I was conscious of my new role. When I became Vice-Chancellor, the question put to me generally was not what my vision was for the University, but how I viewed the two functions. Maybe there was anxiety that after a long tenure as Registrar, I may not grow out of that ethos. Personally, I had no apprehensions, as I had a clarity about my mission in the new position.

### **Institutional Cooperation**

If I have to evaluate my contribution and describe the thrust of achievement during my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, October 4 1986 to November 27, 1989 when I retired voluntarily, cooperative links at national and international level could be considered major thrusts, in addition to strengthening the earlier schemes and programmes.

In the 1970s, university administration at SNTD became more complex, specially with staff unions being formed for the first time. The culture was slowly changing in line with other universities. The need for professional training for administra-

tors, particularly at decision-making levels was uppermost in my mind. I had long discussions with Madhuri Shah as well as Jyoti Trivedi on this need. Whatever strategies administrators like me had learnt were through experience in the field. This was now not enough. Professional inputs were needed.

An excellent opportunity came my way when in 1984, I was invited by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in London to be a member of the committee to prepare a project to be sent to Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for training women administrators in decision making positions. I was invited, especially since I had been the recipient of an administrative staff fellowship of ACU in 1981. The ACU had initiated this programme, as it was conscious of this need for administrators as well as academics. I took this opportunity to visit several institutions in the United Kingdom and Canada and this broadened my vision. This was a beginning of my close association with some of the international agencies, which later resulted in cooperative academic links for the University.

This meeting in 1984, where I interacted with experts from Africa, Australia, U.K., West Indies, Canada resulted in SNTD conducting two workshops for senior women administrators in the university system first in 1986, when I took over as Vice-Chancellor, and the second one in 1988, under the SNTD-ACU-CIDA programme.

All the while I was contemplating how this benefit could be extended to other institutions. I started a dialogue with the Director of National Institute of Administration and Planning, (NIEPA), Prof. Satyabhushan and his senior colleague Dr. G.D. Sharma as NIEPA conducts year-round training programmes. At a final discussion with them and UGC Vice Chairman Prof. S.K. Khanna, just before I retired, a scheme was approved in

principle, to offer special training programmes for Principals of Women's Colleges, inter alia, to sensitise them and through them students and faculty, to gender issues. Under representation of women in higher education management has assumed a global dimension. Although women's access to higher education has increased visibly, the percentage of women influencing policy in higher education is still low. Hence, the above programme of empowering managers of women's colleges numbering over eleven hundred, is a positive step towards achieving gender equity.

In about 1982, a dialogue was started with Sheffield Polytechnic's Department of Education Management to have a partnership programme in this area under the Academic Link Interchange Scheme (ALIS) of UGC and British Council. The link lasted for six years with Prof. Len Watson, Head of the Department of Education Management at Sheffield, and I co-ordinating it at this end. This culminated in the establishment of the Department of Education Management on December 1, 1987. This was again a pioneering effort to train managers of educational institutions. Dr. Lena D'Souza was appointed the first Head of this newly-created Department. Today, the significance of this discipline is evident and other institutions have initiated similar programmes.

Another important cooperative programme was that between SNDT and New York University under the auspices of United States Information Agency, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, USA for faculty exchange.

Dr. Padmakar Sapre and Dr. Johnson used to visit SNDT regularly under the United States Education Foundation of India's (USEFI) seminar programme of South Asian Studies. In 1985-86 they applied to the United States Information Agency for an affiliation with SNDT with the blessings of my predeces-

sor Jyoti Trivedi. The areas selected were Communication and Education Technology, Nursing Education, Education Management and South Asian Cultural Relations. The programme commenced in February 1987. For two years after my taking over as Vice-Chancellor, I spent many sleepless nights obtaining clearance of Government of India, as the process was hampered due to bureaucratic delays. There were times, when I felt that the programme would have to be abandoned. Fortunately, the hurdles were crossed and faculty from both the Universities had gainful visits which generated many new ideas for strengthening concerned disciplines and modernizing the approach and methodology of teaching. Sapre continued his association with the University and further strengthened the gains.

In the meanwhile, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada approached the University to set up a regional Minisis Resource Centre for distribution and training support of MINISIS software used in libraries and information centres for creation of bibliographic databases. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 1988. This was the first international programme of this type assigned to a university library in India. Keeping pace with the telecommunication revolution, the National Library Information Centre with UGC's assistance was established in 1986 at the SNTD Library. The aim was to provide bibliographic information services to universities and colleges throughout India in the subjects of Sociology, Women's Studies, Home Science, Special Education, Gujarati and Library Science and this to an extent helped in computerizing library services. Only three such national centres were set up in the country by UGC at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, M.S. University of Baroda and SNTD Women's University.

At national level, a Memorandum of Understanding was first entered into with National Centre for Software Technology



*The First College*



*The first  
5 students*



*The Unique Convocation of 1939. Gandhiji, Sardar Patel, M. Vishweswaraiya, Subhash Chandra Bose, Sarojini Naidu and B.G. Kher on the university stage*





*Silver Jubilee Celebrations – 1941*



*Golden Jubilee Celebrations – 1966*

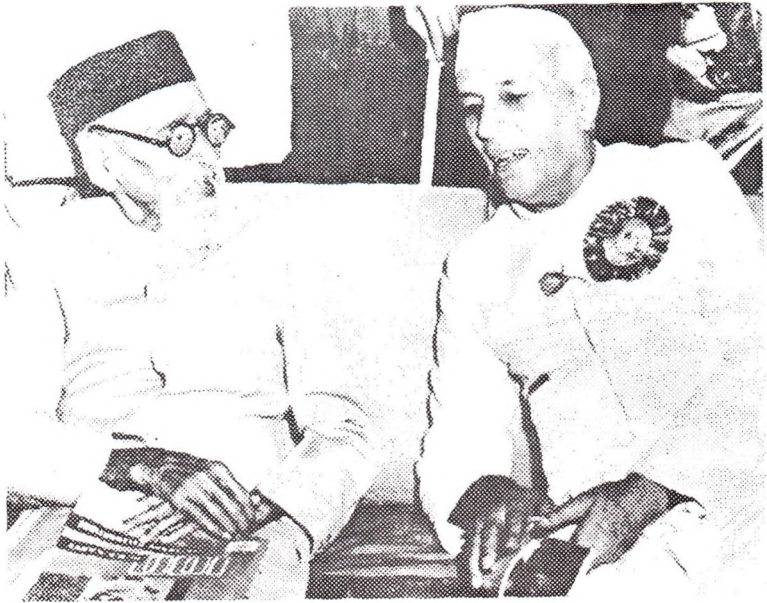




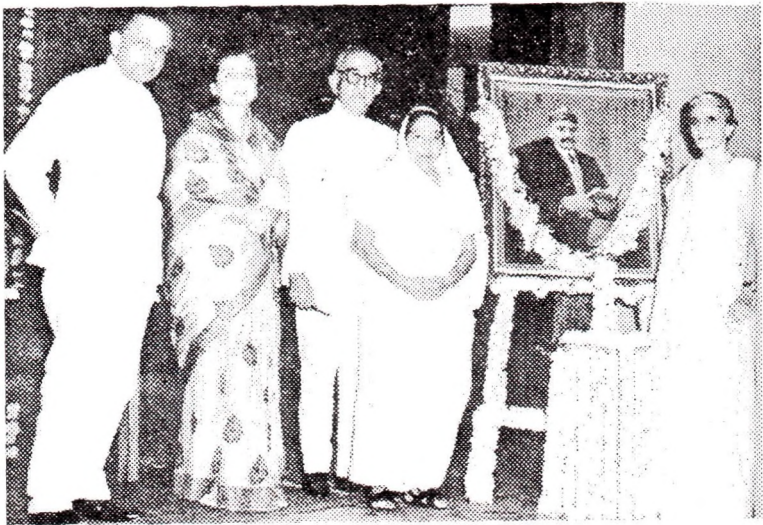
*Diamond Jubilee Celebrations – 1976*



*Platinum Jubilee Celebrations – 1991  
Four Vice-Chancellors at the Torch Run Relay*



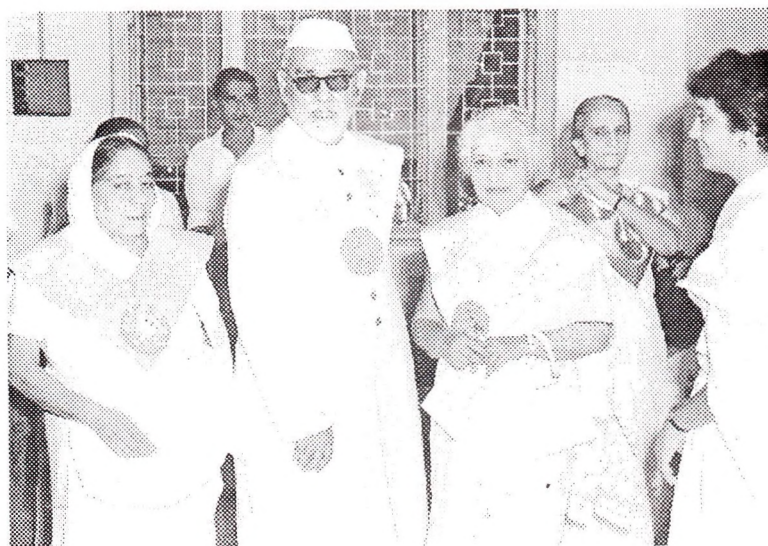
*The Prime Minister at the Founder's Birth Centenary Celebrations*



*Sir Vithaldas Thackersey Birth Centenary – 1970*



*Presidents, Prime Ministers and Ambassadors  
Visitors at the University*



*Welcome visitors to The University*



*Coretta King*



*Margaret Mead*





*Anutai Wagh with a D.Litt in 1989*



*Seven Women Freedom Fighters in 1989*

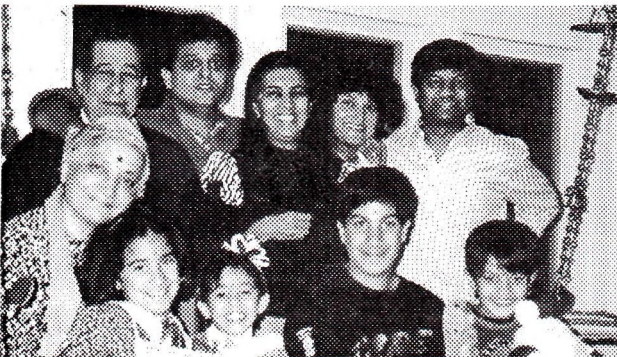
*The Author*



*After being awarded Honorary Fellowship by the Sheffield Hallam University, UK*



*The Symons Award by the Association of Commonwealth Universities*



*Her happy family*



(NCST) for supporting the computer programme. Two faculty members registered with NCST for their doctoral studies in computer application and have cleared their doctorate studies.

The second Memorandum of Understanding was with the State Bank of India (SBI) for evaluating ongoing government schemes for women in selected rural areas.

The last Memorandum of Understanding I signed before retiring was with Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) for computer interaction.

The above Memoranda of Understandings and academic links have helped the University charter new paths and sustain and enrich the thrusts so necessary for a competitive environment so that women can contribute with equal confidence as their male colleagues.

Over the years, this University has made positive contribution to society. In India or abroad, I have come across teachers, professors, administrators, social workers, librarians, home scientists, musicians, artists, business women, social workers and home makers who remember fondly their alma mater. When I meet some of them, I see a spark in their eyes, as it gives them a opportunity to talk about their alma mater, which changed the lives for many.

In the earlier days, Karve inculcated among students the spirit of giving to society what they had gained through the University. The Founder's objective has been realized and this culture is evident, even to this day, though in a lesser measure.

The motto of the University "An Enlightened Woman is a Source of Strength" continues to be true. Empowerment is perceived in diverse ways. It means giving dignity to woman,

instilling in her a confidence to take her own decisions, enabling her to be self reliant and articulate, developing skills to move forward in life. Over the years, the University has tried to give this gift to the women of India. Nevertheless, as Usha Thakkar in her paper 'History of SNDT' has mentioned, the motto needs to be reinterpreted and reconceptualised to be in tune with the changes taking place in the status of women and the several roles modern woman has to play. Women themselves will have to redefine their goals and roles and the University through its future programmes will have to accommodate itself to the changes, as its existence is for them.

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# Challenges of Uniqueness

The previous chapter describes the "forward march" of the University. In order to trace the historical events faithfully, it is essential to give a balanced description of the stresses, threats and dilemmas faced by the institution through its journey, as well as the progress and problems faced by the affiliated colleges. There were several challenges the University has had to face and overcome during the eight decades of its life. In these reflections, only a few, which are unique to the University, can be highlighted. These range from policy issues such as the need and relevance of a women's University, to administrative matters related to the University's jurisdiction and structure, medium of instruction, and the like.

## **Need of Separate Universities for Women : An Ongoing Debate**

The question of the need and relevance of a separate women's university has surfaced again and again since the time the idea of establishing such a university was sown by Karve. Mine is an attempt to point out to the different stages of the debate. It started much before I joined SNDT and continues even to this day.

In fact, the question was first raised, even as Karve introduced the theme at the National Social Conference in 1915. In his speech delivered on December 30th 1915, while explaining the objective of the venture, he stated : "Our aim in establishing the Women's University is neither to copy the higher institutions for women in America or Europe, nor to rival the men's univer-

sity courses in this country. What we aim at is to frame our schedules of study as to suit the mental and physical conditions of women at present, and to gradually raise the standard in accordance with general progress."

In spite of the clarity of objective, during the immediate period after the establishment of the University in 1916, some social reformers considered Karve's move for a women's university as a retrograde step. The progressive section of the society did not visualize the demand for a separate university; according to them the separateness would lead to a lowering of standards. On the other hand, the conservative section felt that such an institution would destroy the traditional culture and the peace of the home, break families and encourage women to ape the Western way of life. The official quarters, too, did not favour the idea and found the establishment of a separate institution, unnecessary. In contrast, the idea found favour with enlightened leaders of the country whom Karve consulted. In the early years, not recognised by the Government and not accepted by society, the University struggled for existence. The Committee on University Reforms in Bombay in 1924 had declared that the "Introduction of vernaculars as media of instruction is not in the interest of higher education of women." In spite of this discouraging note, Karve and his colleagues continued the work and gradually the need of a separate university for women with its special characteristics got accepted. Principal A.B. Dhruva substantiated this need in his Convocation Address (June 1929) : "We are asked by some of the best friends of female education in India - Why should there be a separate university for women with distinctive courses? My simple answer is : Because men have ignored women too long, unpardonably long, making no provision for their special needs in the educational system of the country."<sup>1</sup>

The second major stage of debate took place in 1949, when

Shri B.G. Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay Province introduced the Bill in the Legislative Assembly to recognise the Women's University. Mainly the debate involved granting statutory recognition to the University. However, this digressed into co-education versus segregated education, and to some extent the type of education relevant for women. Initially, views were expressed on both sides. To quote :

- \* "Bill is a progressive step - a good piece of legislation";
- \* "Women's University should not be an imitation of men's universities";
- \* "Bill has not laid down a special target for educating women";
- \* "Present day women are more attracted to co-educational institutions";
- \* "Girls will not join in large numbers";
- \* "Specialisations and exclusive training are needed in science and economic areas, in addition to accepted fields".
- \* "The University is an adventure of the mind in pursuit of truth to respond to educational needs" and;
- \* "Question of women's education is highly controversial".

Many, including B.G. Kher, were not against co-education but it was argued that having a separate university offered girls an option to select the type of institution they desired. While championing the cause, B.G. Kher described his philosophy on co-education. He was convinced about the differences between girls and boys which necessitated separate provisions. Moreover, the law promulgated was giving a stamp to the University which was functioning for 33 years, an outcome of the social reform movement and particularly of the selfless service and vision of Karve, who was then 91 years old.

The strongest opposition to the Bill came from Shri Purshottam Trikamdas, leader of the Socialist Party, referring to

the Women's University as "an iron curtain" against achieving democracy. He urged the house to reject it as a "Reactionary Bill".

At the end of the debate, the Bill was approved in the Lower House with only one dissent from 230 members. The University remains grateful to B.G. Kher for persistently and forcefully upholding the cause of the Women's University. His faith is indicted through the tremendous growth of the university recognised for 'imparting higher education to women specially suited to their needs and requirements'. [The Bombay Government Gazette - Part V - LA/Bill No. LX of 1949: Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Women's University Bill]. While reviewing the issues raised in the above debate, I was struck by the similarity of arguments offered over the years.

In December 1973, the University organized a Round Table Discussion, to consider among other matters, the relevance of a separate University for women and expectations from it in future. The general consensus at the discussion was that the need for a women's university continued to exist, but its role had changed. The future pattern of women's education would need to be considered in the context of the emerging social structure, the multiple roles of women, their economic independence, employment opportunities available, and so on.

At the Round Table, Shri A.R. Kamat, Joint Director, Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, Poona, summed up the situation in these words : "Exclusive institutions for women students like the SNTD Women's University and its colleges have played an important role in the past in the field of women's education. The need for exclusive women's institutions perhaps may not be as keenly felt now as when they were first started. But their manageable size and compact character offer greater scope for changing the existing pattern so that it has greater rele-

vance to social reality. It is hoped that the SNDT Women's University as a pioneering women's institution in women's education will also be able to take pioneering steps in this direction."

I was associated with the Round Table as the Registrar of the University. Since then, this question was vexing me. Based on this, when I became Vice-Chancellor, I organised two reviews: "Images of the Future" and "Mission of Women's Universities", to review the past and forecast the needs of the future. Many interesting recommendations for the future emerged from the first review organised in January 1989; these included the new responsibility of the University in changing times, maintaining standards, promoting excellence and playing a special role as a women's university. An interesting question raised was "Will SNDT produce a new woman for new India?"

This was a good exercise for reflecting what the University is, what it can become and what gaps it needs to fill.<sup>2</sup>

Until the beginning of the 1980s, there was only one women's university in the country; but during that decade a peculiar and paradoxical situation arose. On the one hand society was questioning the very need for a separate women's university in times when women were constitutionally equal. On the other hand, new universities for women were being established. The paradox needed to be deliberated and resolved. If separate universities were still needed, what should be the new roles and goals? In the present context, how does women's education need to differ from that of men?

Currently, there are three women's universities and two deemed universities for women in the country. The newer universities have adopted a unitary pattern with a focused mission and a model with clear objectives. May be, they needed a justification and also wanted to avoid the conflict and problems

faced by SNDT. The Founder Maharshi Karve, notwithstanding his pioneering objectives, had to adopt the contemporary format accepted by universities of that time, although he was bold enough to carve out a new vision for his Mahila Vidyapeeth (SNDT). In order to provide a common platform to share experiences, I convened a workshop of Indian Women's Universities at SNDT Women's University on April 1 and 2, 1989. It was natural that the workshop be hosted by the oldest of the five exclusive women's institutions in India - three universities and two deemed universities. The main thrust of the dialogue was a discussion on the future role of such institutions. The existence of women's universities was not a phenomenon peculiar to India. U.S.A. had a number of women's universities which had later become mixed institutions. However, the Carnegie Commission's report on "Opportunities for Women's Higher Education" by Dr. Kerr, the President of the Commission, indicated that after a decade of increasing coeducation, there was a move to revert to special institutions for women<sup>3</sup>. A separate women's university exists in China; Thailand and Philippines have women's universities. Germany probably has two or three and Canada has one, which after fifty years of existence started admitting men. Japan has had several women's universities, one of which was the inspiration for the oldest Indian women's university!

The five universities which participated in the Workshop had different models. SNDT Women's University founded in 1916 had adopted the traditional university structure but introduced special characteristics which made it a pioneering and unique institution. The two new universities - Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalaya, established in Andhra Pradesh in 1983, and Mother Teresa Women's University, established in Tamil Nadu in 1984 - could select a special model.

The justification for setting up a separate women's universi-



ty in Andhra Pradesh was denial of access to higher education to women, particularly that which would make women self-reliant and enable them to meet the challenges of modern times. The model selected by Mother Teresa Women's University enabled it to take statewide responsibility of conducting research with a feminist orientation, monitoring and consultancy. The University was founded to commemorate the birth centenary of poet Bharathi whose clarion call was for women's equality. The remaining two deemed universities - the Banasthali Vidyapeeth in Rajasthan and the Avinashilingam Institute of Home Science and Higher Education for Women in Tamil Nadu - originally started as women's colleges and were recognised later as deemed universities. Structurally, they are like traditional institutions but with a thrust on the development of women. In the case of Banasthali, the focus is to impart modern education in a rural setting, while still retaining the cultural traditions. The goal of Avinashilingam institute is on Home Science, emerging frontier areas and extension work.

During the workshop, the experience of Mount St. Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada was also compared. The Canadian university was established as an academy in 1873 by the Sisters of Charity and was granted the right to award its own degrees in 1925. The only women's university to be established in Canada, it became coeducational in the 70s, partly because of the desire for equality and partly because women's institutions were perceived as inferior. Although male students comprised a mere 20% of the total enrolment, the relevance of the institution was reported to be waning.<sup>4</sup> At this point, it is interesting to refer to the case of Mills College, Wyoming in U.S.A.. In May 1990, the Board of Trustees of the Mills College decided to admit men. The students protested and shouting "Better Dead than Coed" brought college operations to a standstill. After a dialogue with alumni and students, the Board changed its decision, to the jubilation of the academic and stu-

dent community.<sup>5</sup> Barring isolated instances, however, the number of single-sex institutions has dropped worldwide.

While considering the question of the future of women's universities, at the workshop, the consensus emerged that women's universities continue to be more functional, more innovative and flexible. Women, even at the threshold of the next century, continue to be marginalised. Women's universities can cater to conservative groups who still find it difficult to come out of their traditional mould, and also equally to those who are looking for access to more modern vocations, at the same time being concerned with "women's issues". Thus the need continues.

In spite of this understanding, critiques continue to discuss the two sides, namely, on the one hand the isolation of women in women's institutions and on the other the greater opportunities and space available for women in separate institutions. The debate further continues whether women need to be educated differently than men in view of their different thinking and reactions to issues. The experiences of women's colleges and women's universities are bound to differ depending on prevailing environmental conditions, on social pressures faced by them and, most importantly, their commitment to the cause of women.

The workshop generated several ideas to be placed on the agenda of action for the women's universities. They referred to the new responsibility of sensitising people to the social concerns and critiquing policies related to women; promoting excellence in education while at the same time sharing concerns for the less privileged; creating a new culture for women to fit into the emerging social order. The question remains : "To what extent can women's universities fulfill these obligations?" In reality, these should become the common concerns of the main system".<sup>6</sup>

In spite of doubts and hesitations, the number of women's

colleges has increased. Today, there are three women's universities, two deemed universities for women and over 1100 women's colleges.

It was a confirmation of the process of continuous renewal that Suma Chitnis, the Vice-Chancellor who followed my term, not only picked up the threads of the debate but also organised a programme in 1992 to review in a larger context of global comparison, the role of separate institutions.

Recently in 1994, there was a proposal by the University authorities to admit males to some of the courses of the University, thus making it coeducational. Many opinions for and against this move were expressed. Several aspects, social and legal, had to be considered. The impact of changing times also needed to be reviewed in relation to the core socio-cultural ethos of the institution before changing the constitution and mandate of an eighty year old University set up exclusively for women. In the light of the debate, the University authorities decided to withdraw the proposal as it needed more "intensive dialogue in the context of the responses received".

Dr. Usha Mehta, eminent Gandhian, during the Convocation address delivered by her at SNDT Women's University pointed to the recent controversy and while referring to the two view points and about the University's relevance in the present times stated : "In view of the fact that women still are not completely liberated, there is no doubt that women's universities still have an important role to play in society. It will however, do well to define the exact role of women in today's society and spell out the connotation of the term "equality of sexes" (Convocation Address at SNDT Women's University - January 6, 1996).

While debates regarding women's education raised important issues at a conceptual level, the institutions imparting wom-

en's education have to face many challenges at practical and administrative levels. I was drawn in the ideological debates and was also involved in implementation of important policies. SNDT had to face not only social prejudice but also administrative complexities. At times they were formidable but had to be dealt with courage and patience. As I look back, I realise the pressure and tension at that time but as SNDT worked its way through these difficulties, it acquired certain characteristics which became unique to the institution. Some of these are described here.

### **The Dual Structure**

The University's peculiar structure of affiliated and conducted schools and colleges, which emerged due to historic reasons, has been described in the earlier chapters. Even after receiving statutory recognition, in the 1950s, the pattern of conducted and affiliated colleges continued. Today, the University has 10 conducted colleges in Arts, Commerce, Education, Nursing, Home Science, Science, and Pharmacy, functioning from three different campuses and 20 affiliated colleges located in Maharashtra and Gujarat in the cities of Bombay, Sangli, Nashik, Dhule, Amalner, Jalgaon, Baramati, Surat, Baroda, Savarkundla and Bhavnagar.

This structure has resulted in several problems. The University with its conducted colleges was earlier treated as a University department for grant purposes and accordingly norms were applied. Suddenly, the Government policy changed and the conducted colleges were treated as affiliated colleges and grant norms changed making the grants sanctioned earlier, non-grantable.

This sudden change of policy created tremendous pressures; great patience was needed to explain the structure of the University to the government authorities. I recollect, at times,

when grants were not forthcoming, what an effort it was to find funds to pay monthly dues and to convince people about financial constraints faced by the University as the public impression was that SNDT was a rich university - may be because the university was well run and had the backing of the Thackerseys.

### **Multi-State and Overlapping Jurisdiction**

The University's colleges were all located in the earlier Bombay State. When the State was bifurcated in 1960, the colleges were distributed between the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Earlier, there was only the University of Bombay for the whole of the Bombay Presidency. After Independence several universities were established both in Maharashtra and Gujarat. SNDT colleges thus came to be located within the jurisdiction of a local regional university. As a special privilege, SNDT's jurisdiction was not limited geographically; but the overlapping jurisdiction posed several problems.

A major problem was keeping balance between the affiliated colleges in Maharashtra and Gujarat. With the two separate Governments, rules and regulations of the two States differed; when Tribunals were set up the Gujarat colleges were not included in the Gujarat Tribunal and teachers from Gujarat had to appear before the Tribunal in Bombay. This became a sore grievance issue. A dialogue was started with the Governments of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Officials in Gujarat refused to take action as the University was functioning under an Act promulgated by the state of Maharashtra and thus not part of their jurisdiction. The Maharashtra Government pleaded its helplessness in acting in a legal matter in another State, although appreciating the validity of the grievance. No action was therefore possible unless the University Act was amended. The clause, permitting teachers from Gujarat to appear before the Gujarat Tribunal, was specially incorporated for SNDT in the Draft Bill of the

Maharashtra Universities Act which was being prepared; unfortunately this was dropped in the final version of the 1994 Act.

When student strikes took place, students of Gujarat State did not appear for examinations of the University as their comparison was with other regional universities. Often, the University had to conduct special examinations resulting in unnecessary comparisons between the standards of colleges in the two States.

With the opening of several universities in Gujarat, two of the older colleges of the University from Ahmedabad and Surat, sought disaffiliation from SNDT and got affiliated to the regional universities. The Act had no provision describing the process of disaffiliation, if a college chose to do so. The University could not hold up the disaffiliation if the regional university approved of it. Such events were traumatic. At the disaffiliation of these two colleges - one of them being the oldest affiliated college, the SLU College for Women in Ahmedabad - two new colleges in the same cities sought affiliation. However, they took a long time to stabilise and the competition, between the old disaffiliated colleges and the new affiliated colleges caused undue stress. Once again, the college in Ahmedabad has disaffiliated itself from the University and joined the Gujarat University.

These problems were unique to SNDT and that was because of its structure and overlapping jurisdiction. In my long association, I have not found any other university having to battle with such problems. In order to control such occurrences repeating, the SNDT University's Act of 1974 and the Maharashtra Universities Act, 1994 have provided some protection, although this is not foolproof. Fortunately, the members of the Syndicate, where the final decisions were taken, were experienced stalwarts like B.N.Gokhale, C.C. Shah, Sulabha Panandikar, B.D. Karve, A.N. Kothare, T.K. Tope, Ram Joshi, Boman Behram, D.D.

Shah and senior principals, who not only extended full support but helped and guided the Vice-Chancellor to overcome the complex situations that arose from time to time.

Another important issue was of mass migration; students elected to join SNDT as they were getting certain concessions, concessions intended to give more opportunities for access to higher education to women. After taking this advantage, when admission criteria were equalised, many migrated to other universities in the area. The university authorities were informed that the preference for local universities was due to their greater acceptance for employment. These were difficult situations for all concerned. Often these issues were discussed with principals, presidents of societies and senior faculty members. This gave a little solace but solutions were not easy for situations which were full of innumerable complexities and comparisons.

Applications for affiliations were forthcoming, practically every year from Delhi, Madras, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and other states. The problem faced by the University was of monitoring quality and standards and conducting examinations in several media of instruction. This required a mechanism which SNDT did not have, unlike the present open universities. Thus, although SNDT has the privilege of national jurisdiction, as far as colleges are concerned, they are concentrated in the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat. Although this number is small, SNDT has the advantage of being able to put in concentrated effort on specific matters. This benefit is generally not available to women's colleges within the orbit of a co-educational university. Moreover these colleges being with the women's university can further develop an identity, which may be difficult in mixed colleges.

The question of change of status for the oldest and the largest women's university has been raised time and again. Prof.

Ram Joshi, former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bombay and closely associated with the activities of SNDT, when interviewed, was of the firm view that SNDT University should have the status of a national institute. Dr. Jyoti Trivedi, Vice-Chancellor before me, supported this idea strongly and had even discussed with several government officials, the pros and cons of giving SNDT the status of a Central University. Resourcewise, this was likely to be an attractive proposition; but unless directions about the University's future role and its interactions with other institutions, were laid down very clearly, it was difficult to visualise the gains and losses.

In a nutshell, the management of the University, with diverse and often conflicting administrative structures, has become complex, needing astute management skills to face the growing challenges. Further, due to the uniqueness of the University several dilemmas have come up which can be ascribed to the dual pattern of conducted and affiliated colleges: relation within the University structure between general and professional colleges on the one hand and technical institutes on the other; having separate authorities but common expectations particularly in respect of seniority and promotion norms; colleges located in two states, at times governed under different laws; varying expectations from the University by urban and rural institutions and several more.

### **The Affiliated Colleges**

The history of the affiliated colleges located in Maharashtra and Gujarat is a saga of struggle - a struggle for enrolment, struggle for quality of students, a struggle for survival. With the regional language being accepted as the medium of instruction in many universities, one unique characteristic of SNDT no longer remained unique. For the affiliating colleges, affiliation to SNDT rather than the local university, resulted in a feeling of



isolation, a withdrawal from the competition with the local cluster of colleges.

It is my firm belief, that even though these experiences were breaking the morale of all concerned, the struggle was faced with grit and determination because it was for a cause - women's education. This "toughness" and sustenance of spirit, of not giving up, enabled the colleges to re-establish themselves. In time to come, these colleges were not only accepted but their contribution was greatly appreciated. It was gratifying that even in these dire circumstances the affiliated colleges did not estrange themselves from their parent university.

I would like to make a special mention of the affiliated colleges of Bhavnagar, Matunga, Ghatkopar, the B M Ruia College and colleges at Sangli and Malad for trying out different strategies towards reaching their educational goals and making a mark in the educational world.

The Bhavnagar college did not face the tribulations experienced by many of the other SNDT colleges. I attribute this success to two or three factors-excellent management, linkages with other institutions in the area, organising intellectual programmes for the community of the entire city. These activities resulted in the college occupying centre stage and avoiding becoming isolated. With imagination and enthusiasm, the college remained ahead of others in academic work. The management of the college was often asked to join the regional university, but allegiance to SNDT and identification with the cause of women's education were strong. Prof. K.C. Shah and Prof. Jayendra Trivedi who guided the college were equally involved in the developmental dimensions of the University and did not regard the college as a separate entity from the university. The SNDT family was closely knit and whenever problems related to

Gujarat colleges came up, they were consulted by the Vice-Chancellors.

With the introduction of the 10+2+3 pattern, and the intermediate stage being split between Higher Secondary Schools and Junior Colleges, and with English being made a compulsory subject of passing in Maharashtra, the strength of the affiliated and conducted colleges dwindled. This was due to the abolition of the pre-University class where admission could be gained in some courses without being required to have passed in English. Besides giving rise to a number of tricky issues for teachers, the very existence of some of the colleges was at stake. At such a crisis in survival, considerations of quality and excellence often got a second place. Instead of a defeatist attitude, the Principal of the college at Matunga, Dr. Dhairyabala Vora and her team introduced affirmative strategies to relieve the tension. A number of short-term job oriented programmes were introduced, offering greater opportunities for enrichment and self employment. Today, these courses are offered as polytechnic programmes for women.

In Gujarat, the 10+2+3 pattern was introduced a year later and taking a leaf from the experience of Maharashtra, the Higher Secondary classes were attached only to schools. This strategy reduced many of the problems faced in Maharashtra. As far as our University was concerned, it had to adjust to two types of system shocks in two different years.

A promise given to the Jain Muni Pandit Shri Ratnachandraji to impart free education to girls was upheld by stalwarts Shri Durlabhibhai Khetan and Shri Nyalchand Seth and the Ghatkopar college was started on a different pattern. It is only recently that the Governments of Maharashtra and Gujarat have made education of girls free - the former upto the Higher Secondary level and the latter up to the tertiary level. The

Ghatkopar college, right from its establishment has been offering free education to girls despite heavy odds. The reputation of the college is high and it is a matter of pride for students to join this college. Several past students have come forward to acknowledge and pay their debt to their alma mater. The management of the society not only provides facilities of higher education, but conducts an entire educational complex from pre-school level to graduation in Arts, Commerce and Home Science, all entirely free. The society decided to affiliate to SNDT with Yasoda Patel as the first Principal. After her, Pranaybala Koticha nurtured the college till she retired in 1995.

In 1957, the University added an additional medium of instruction in its regular teaching programmes. Bhagirathibai Manmal Ruia Mahila College which affiliated to SNDT in 1957, opted to impart education through the medium of Hindi; it continues to do so till date.

There was a time when societies in Maharashtra were not coming forward to seek affiliation to SNDT, although several colleges in Gujarat were affiliated to the University. Sangli college was the first affiliated college in Maharashtra outside Bombay. Even though SNDT had a college affiliated to it in Sangli, another women's college was permitted to start in the vicinity of the SNDT college and affiliate itself to Shivaji University at Kolhapur. This resulted in unhealthy competition and also in a wastage of limited resources. In spite of repeatedly approaching the Government of Maharashtra and Shivaji University, no action was taken. Political pressure prevailed. When the White Paper on the action plan for higher education was prepared by the State Government, this point was stressed, but due to overlapping jurisdiction, such dilemmas and difficulties continued. The college at Sangli continues, but under pressure of dwindling enrolment.

A similar situation was faced by the M. D. Shah College, located in Malad, a suburb in Bombay, when a college for women was started in its vicinity by the University of Bombay. Initially, the SNTD college did face an adverse impact on the enrolment, but due to ever increasing needs for higher education in an urban metropolis and aggressive efforts by the management and faculty members, the college has gained stability and expanded. Under the leadership of Dr. Mohanbhai Patel, President of the society conducting the college and the present principal, Bharti Naik, new dimensions are being added.

In the late 1980s, during my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, a number of applications for affiliations were received from societies in Maharashtra, but due to the State Government's policy, except in one or two cases, approval was not given to the others.

Every college affiliated to SNTD has made a distinct contribution to society, whether it is in an urban pocket or a rural one and carries forward the mission of the University by meeting traditional and non-traditional demands.

While analysing the working of affiliated colleges, two or three factors stand out strongly. The management of societies governing these colleges were firm believers in the cause of women and women's education. This objective motivated them to continue their association with a women's university despite low ebbs in tide on several occasions. Financial difficulties were overcome through personal efforts and in earlier years, donors not only gave money but were closely involved in the management of the colleges. Their personal interest helped the colleges to grow and face competition. The principals, too, considered the institutions as their own and gave long and dedicated service to them. Their identification with the University was strong. Students came from a mixed background, but this did not defeat them. The aim was to take up from where they began during

their stay at college. These were positive attitudes which helped them across their path of struggle.

### **Medium of Instruction**

SNDT Women's University is a university started through an indigenous system of education in the early decades of this century when the formal and conventional atmosphere was prevailing under the British rule. This bold step permitted the University to undertake experiments and adopt innovative measures. Karve's conception of a women's University was to impart higher education through the medium of the mother-tongue keeping English as compulsory subject. Rabindranath Tagore liked his idea of imparting instruction through the mother tongue. When Karve met Mahatma Gandhi and spoke to him about his new project, he supported teaching through the mother-tongue but did not approve the idea of English becoming a compulsory language. Karve could not agree and politely told Gandhiji: "It will be our misfortune to proceed without your sympathy". After a little while, Gandhiji replied: "Mr. Karve, because it is you, I yield. However, my opinion is still the same".<sup>7</sup>

Karve's farsightedness set futuristic trends which after a number of decades were accepted by several Indian Universities in the post-independence era. In spite of the use of regional languages the University did not shut its doors to the use of English.

In 1973, during the Round Table Discussion when one view reflected the teaching through the mother-tongue as a cause of lowering the standard of the university, the faculty opined that it should not be forgotten that when the University started to teach through the mother-tongue, it was started with a conviction that this was the best medium of learning. This continues to remain a strong conviction even today.

Today the University has adopted a realistic approach and imparts education through four media - Marathi, Gujarati, Hindi and English. The liberal art courses mainly continue through the regional language but the science and professional and technical - oriented disciplines are offered through English for better employment opportunities.

Having studied in English medium throughout my career, readers would be interested to know my reactions. Long before I joined SNDT, I shared the popular notion about the University being a vernacular institution. In a cosmopolitan city like Bombay, I realise the University had an uphill task to face going against the mainstream while accepting regional media. If the university was some where in a Northern city, this difficulty of acceptance may not have been so apparent. However, once having joined SNDT, I could appreciate the conviction of the Founder. In the earlier years, the University could reach remote areas and the regional medium was a facility which helped women to join higher education.

I recall many discussions in the Syndicate Hall, later known as Premlila Thackersey Hall, becoming vibrant when some of the members, specially from Gujarat vehemently opposed the idea specially when it came to introducing English as an additional stream in liberal arts course. This incident takes me down the memory lane remembering controversial issues. If the walls of the Syndicate Hall can speak, the plethora of information which would be revealed by opening up a Pandora's box can fill volume after volume.

In addition to these special issues the University tackled, it did time and again face the problem of financial crunch; but today this problem is a common one faced by all Universities. Fortunately, except on a few occasions the University has not faced severe problems of discipline. Often this is attributed to

its being a women's university.

In the life of every institution challenges will keep on coming and the institution will continue to progress meeting these demands.

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# Become Lamps Unto Yourselves

In November 1988, I received a telephone call from Rajkot from the President of Shri Subhadra, Sumati, Susheela Reception Committee, inviting me to be the Chief Guest at a function to felicitate old graduates of SNDT in their 60s. My curiosity was roused. Subhadra Shroff, Sumati and Susheela Vaidya, I learnt had dedicated their lives to the cause of women's education on Gandhian principles and had spared no effort to take education to women of rural areas of Saurashtra and Kutch. In their work they were encouraged by Dhebharbhai and Gopaldasbhai Desai who were active in the freedom struggle. These women were proud of being the alumni of "Karve University" which equipped them to meet their life's determined objectives. This was an occasion I would not have liked to miss. I am glad I accepted the invitation.

30th November, 1988, the day of the felicitation function is etched on my mind. It was a unique experience. The ground was full of people - young and old; students and colleagues; public from different fields of life. Some of the students had come from far flung places to felicitate their teachers who had given them a new goal in life.

I was greatly moved when one of the graduates felicitated mentioned that they were very keen to have the Vice-Chancellor of the University which had opened a new future for them to be

present on the occasion. They did not care whether I could speak Gujarati or not or whether I spoke at all at the function; I was invited because I was a symbol of the institution which gave a new direction to the lives of women and through me they were paying their tribute to the institution and the Founder. I admired their spirit and I was happy to be part of such an institution built up by Karve, Sir Vithaldas Thackersey and Premilaben. Together with us on the dias, was Bhaktiba a member of the royal family of yore, who with her husband Gopaldasbhai Desai had given up everything for the nation's freedom. She was almost reaching her centenary year and her presence amidst us was a great inspiration. In 1989, when SNDT felicitated women freedom fighters, she was one of the seven women selected.

*This incident made me ponder about the role of SNDT in women's education and women's lives. What has it given to those who passed through its portals? What does it need to do for future generations? These thoughts cannot be considered in isolation. They had a strong link with the struggle for gender justice. In view of this close nexus, I am tempted to give a brief overview of this struggle, as the University's goals and the objectives of the struggle continuously interface with each other. Gender equity has its origin in the demand for equal rights for women and one of the instruments which helps society in realising justice is education. It was through the efforts of several men and women that women's education in India has reached the current stage. While the social reformers challenged religious orthodoxy which kept women out of education, the aspect of gender equality or empowerment of women was not supported, and the movement was confined mainly to urban, upper class members of society. In spite of these limitations, the social reform movement of the 19th century contributed to a great extent to the development of the women's movement and furtherance of women's education.*

Women's participation in the national movement and acceptance of gender equality as a basic principle of the new political system by mobilising women of all classes through Gandhiji's non-violent demonstrations, use of Swadeshi and Khadi, brought women under a single canvas. Karve, on his return from abroad in 1930, saw hundreds of women in Bombay, breaking the salt law during the freedom struggle. This incident brought tears to his eyes and he exclaimed, "What decades of my work and work similar to mine has failed to achieve, this wizard of Sabarmati has achieved by a single stroke of imaginative action". The action brought the women out of purdah in thousands and they have remained out of it. When the freedom struggle of the 1930s ended, women who had participated with national leaders developed new aspirations. They did not want to withdraw within the four walls. To meet their ambition they realised it was necessary to receive higher education. Two openings were before them - joining the mainstream with the young students or taking advantage of the private studies programme provided by Karve as a unique feature of his University. Many preferred the latter and on graduation became teachers or social workers. So great was their commitment that like Subhadra, Sumati and Susheela, they dedicated their lives for society's well being and several remained unmarried. The inspiration for this deep commitment during the national struggle, on several occasions was the result of the impact of Gandhiji and his philosophy in developing strong minded citizens. Dr. Usha Mehta, vividly describes this impact on her and her cousin then aged about nine years, which has led to life long commitment. Gandhiji extracted a promise from them to wear khadi throughout their lives and not get married except with a partner who would help them in serving the nation, when they approached him to permit them to attend a camp in Surat District in Gujarat. Earlier this request was denied as they were dressed in non-khadi clothes. Usha Mehta to this day kept both the promises while serving the nation. (Convocation address delivered at SNTD Women's

University - January 1996).

The Social Reform Movement and the National Movement as pointed out above, provided women a purpose in life. One of the important manifestations was establishment of some of the leading women's organisations such as, The All India Women's Conference, Mahila Samitis and Mandals which played a leadership role in meeting problems faced by women. Their objective was neither to start a sex war with men nor be a feminist critique of society, but to provide a platform for women to come together and interact on issues of great relevance to them and voice their demands. On second June, 1989, the Bombay Branch of the All India Women's Conference invited me to be the Chief Guest at their Diamond Jubilee function. This gave me an excellent opportunity to study the growth and development of women's organisations set up in the pre-independence period. Their objective was mainly education and social reform. It was also an occasion to pay tribute to those women who fought for freedom and justice and to generate confidence among women to fight for their privileges and rights. The efforts of enlightened educated women like Sarojini Naidu, Hansa Mehta, Margaret Cousins, Aruna Asaf Ali, Anila Bose, Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, Durgabai Deshmukh, Laxmi Menon, Begam Shareef Hamid Ali, Ansuya Kale, Rameshwari Nehru, Vidyagauri Nilkanth, Heerabai and Lady Meherbai Tata and many others were remembered for their pioneering role in starting the process of empowering women.

Though some research has been done on the role of the women in the freedom struggle, I feel that still more work needs to be done. Scholars hold different opinions. There is a feeling among some scholars that the pre-independence phase lacked action for equality, liberation and rights, and it cannot be credited as the beginning of women's movement in India. However, according to others, since bringing women out of the four walls

was the first step of challenging traditions, that in itself was a direction towards women's movement.

The post-independence era, which began with constitutional equality, also witnessed the setting up of several Committees and Commissions which made recommendations for promotion and expansion of women's education.

I recall the discussions at the meetings of National Council on Women's Education in the 1960s, while accompanying Premilaben Thackersey to the meetings when she was Chairperson of the Council. The thrust was on education of girls and women and strategies to fill the gaps.

As far as women's movement was concerned the period upto 1975 was one of complacency. The post 1975 phase has seen greater official concern towards improving women's access and quality of education. The momentum was generated by the report "Towards Equality" by the Committee on the Status on Women in India (1975) which revealed startling data about conditions of women. The process got strengthened by the declaration of the Women's Year and the Women's Decade (1975-1985) by the United Nations and growing contact with international feminist groups leading to awareness campaigns and feminist programmes. The response from the education system to women's issues became focussed during the Women's Decade and several institutions of national importance, universities, advanced centres of research undertook studies on women. The period since the declaration of International Women's Year, further witnessed a qualitative change in women's organisations, traditional organisations attempting to change their focus emphasising health and education and protection against violence, rape and dowry. Parallel to these organisations major cities have witnessed emergence of new groups, very differently focussed in comparison to conventional women's organisations

functioning as autonomous women's groups to pressurise public and political opinion to women's issues and taking advantage of their political affiliation linking women's problems with class and work. Another trend of recent decades is setting up of interest groups with feminist perspectives in areas like media, law, academia and generating awareness through journals and newsletters. This development led to establishing networks in universities with such interest groups for research, action and curriculum development.

Women's movement, the declaration of the International Women's Year and the Decade have contributed to the change of the government's approach to women's issues. Instead of welfare doles, the state talks of women's empowerment. 1985 saw the establishment of a separate Department of Women and Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development to guide and co-ordinate the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organisations working for the welfare and development of Women. The National Commission for Women is established more recently to act as a watchdog for women's concerns.

What has been the response of SNDT, the only women's university till the decade of 1970? During the Round Table Discussion (1973), while deliberating on future goals of the University, the need for researches on women emerged. In 1974, Research Unit on Women's Studies was set up with Neera Desai as its first director. The programme was initiated, not because we were a Women's University but we were convinced that the need to understand women's problems was evident and SNDT with its background and experience could play a dynamic role in this work. This development evoked great excitement although we were fully aware of the hurdles we would have to cross. The first Advisory Committee under the Chairmanship of Vice-Chancellor, Sharda Divan, consisted of eminent men and

women with a forward looking vision. They were Premlila Thackersey, Madhuri Shah, J.P. Naik, A.R. Desai, Suma Chitnis, Chitra Naik, Vina Mazumdar and others with Neera Desai as Secretary.

Ours being the first such innovative programme in the country, paradigms were interpreted and established as we progressed, adding fresh dimensions. Recently, the Centre celebrated the completion of two decades of its activities. It was indeed gratifying to see this progress, since I was associated with it from the beginning and witnessed its success and deprivations. While taking stock at the completion of two decades of work of the Centre and looking inwards, it is evident that this strand has influenced both the people within the system and the women's studies programme outside the higher education stream. At the same time the system outside has reinforced work and utility. The University can take credit of pioneering innovative strands, Students Services, Continuing Education, Education Management to name a few - but in my opinion Women's Studies is a trend which stands apart.

Its influence resulted in two significant interventions at SNTD. During my predecessor's (Jyoti Trivedi) time, programmes related to legal literacy and legal aid in urban as well rural areas were stressed. During my tenure an international workshop on 'Visibility of Women in Statistics and Indicators' organised by the University's Research Centre on Women's Studies, the Department of Women and Child Development, Government of India and the United Nation's International Institute for Research and Training for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) was held at SNTD's Juhu Campus in July 1989. The workshop created a new interest in improving the visibility of women's work in official statistics. Dr. Maithreyi Krishna Raj, the then Director of the SNTD's Research Centre on Women's Studies and her team, in collaboration with other

organisations under the banner of UNIFEM, organised a Round Table and the 1991 census questionnaire for the first time, included agriculture and household contribution by women while computing work. This was a landmark achievement, which is bound to have a far reaching impact on the census of 2001.

Another change was the selection of research areas by faculty and students opting for themes related to status of women and gender justice.

Nurul Hasan's (the Minister of Education, Social Welfare and Culture, Government of India) advice contained in his Convocation Address delivered in February 1977, referring to the social status of women and the report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, set up in 1975 during the International Women's Year is most appropriate to the programme of women's studies. He suggested that if society desired to convert the 'de jure' equality conferred by the Constitution to a 'de facto' one, there were certain factors which the university for women should incorporate in its role and activities. It needed to conceptualise the role of the University vis-a-vis the changes needed for equity and justice. The task did not end there; a continuous assessment of their status with ongoing monitoring was necessary. He was of the strong view that science and technology should reach every home and every woman. To sum up, he advised: "We need a vast nationwide movement to spread education among women. It is the responsibility of a pioneering institution like yours to help the growth of this movement". His postulations continue to be valid to this day.

During the Vice-Chancellorship of Madhuri Shah, the idea of organising a National Conference on Women was being discussed with like-minded scholars. In 1981 Madhuri Shah took charge as Chairperson of the University Grants Commission.



However, since the idea was conceived at SNTD, the first National Conference on Women's Studies was held at the Juhu Campus of the SNTD Women's University in 1981. I recall the many anxious meetings, before and during the Conference Neera Desai, Vina Mazumdar and I had; many discussions about the agenda of the conference, the trends it would set and organisational problems which we tried to solve to the best of our ability. Such a large conference on a new theme was being held for the first time. Manpower and other resources were limited. The organisers were hoping that the debate and dialogue would result in giving a meaningful direction to women's studies. Fortunately, the demand came from the Conference for incorporation of women's issues and concerns in teaching, research and extension.

One of the most concrete outcomes was the establishment of the Indian Association for Women's Studies in 1981 with the objective of broadening the outlook of scholars and providing a forum for interaction between academics and activists at individual and institutional levels through its bi-ennial conferences on pertinent themes. Madhuri Shah was the first President with Vina Mazumdar, Neera Desai, Lotika Sarkar, Devaki Jain, Lila Dube, Hemlata Swarup as members of the Committee. So far seven bi-ennial conferences have been held which have acted as forums for bringing new perspectives to women's issues. I had the privilege of being the President of the Association between 1989 and 1991 and since 1991 was the completion of the decade of the activities of the Association, I selected the theme - "On the way to Gender Justice: A Decade of Trial and Achievements", for my Presidential Address. We were fortunate in having Ms. Qurratulain Hyder, a renowned literary scholar and Gnanpeeth Awardee to inaugurate the Conference - the Association's way of paying tribute to a woman of eminence. It was heartening to find Ms Hyder simple, and warm, eager to know about the Association and women's issues.

Neera Desai, Usha Thakkar and I had an opportunity to spend time together during the conference. Many questions surfaced in our discussion like: how can education be made relevant to women's life; how can women's studies contribute to the cause of women's liberation; how can women's studies help us in understanding and changing gender relationship; how can we make women's studies more meaningful in the Indian situation; what is the relationship between women's studies and women's movement and so on.

The debate between academics and activists on some of the above issues was an ongoing one at every conference. Talking of activists, was Baya not an activist facilitating Karve to introduce social reform through women's education? Was Premilaben not an activist sparing no effort in the cause of promoting women? What about the women of the pre-Independence era - participants of the social reform movement and the freedom struggle? Whatever the interpretation, if the cause is women, collective deliberations, collective thinking, collective action and collective commitment should be the clarion call of the crusade as I mentioned in my presidential address.

Coming back to the debate about women's equality, it did not confine to academics and activists but was carried to policy level. The National Policy on Education of the Government of India (1986) and the follow up Programme of Action, articulated a positive and interventionist role in declaring that the national education system for the promotion of the empowerment of women, should adopt, inter-alia, introduction of women's studies in the higher education stream.

Madhuri Shah, Chairperson, University Grants Commission was an ardent supporter of women's studies being a part of this process initiated at SNDT in 1974. Responding to the developments inside and outside, under her chairmanship, the University

Grants Commission issued guidelines to universities in 1986 to integrate women's concerns through women's studies encompassing teaching, training, research, and extension with the objective of enriching the disciplines and generating awareness about women's problems thus acting as "a critical instrument for breaking the unequal power relations and hierarchy prevailing in the field of knowledge" (Neera Desai).

The Perspective Paper of the Ramamurti Review Committee which reviewed the National Policy on Education (1990), re-confirmed the interventionist role to promote gender equality and expansion of women's studies. The Report "Towards an Enlightened Humane Society" (1991) and resultant Programme of Action (1992) have emphasised "Equity and Social Justice" with "Education and Women's Equality" as one of the priority concerns highlighting the visible gaps affecting the status of women and policies affecting their participation.

In spite of these mandates and commitments it was a sad day when the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court declared that women's proper place was in the home. This created a furor in the entire country. Women's organisations protested and continued to protest till their voices were heard. This new awakening on the part of women's groups is heartening, though many areas and many people remain uncovered.<sup>3</sup>

Between 1975 and 1995, the United Nations has organised four World Conferences on Women starting from Mexico in 1975 on the theme Equality, Development and Peace, followed by the Second World Conference on Women at Copenhagen in Denmark (1980) and the third in Nairobi (1985) till the last one in Beijing in September 1995 calling attention on : Action for Equality, Development and Peace. The journey from Mexico to Beijing for the UN and for India has been long and eventful. Worldwide data on women, world-wide debates from feminist

perspectives on issues from rape to peace, emergence of organisations and international linkages are new trends. This global thrust has given a fresh new sense of power to women sending signals that women are serious and they want national and international bodies to be equally serious about their situation. The NGO Forum, which met at Huairon (a Beijing tourist resort) ran parallel to the official meeting and attracted about 25,000 women. The Beijing Conference through the Platform of Action will provide guidelines for the governments. Women's groups all over the world are making efforts for bringing women's perspectives in national and international agendas in several areas. India played a significant role in asserting the viewpoints of developing countries in the Platform of Action and established itself as one of the top political powers in terms of programme implementation. The Beijing Conference, inter alia, focussed attention on the role of women being central to development. One of the new important recognitions both by NGOs and Governments was that macro-economic policy is a feminist issue and women need to be part of the process of decision making and financial allocation. The Indian Government has endorsed the document and has declared its commitment to formulate and operationalise a national policy on women and set up a commissioner for women's rights to act as a public defender of women's human rights. However, for the stream to keep flowing, women themselves will have to continue to fight and retain the right to self determination.

In conclusion, I feel compelled to quote from Laxmi Menon's Convocation Address delivered at Mother Teresa University, where she ended with Buddha's parting message to his disciples which is worth reckoning for the empowerment of women.

Said the Buddha :  
"Be ye lamps into yourselves  
Do not depend on external help  
Rely on yourself  
The more you depend on yourselves  
The more your potentialities will be realised".

### Notes and References

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3. Research Centre for Women's Studies, SNTD Women's University, Newsletter, Vol. 16, No. 1, Summer 1996.
4. Thakkar, Usha : "Forging Ahead : Mexico to Beijing" *In* India's role in the United Nation edited by Nawaz Modi and B. N. Meherish. Bombay : Allied Publishers, 1995. p. 162.

*Note : In order to tie up this chapter with the process of social development for equality of women to enable them to become "lamps unto themselves" supportive information is given under Appendix 7. It gives lists of documents of Governmental efforts in setting up Committees and Commissions and itemises the involvement of academia and Non-Governmental Organisations in this process.*



## Intimate Reflections

While I was writing these memories, I wondered as to what extent my *Karmabhoomi* defined the course of my action and to what extent I was able to affect its course. This is a difficult question to reflect upon objectively and I leave it to the readers to decide on the question after reviewing this 'academic biography' which intertwines personal and institutional strands.

However, working with SNDT, one influence stands out very strongly. This long association has affected the course of my life and my style of functioning in an important way. It placed before me new ideals and new commitments. In turn, in spite of problems, disappointments and frustrations, I was able to overcome the problems and difficult situations because I made a conscious effort to align my personal goals with institutional objectives. May be because I am basically a positive and optimistic person, when I look back, mostly memories of happy and constructive events flash by. When holding positions of responsibility, one is aware of the volcano under the chair. During my long years in administration, I must have displeased several, but not for any personal reasons; the conflict was between the interest of the individual and that of the institution; hard decisions though objectively taken and keeping in mind the human factor, displeased those affected; it was just not possible to please everyone. These were my regrets. My other regret was time spent on legal battles, though compared to sister universities, this was minimal. I recall with gratitude the moral support extended to me by Boman Behram, former Mayor and member of the Syndicate and G.M. Divekar, University solicitor during a

lengthy legal hassle. Today, unfortunately the legal battles have seeped into the university culture to a large extent causing great hardship and stress to all concerned. As mentioned earlier, I joined SNDT Women's University on October 1, 1960, as its Registrar when I was not even thirty-five years old. Many must have thought me quite young to hold this responsible position. Some even tried to dissuade me from joining it as they felt I would not fit into its culture. I took time to decide whether I was ready to make a change; but once having made up my mind, there was no looking back. Of all the Registrars who took charge before me and after me, my tenure has been the longest and at the same time, joining the University marks the most important milestone of my career path.

The University at that time was a low profile institution as it was at a formative stage after receiving statutory recognition in 1951. Today it has grown and blossomed. Justice Smt. Sujata Manohar in her Convocation Address delivered in November 1986, describes its evolution thus: "SNDT started as a traditional university to give an opportunity to sheltered women to go for higher education. Today, it is a happy blend of traditional and modern university and the changes in the university reflect the fast changing norms of women's education".

This change, from a traditional institution to a pulsating force, in my opinion, was a combination of several factors - dedicated faculty, encouraging leaders at the helm of affairs and a close knit team of half a dozen members enthusiastic enough to forge ahead; academics from other institutions began to accept the achievements of the University and society recognised its contribution.

To a large extent, this climate helped me to sustain myself in administration as the Registrar for over twenty-five years, mostly enjoying my work. In spite of these positive factors and the



comparatively uncomplicated nature of the institution, an administrator has to face lights and shades. I experienced both, and at times had to work very hard and burn the mid-night lamp to maintain the demands of an expanding university. This gave me hardly any time for leisure and even today I find it difficult to enjoy life in a relaxed manner. On the other hand, a major gain of my long association with the University was making life long friends, at the University and among the academic community in India and abroad. The family of friends continues to grow. For me, these friends are my treasures. At the end of an exciting and eventful career, towards the end of my sojourn I was looking forward to a break but with the satisfaction of having worked in a good institution, adhering to certain principles and ideals.

During my tenure as Vice-Chancellor, I was asked to share my experiences with a group participating in an international workshop organised for women administrators. In this group there were a few members who were keen to revert to the academia after initially opting for administrative responsibility. They were keen to know how I could retain myself in administration. While reviewing the sustaining factors, I pointed out my developmental role in building up of the University through newer academic programmes which gave me an opportunity to blend the administration with the academic. I took an initiative in setting up the Departments of Students' Welfare, Continuing Education and Education Management.

These were pioneering dimensions in emerging areas. This involvement in academic work, although it meant working double, was my strategy to enliven routine administration and make it exciting. It also bridged the gap between administrators and academics at the University, by providing opportunities for interaction and dialogue from time to time. Secondly, those in authority were broad minded and supportive with a vision for the progress of the institution. Ideas and projects put forward

were always considered in good measure and implemented when feasible. This sort of open atmosphere helped people to work harder with greater zest. This was a classic example of an institution helping rather than hindering an individual's growth.

Thirdly, belonging to that phase of the university's development when it was forging ahead, consolidating its gains, it bound members together with a sense of belongingness and encouraged them to further the goals of the University. It was a rare atmosphere of cohesion where cooperation prevailed.

I am happy to record that my introspection and sharing had a healthy effect and that some participants in the group who were facing the dilemma, later on informed me that they reviewed and reflected and decided to remain in administration.

During my long association with SNTD, as Registrar and Vice-Chancellor I had to play different roles. How did I tackle them? As the Registrar, I had often prepared ground for developmental schemes and made new proposals to facilitate those in authority to take decisions. This helped me to gain insight into policy formulation. When I became the Vice-Chancellor, the focus changed. I had to take decisions and leave the ground work to others. Did I find this difficult? No, but some of the decisions were difficult to take when it was a long term gain for the University without adequate matching resources. The opportunity could not be lost, at the same time, consideration had to be given to resources available. As the Vice-Chancellor, I was expected to give a vision which would give new directions. Was I able to do this? I had the gratification of working in the best interest of the University, the 'interest' as I perceived it. During my brief period of three years as Vice-Chancellor - October 4, 1986 to November 27, 1989 - when I voluntarily decided to retire, programmes with newer thrusts, pioneering schemes and links at national and international were introduced to give

greater exposure to students and faculty to trends emerging worldwide and equipping them to respond to new challenges.

The University had come a long way since I joined in 1960. At that time, University's conducted institutions were located at its two campuses at Pune (oldest) and Churchgate, having in all twelve institutions (three conducted colleges and nine affiliated), an enrolment of nearly 7000 and about 200 faculty members. Over 80% were in art faculty, 18% in education and 2% in Home Science and Nursing. Hardly 10,000 students had passed out of the university.

When I retired in 1989, the scene had completely changed. The University had three campuses, catering to over 32,000 students in 31 colleges and 32 University departments, undergoing training for diplomas, graduate, post-graduate and doctoral degrees covering traditional, non traditional and market related fields under 10 faculties in disciplines ranging from Liberal Arts to Computer science. The number of graduates passing out of the portals of the University was nearing a lakh. The development was outstanding. In comparison to other universities in the country, SNTU was a small University as far as enrolment was concerned; but its contribution in empowering women to face the world with confidence and a sense of fulfillment stands out as a beacon. The small and courageous beginning made by Karve with just five students, made me feel fulfilled that I could be a part of this unique process of lighting thousands of lamps and thus continuing the message and mission of the Founder.

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My familial and marital background to a great extent, have influenced my home as well as work roles. I belonged to a upper middle class family, valuing education, specially that of girls in the family. Fortunately, both families shared common views for the upbringing of children. Girls and boys were treated equally

and given the same opportunity at both the levels. This was a great support to my generation and allowed us freedom of options to decide our future. The legacy of social reform was received from my paternal grandfather Tuljaram Khandwalla who although a medical doctor by profession became a Prarthnasamajist and was ex-communicated by his caste for his reformist views. My grandfather encouraged two of his daughters Jaya and Kapila in the 30s to go abroad and study. Both remained unmarried and pursued their career, one among the first few lady doctors and the other an educationist. This spirit of independence opened up many opportunities to those of us who followed them. Our family, like many other families, was influenced to a good extent by the national movement and my uncle Navin Khandwalla, a freedom fighter courted jail for a long period.

My father, Mangaldas Khandwalla, was a doctor, belonging to the Indian Medical Service. He died suddenly when he was not even 40 years old and my mother Lilavati, less than 30. My mother was bereft. My parents were first cousins and theirs was a love marriage at a time when arranged marriages were the accepted norm. When my father died so young, custom-bound, superstitious members of the family and society, laid the blame on that marriage.

Under these circumstances, my mother Leelavati, known to all as Akaben, would have led a life of oblivion, but for the concern of members of my father's family. My aunt Tara and uncle M.A. Master took us under their wings and the family, particularly my aunt Kapila, encouraged her to pursue Montessori training with Gijubhai Badheka, who pioneered in this area at Bhavnagar. On her return, again with the support of the family, a Balmandir (Montessori School) was started which she looked after and nurtured in a purely honorary capacity, till almost her death.

If my father had lived longer, I am sure my life and values might have been very different, growing in an atmosphere of civil service; but then one cannot go against destiny. My sister and I owe a lot to my mother, who as a young widow looked after us, giving us the best education and a conducive environment. From a young age, I was determined to be a teacher. My sister Torulata was equally determined to follow the footsteps of my father and become a doctor. Due to our mother's perseverance, our wishes were fulfilled. It was with this kind of exposure that I pursued my career. I met my husband, Harshad, while we were both in the final year of school. He had just then migrated to Bombay with his family from Rangoon after the Burmese invasion in 1941, adjusting to quite a different type of life style from what he was used to. Our friendship grew during our college years and ended in our marriage in 1948 with the blessings of both families. My marital family was equally enlightened. My sisters-in-law Padma and Hansa pursued the profession of medicine and law; I was given all the facility to follow my career and thus on that score it was a smooth transition from one family environment to another. Throughout my career, Harshad has been the most supportive companion, always encouraging and taking pride in my development and my achievements. He has been a Marketing Executive with prestigious automobile companies. We both worked very hard but at the same time enjoyed the work of our choice without ever experiencing confrontation with each other while pursuing our work roles.

We stayed in a joint family for many years. I consider it a great boon as my parents-in-law Tarulata and Narbheram were always there to give emotional security to my growing children, Paulomi and Sunil. We gave our children the same freedom of option to select their careers and their spouses as we had received. Today, they are well settled in their work and life, moulding their own children. My daughter Paulomi and her husband Kanti are physicians in USA; my daughter is well

adjusted with her husband's family, pursuing a career and at the same time meeting the demands of her home. My son Sunil and his wife Jaya, both busy in creative careers of an architect and fashion designer, with their two daughters live with us. Adjustments have to be made but if there is understanding and respect for each other's views and a free exchange of opinion, a good atmosphere can exist.

From generation to generation, values are bound to change but it is my belief that as long as family bonds continue to remain strong, there are greater chances of happiness. Harshad and I have tried to instill a code of understanding and values, emphasising family strength and healthy relationship among our children, with a hope that the traditions will be handed down to their children. Now that Harshad and I have retired, we find great joy in spending our time with both families and enjoying our grand children Hemal, Janaki, Nerisha and Mesha.

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While narrating my intimate reflections, I would like to share some of the momentous occasions at the University which forever will remain etched in my memory. In 1969, Corretta King and in 1973 Margaret Mead visited the University as guests of honour. These were very special occasions and the impact of these internationally famed strong women on faculty was tremendous. They acted as role models, generating a pride for the women who belonged to the entire world. It was a proud day for Sharda Divan to felicitate Margaret Mead who visited the University during her tenure as Vice-Chancellor.

I will not repeat the Subhadra, Sumati, Susheela episode which is described in context earlier. For a long time my Registrar, Usha Thakkar, Rohini Gawankar and I were thinking of felicitating women freedom fighters. Seven women from different fields and diverse strata, who had dedicated their lives in

the 1930s and 1940s to achieve freedom for their motherland were identified from Maharashtra and Gujarat with the help of specialists. These States could boast of many more women freedom fighters but the list had to be limited to seven. They were Usha Mehta from Bombay, Anutai Limaye from Pune, Veer Mahila Dagdabai from Marathwada, Sudhatai Joshi from Goa, Maniben Nanavati from Bombay, Maniben Patel from Ahmedabad and Bhaktiba Desai from Rajkot.

We did not know what the response would be but were happily surprised at the welcome it received. This was an unforgettable occasion for me personally during my Vice-Chancellorship. For the students it was an occasion for bridging the lives of older and younger generations.

It was in 1953 and 1955, after the University received statutory recognition, that Karve, Premlila Thackersey and Sharda Mehta were conferred honorary degrees of Doctor of Letters for their pioneering role in the building up of the University in its earlier years. Since then, somehow no new names were added to the honours list. During my Registrarship, this was debated, from time to time but without a positive outcome. This was rankling in my mind when I became Vice-Chancellor. I seriously contemplated this matters. The country could boast of many women whose contribution deserved recognition. The Women's University was the right institution for honouring these women. The last convocation at the University before I retired as Vice-Chancellor was on November 20, 1989. On that occasion Honorary Degrees of Doctor of Letters were conferred on three outstanding women-Hansa Mehta, Anutai Wagh and Amrita Pritam. I retired from Vice-Chancellorship on November 27, exactly a week after this function, carrying with me proud memories of the women who gave a special dignity to the womanhood of India. Within a few days after I retired, the Sheffield Polytechnic in U.K., now known as the Sheffield Hallam, con-

ferred on me an Honorary Professorship under the Faculty of Education, Health and Welfare during the Graduation Day of students on November 29, 1989 at Sheffield. Every year, Honorary Professorship was conferred in "esteem, appreciation and recognition of outstanding leadership in the service of education and training". This honour was conferred on me for my contribution in the pioneering area of Education Management. I have attended many convocations but the events of this particular evening stirred my soul.

Soon after, the next year, the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in London, with a membership of 450 universities from 34 Commonwealth countries, selected me for the Symons Award, which is awarded each year to a person who has given distinguished service to the Association and Universities of the Commonwealth. I was selected for my contribution to the development of training programmes for the decision making level of women administrators under the SNDT-ACU-CIDA programme with which I was associated right from the beginning. This was a great honour done to me. The award-giving ceremony was held in Delhi on January 18, 1991 linking it with the ACU's statutory general meeting and conference of Executive Heads of Commonwealth countries. Professor Grace Alele Williams, Vice-Chancellor, University of Benin in Africa, presented the 1990 Symons Medal to me. It was a rare occasion being honoured amidst one's peers, old and new. I was happy to once again meet Dr. Christodouloo, Secretary-General of ACU and Peter Hetherington, Deputy Secretary-General as the ACU had close links with SNDT, especially after an international meet at SNDT during Madhuri Shah's tenure. On both the occasions my husband Harshad was with me, as always, to support me. These were very momentous occasions.

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At the University I came in contact with a cross-section of



women with diverse expectations and aspirations. Some were strong and motivated; some with a *laissez faire* attitude and still others who came to pass their time. I observed that their background and lifestyle, the influence of the family and surroundings affected their philosophy of work. The interaction presented a good picture of the profile of womanhood.

There were those staff members and faculty who desired protection at the Women's University and at the same time expected concessions. On the other side of the pendulum there were strongly committed faculty and staff, identifying fully with the institution; the University could boast of strong leaders, in authority positions, as well as from the alumni who could swim against the current and make it in a man's world without being "twice as smart or working twice as hard". Several of the students, particularly, in the Arts disciplines considered joining the University a 'waiting period' for marriage; while private students considered coming to the University as a rare privilege.

I recall, poignantly, incidents when some parents would approach me during my Registrarship, when their daughters failed the examination. There would be anger on their faces blaming the University for this calamity (their perception) as it spoiled their daughters marriage prospects. I was told: "We would have been better off sending our daughters to co-educational institutions". At such times it was impossible to rationalise with them. On the other hand, I recently met a SNDT alumni bubbling with enthusiasm, who reminded me of her frustration when she had come to see me as a student, complaining about her father not permitting her to pursue a career of her choice. A few encouraging words from me changed her disappointment to determination and after completing her SNDT degree, she pursued a management course and is looking after her own business. The twinkle in her eyes spoke volumes about her achievement.

The experience with mature students, seeking education through the private stream, is quite different. Some of them come from long distances carrying their tiffin, and often accompanied by their children, some in their 30s, others in 40s and 50s reflecting their keenness to be educated. From my window, when I saw them lining up for the contact sessions on weekends, I was very touched. At one of the Convocations, when Premilaben Thackersey saw a woman, who had come to collect her degree certificate with a small child in her arms, tears of happiness shone in her eyes. Reaching out to such women was her greatest satisfaction.

It is interesting to note that the University's exciting journey has enabled it to reach out to women born in the 19th century and also to women who will be part of the 21st century. How different have been their aspirations from decade to decade and how fulfilling for the University to be on the move to meet the changing demands!

We are on the threshold of a new century. The modern woman has several advantages over her sister who joined the University when it was first established. From 'nurturing' disciplines she now has the freedom of choice from a wide range of subject areas the University has introduced over the decades. The University's goal should be to provide for these options, offer an access to programmes and professions hitherto denied to her and quickly identify and train her for openings that emerge through pace-setting developments and new technologies to give her an edge for a new partnership between man and woman.

While concluding this narration, a question comes to my mind. What is the role of this University vis-a-vis the woman's life? Women have come a long way but many dark corners remain untouched. As Madhuri Shah pointed out in her Convocation Address of 1983, the University has to open up

new fields of learning, so that women can meet the challenges of life through several options and structures to pursue their education, within their role elements in their own time. Chitra Naik in her Convocation Address of 1991 raised an important question "Since the Women's University was born to relieve the distress of the oppressed women and to make them self-confident and self-reliant, can this original mission become a major focus for the University to be expressed through its programme of teaching, research and extension?" Kiran Bedi at the Convocation delivered on January 9, 1994, urged the students to be their own masters: "Command yourselves; be in control; take your own decisions; be clear about your life's vision and goals and identify your strategies to lead your life". These directions coming from three dynamic women are diverse, but at the same time, relevant at this point and to the new needs of this unique institution.

The University under these broad paradigms and in the background of its development, and changing global trends, will have to decide its course of action, searching for excellence while retaining its credibility and identity and preparing its students to be leaders of tomorrow's world.



## Historical Highlights

- 1916** : **FOUNDATION**
- June 3 : Establishment of the BharatVarshiya Mahila Vidyapeeth (The Indian Women's University) by Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve at Poona on the model of Japan's women's university.  
Appointment of Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar as the first Chancellor of the University and Sir Ragunath Paranjype as th first Vice-Chancellor.
- July 6 : Establishment of the Mahila Pathshala (the first college of the University) at Hingne Badruk, Poona with five students.
- 1920 : Donation of fifteen lakhs of rupees to the University by Sir Vithaldas Thackersey. The University named after his mother as the Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University.
- 1921 : Purchase of the land for campus for the University at Erandwana, Poona.  
Affiliation of the first college, the S L U College of Women at Ahmedabad started by Sharda Mehta. This was followed by a second college in Surat (1922) and a third in Baroda (1923).
- 1922 : Death of Sir Vithaldas Thackersey.
- 1923 : Construction of the University Building and the Mulraj Khatau Hostel Building on the University Campus at Poona. Shifting of Mahila Pathshala conducted by Hingne Stree Sanstha to the

- University. Came to be known as S.N.D.T. College for Women.
- 1931 : Establishment of second conducted college - the S.N.D.T. College for Women at Bombay.
- 1936 : Transfer of University headquarters from Poona to Bombay.  
Purchase of two plots with military bungalow at Churchgate, Bombay.
- 1939 : Mahatma Gandhi sanctified the Annual Convocation of the University and presided over it. B.G.Kher, Chief Minister of Bombay Province delivered the Convocation Address.
- 1942 : SILVER JUBILEE**  
Celebration of the Silver Jubilee at Poona with Dr. Radhakrishnan presiding and Sarojini Naidu gracing the occasion.  
Addition of two plots adjoining the two plots purchased earlier at Churchgate. The four plots form the main campus of the University at Churchgate.
- 1948 : Visit of Lady Mountbatten to the University.
- 1949 : STATUTORY RECOGNITION**
- Nov. 23 : Passing of Bill by the Government of Bombay, granting statutory recognition to the University.
- 1951 : Putting the University Act on Statute Book. University then known as the S.N.D.T. Women's University.  
Nomination by the Government of Bombay of Premlila Thackersey as the first Vice - Chancellor of the statutorily recognised University.
- 1952 : Appointment of Divan Bahadur K.M. Jhaveri as Vice-Chancellor, opening of the Gordhandas

- Khetsey Building of the University (present building where the University office is located on the Churchgate Campus in Bombay) by Dr. Radhakrishnan, Vice President of India.
- Establishment of Nursing Department under SNTD College for Women at Bombay.
- 1953 : Introduction of Diploma Course in Home Science.
- Conferment of D.Lit. on Premlila Thackersey.
- 1955 : Conferment of D.Lit. on Dhondo Keshav Karve and Sharda Mehta.
- 1956 : Recognition of University by the University Grants Commission.
- 1957 : Election of Premlila Thackersey as Vice - Chancellor .
- 1958 : Conferment of Bharat Ratna on Maharshi Karve by the President of India on Republic Day in 1958.
- Apr. 18 : Celebration of the Birth Centenary of Maharshi Karve, jointly with Hingne Stree Sanstha. Inauguration by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India. Publication of Karve's biography "Maharshi Karve" to mark this important occasion.
- 1959 : Establishment of Department of Home Science as part of SNTD College for Women at Bombay.
- 1960 : Conversion of B.Ed. Department into "The Premcoover Vithaldas Damodar Thackersey College of Education" (PVDT College of Education for Women) at Churchgate Campus, Bombay.
- 1961 : Establishment of the Shri Hansraj Pragji Thackersey School of Library Science at the Bombay Campus.

Appendix 1 – Historical Highlights

- 1962 : Death of the Founder, Maharshi Karve.  
Nov. 9 Conversion of Department of Home Science into full-fledged College of Home Science at the Bombay Campus.
- 1963 : Opening of the second University Building at  
March 21 the Churchgate Campus by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India. Vijayalakshmi Pandit was then the Chancellor of the University.
- 1964 : Granting of a plot of land measuring 21 acres at Juhu (Bombay) a suburb of Bombay for the University's new Campus by the Government of Maharashtra.  
Conversion of Department of Nursing into Leelabai Thackersey College of Nursing.  
Conversion of the B.Ed. Department at Pune into SNTD College of Education for Women, Poona.
- 1965 : Naming of the College of Home Science at Bombay as Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College of Home Science.
- 1966 : **GOLDEN JUBILEE**  
Inauguration of the Golden Jubilee of the University at the Bombay Campus by Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India.
- 1968 : Dr. Zakir Husain, President of India, presided over the concluding function of the Golden Jubilee celebrations at the Bombay Campus.  
Publication of the Golden Jubilee Commemoration volume.  
Golden Jubilee of SNTD Kanyashala at Poona.  
Establishment of the SNTD College of Home Science at Poona Campus.  
Visit of Mrs. Corretta King to the University when she came to India to receive the Jawaharlal Nehru Award (1966) for International



- 1969 : Understanding on behalf of Martin Luther King.  
 Celebration of the 75th Birthday of Premlila Thackersey by the University.  
 Conferment of Padma Bhushan on Premlila Thackersey by Government of India.  
 Decennial celebrations of the Home Science College at Bombay; inaugurated by Hansa Mehta.
- 1971 : Establishment of Centre of Continuing Education at the University.  
 Visit of Khan Abdul Gafar Khan.  
 Commencement of construction work on Juhu Campus.
- 1972 : Celebration of the Birth Centenary of the Principal Donor, Sir Vithaldas Damodar Thackersey and naming the Juhu Campus as Sir Vithaldas Vidyavihar.  
 Establishment of Shri Hansraj Pragji Thackersey College of Science at Bombay Campus.
- 1973 : Valentina Nikol'yeva Treshkena, Soviet Cosmonaut and World famous anthropologist Margaret Mead visit the University.  
 Independent Building of SNTD College of Education at Poona opened at the hands of A.N. Namjoshi, Minister for Education and Sports in the State cabinet.
- 1974 : Setting up of Research Unit on Women's Studies which was later converted into Research Centre for Women's Student at Bombay.  
 University Act of 1974 comes into force.
- 1975 : Madhuri Shah appointed as Vice-Chancellor
- 1976 : DIAMOND JUBILEE**  
 Inauguration of the Diamond Jubilee of the University at the hands of Indira Gandhi the then

- Prime Minister of India and naming the Pune Campus as Maharshi Karve Vidyavihar.  
Release of special commemoration stamp to mark the Diamond Jubilee of the University at the hand of Dr. Shankar Dayal Sharma, then Minister for Communications.
- 1977 : Death of Premlila Thackersey.  
Nov. 30
- 1979 : Introduction of open University Programme through the Department of Correspondence Courses.  
Establishment of C.U. Shah College of Pharmacy at the Juhu Campus.
- 1981 : Jyoti Trivedi takes over as Vice Chancellor.
- 1984 : University was identified for three International Academic Link Interchange Schemes (a) with Sheffield Polytechnic for Education Management (b) with Edinburgh University for Child Nutrition and (c) Mother and Child Care.
- 1985 : Establishment of Department of Computer Science programme at the Juhu Campus.
- 1986 : Kamalini Bhansali takes over as Vice - Chancellor.  
Establishment of Department of Education Management.  
Establishment of UGC's Library Information Centre.
- 1987 : Co-operative programme with New York University.
- 1988 : Signing Memorandum of Understanding with (a) National Centre for Software Technology (NCST) for strengthening Computer Science programme, (b) State Bank of India for evaluating bank's rural programmes.  
Collaborative programme between Premlila

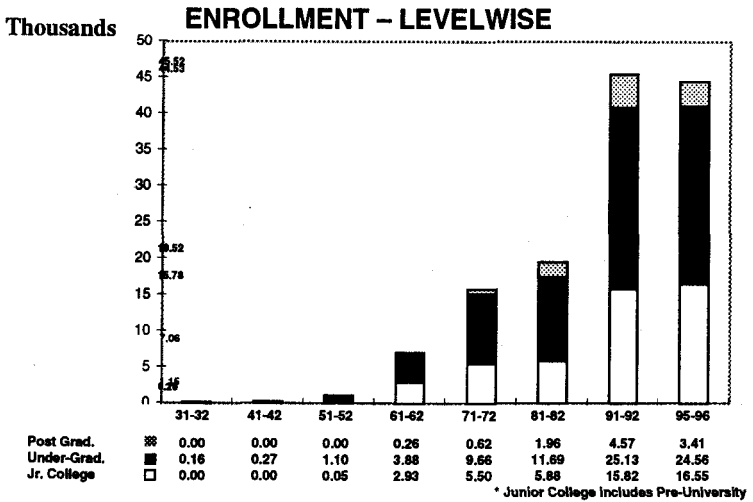
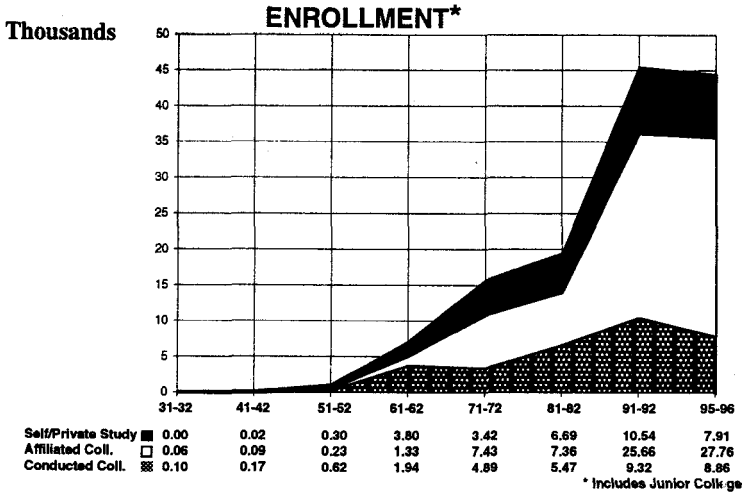
- Vithaldas Polytechnic and Clothing Manufacturer's Association of India (CMAI) for emerging fashions.
- 1989 : Acceptance of proposal by the University Grants Commission to establish the Institute of Technology for Women for offering engineering courses.  
Setting up of Regional Minis Resources Centre in Collaboration with International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- 1990 : Suma Chitnis appointed as Vice-Chancellor.
- 1991 : PLATINUM JUBILEE**  
Inauguration of Platinum Jubilee celebrations of the University at Pune campus; Platinum Jubilee celebration at Juhu campus  
International Meeting on Higher Education Reform in India  
International Seminar on Maharashtra  
International Multidisciplinary Seminar on Bombay  
Establishment of the Canadian Studies Programme
- 1992 : International Round Table in the Genesis, Growth, Current Status and Future of Women's Universities and Colleges  
University hosted the 13th International MINISIS users conference
- 1993 : Indo-Canadian Seminar on Violence Against Women & Women Against Violence
- 1994 : Celebration of Two Decades of Research Centre for Women's Studies  
Birth Centenary of Premlila Thackersey celebrated  
Establishment of Diploma in Jewellery Design and Manufacture

Appendix 1 – Historical Highlights

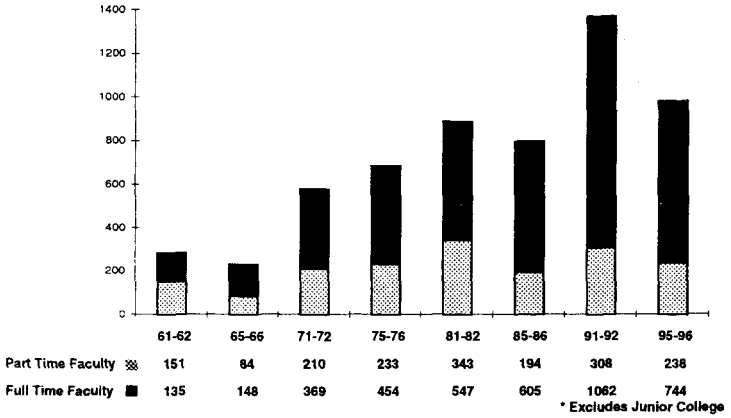
- 1995 : Silver Jubilee of N.S.S. Unit  
Autonomous status awarded to Sir Vithaldas Thackersey College of Home Science (first college of the University to receive this status).  
State level award as the 'Best N.S.S. University' for the year 1993-94.  
International Conference on Women and Development under CUSAC  
Premlila Vithaldas Polytechnic awarded the Best Polytechnic of the state award
- 1996 : Mariamma Varghese appointed as Vice - Chancellor
- 1996 : Celebration of 80th anniversary of the University at Pune Campus
- 1997 : Establishment of the Institute of Management
- July : Establishment of the Institute of Technology

Appendix 2

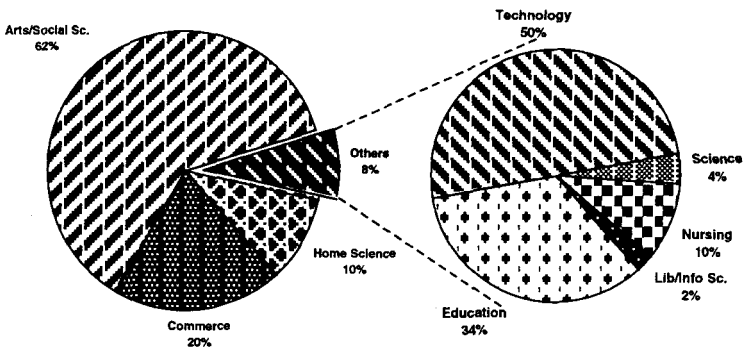
# Statistical Review



### FACULTY MEMBERS \*



### FACULTY WISE ENROLLMENT AT SNTD, 1996



### CONDUCTED & AFFILIATED INSTITUTIONS

	Colleges		Schools	
	Conducted	Affiliated	Conducted	Affiliated
1931-32	2	2	2	12
1941-42	2	2	2	17
1951-52	2	4	2	1
1961-62	5	9	2	1
1971-72	8	13	3	1
1981-82	11	12	3	1
1991-92	13	21	3	-
1995-96	12	21	3	-

### FACULTY WISE ENROLLMENT \*

YEAR	ARTS	EDUCATION	NURSING	HOME SC.	LIB. SC.	COMMERCE	SCI <sup>®</sup> ENCE	TECH <sup>#</sup> NOLOGY
1931-32	155	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1941-42	293	8	-	-	-	-	-	-
1951-52	1060	94	-	-	-	-	-	-
1961-62	6568	307	15	125	19	-	-	-
1971-72	14276	417	119	994	42	-	-	-
1981-82	10165	454	232	884	52	1521	69	440
1991-92	19661	827	211	3094	70	4714	150	971
1994-95	18317	791	240	3874	51	5901	88	1117

\* Excludes Junior college    # Includes Pharmacy, Computer Science & Polytechnic    ® Only Analytical Chemistry





## Beacons of the University

### A. Founders

1. Centenarian Bharat Ratna Dhondo Keshav Karve (April 18, 1858 - November 9, 1962) - Visionary dedicated to the cause of women's education - known with affection as Maharshi. Founder of Bharatvarshiya Mahila Vidyapeeth on July 5, 1916, which later came to be known as Shreemati Nathibai Damodar Thackersey Indian Women's University in 1920.
2. Sir Vithaldas Damodar Thackersey (November 30, 1873 - August 12, 1922) - a leading business magnate, political thinker and philanthropist - Held important positions in public life - member of Legislative Council, chairman of several public organisations and banks; helped in establishing Sydenham College, Benares University; champion of women's education, reformer, principal supporter of Karve whose cause he espoused and cherished; Knighthood conferred on him in June 1908 his crest carried the motto 'Virtue and Wisdom'.
3. Smt. Nathibai Damodar Thackersey - Mother of Sir Vithaldas after whom the University was named when he donated a munificent sum of Rs. 15 lakhs to the University in 1920. Nathibai was a religious and charitable person who imbibed strong values in her children.
4. Dr. Premlila Vithaldas Thackersey (January 8, 1894 -

November 30, 1977) - Wife of Sir Vithaldas, who nurtured the University from 1920 till her death in 1977. She was nominated the first Vice-Chancellor, when the University received statutory recognition in 1951 and later was elected as Vice-Chancellor for four terms from 1957 to 1969.

5. Dr. R.G. Bhandarkar (July 6, 1837 to August 24, 1925) - well known Sanskrit and Prathnasamajist Scholar who held office as the first Chancellor of the University when it was inaugurated in 1916 and among other things advocated widow remarriage.
6. Dr. R.P. Paranjpye, Rangler, - the first Vice-Chancellor of the newly established University. Dr. H.B. Divekar the first Registrar and Dr. D.K. Karve (Founder) the first Principal of the Mahila Pathshala which started on July 6, 1916.
7. Sir Sitaram Patkar-the Vice-Chancellor during 1930-31 and Chancellor of the University from 1932 to 1946 guiding it wisely during its critical period. He was responsible to a great extent for the University being recognised through a Bill in 1949. The University was put on Statute Book in 1951.
8. Smt. Sharda Mehta - a pioneer of women's education in Gujarat giving it a special thrust, was mainly responsible for establishing schools for girls in Ahmedabad, Baroda and Surat, later extending them to Women's colleges, seeking affiliation to the SNDT Indian Women's University in the 20s.

**B. CHANCELLORS /VICE-CHANCELLORS**

***Former Chancellors : Before Statutory Recognition***

<b>Year</b>	<b>Name</b>
1916	Dr. Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar
1920	Sir Mahadeo Bhaskar Chaulal
1926	Sir Chunilal V. Mehta
1932	Shri S. S. Patkar
1946	Sir H. V. Divetia
1948	Diwan Bahadur K M Jhaveri

*Ater Statutory Recognition, i.e. from 1949, the Governor of Maharashtra is the Chancellor of the University.*

***Former Vice-Chancellors : Before Statutory Recognition***

1916	Dr. Sir Raghunath P. Paranjpye
1921	Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve
1921	Sir Lallubhai A. Shah
1926	Dr. Sir Raghunath P. Paranjpye
1927	Shri Balak Ram
1929	Dr. V.G. Nadgir
1931	Sir S.S. Patkar
1932	Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve
1942	Smt. Shardagauri Mehta
1944	Divan Bahadur H. L. Kaji
1946	Smt. Hansa Mehta

***Former Vice-Chancellors : After Statutory Recognition***

1951	Dr. Smt. Premlila V. Thackersey
1952	Diwan Bahadur K. M. Jhaveri

1957	Dr. Smt. Premlila V. Thackersey
1969	Smt. Sharda Divan
1975	Dr. Smt. Madhuri R. Shah
1981	Dr. Smt. Joyti H. Trivedi
1986	Smt. Kamalini H. Bhansali
1989	Dr. Smt. Suma Chitnis
1996	Dr. Smt. Mariamma Varghese

### C. REGISTRARS

1916	Dr. Dhondo Keshav Karve
1916	Dr. H.B. Divekar
1931	Dr. Iravati Karve
1936	Mrs. Sharda Divan
1944	Miss Laxmi Thackersey
1951	Miss Lila Wagle Dhume
1951	Miss Laxmi Thachersey
1960	Mrs. Kamalini H. Bhansali
1986	Dr. Usha Thakkar
1989	Mr. P.K. Thakkar
1991	Dr. A.G. Bhalwankar
1993	Dr. Smt. Naina S. Potdar
1995	Dr. Hemlata Parasnis

### D. ROLL OF HONOUR

Doctor of Letters (D. Litt) Conferred on :

1953	:	Premlila V. Thackersey
1955	:	Sharda Mehta
		Dhondo Keshav Karve
1989	:	Hansa Mehta
		Anutai Wagh
		Amrita Pritam

Appendix 3 – Beacons of the University

- 1990 : Ela Bhatt  
Pratima Kale  
Vijaya Mehta  
1994 : Banoo Coyajee

The Founder Dhondo Keshav Karve and the women honoured have been women with strength (Stree Shakti) being high achievers in different fields, setting an example to faculty and students of this University.



## Pride of SNDT

### **Faculty**

When the University was founded in 1916, eminent professors contributed as honorary Professors. When the second college was established in 1931, in Bombay, this pattern was repeated. Students, though small in number, received personal attention from their teachers equipping them to face life. As Maltibai Bedekar expressed, it was family, caring support. Dedicated teachers worked as Principals, accepting the cause as their own.

Some of these were : R.K. Lagu, Waman Malhar Joshi, N.R. Pathak, Y.S. Pandit, Vasantao Naik, K.L. Joshi, in Poona, Himmatlal Anjaria, Ramnarayan Pathak, J.J. Anjaria, C.C. Shah, G.L. Gheewalla, in Bombay and Sharda Mehta and Gatubhai Dhruva in Gujarat.

After the University was statutorily recognised in the 50s and 60s, equally dedicated principals, to name a few D.S. Phatak, Sharyu Bal, B.K. Sohonie, Nirmala Kher, K.C. Shah, Shakuntala Mehta, Dhairyabala Vora, Indumatiben Mehta, steered the University conducted and affiliated colleges, meeting various challenges.

The torch was carried forward by faculty and a new generation of Principals and Heads of Department. Among others were U.M. Maniar, S.G. Betai, G.B. Sardar, Neera Desai, Gargi Sardesai, A.W. Oak, Kamla Bhoota, Bhanu Shah, Urvashi Surati, Vidyut Kandwala, Jayendra Trivedi, Kumud Patwa, Sudha Desai, Pranaybala Kotecha, Mani Kamerkar, Gladys

Sigamany, Anasuya Trivedi, K.S. Kelkar, Freny Tarapore, H.V. Inamdar, Suresh Dalal, Harshida Pandit, Rajni Ashar, S.G. Malshe, Rohini Gavankar, Jaya Mehta, Malti Baichwal, Kalindi Randeri, Shirin Kudchedkar, Sharawati Shirgaonkar, M.K.R. Naidu, Mariamma Varghese, Sumati Mudambi, Maitreyi Krishnaraj, Prabha Atre, ..... and many, many more.

The contemporary scene continues the ideology of the past but with fresh values through faculty, heads and principals ..... To name a few ..... Hemlata Parasnis, Usha Thakkar, Lena D'Souza, Harsha Parekh, Ranjan Parekh, Bharati Naik, Naina Potdar, Preeti Bhatt, Nita Ramaiya, Ravikala Kamath, S.G. Deshpande, Smriti Swarup, S.G. Sunderam, Meera Kosambi .....

### **Illustrious Alumni**

Only a sprinkling from the one and a half lakh students who have passed out of the University can be mentioned. Many returned to the university and gave in more than full measure what they had received from their alma mater; their names are not repeated.

### ***First Students***

Sitabai Annigeri, Godavari Ketker, Gangubai Patwardhan, Revatibai Gadgil and Verubai Shevde.

### ***First Graduates***

GA : Verubai Shevde (1919)  
PA : Godavari Ketkar (1927)  
PhD : Dhruman Diwanji and Sumati Modak (1969)

### ***Pace-setters***

*Maltibai Bedekar* - revolutionary Marathi writer ahead of her times - presented realities of women's feelings shocking society, - author of novels, plays, short stories - student of SNDT in early



years and for some time Headmistress of SNTD Kanyashala at Poona.

*Gangubai Patwardhan* - a rebel against traditions and a liberal thinker - even as far back as the first decade of the 20th century, refused to marry the groom selected by her father - graduate of second batch - for some years principal of SNTD's affiliated college at Baroda.

*Pushpa Mehta* - SNTD graduate and renowned social worker of early years - founder of Vikas Graha in Ahmedabad and Vikas Vidyalaya in Wadhwa (Saurashtra) - founder member of Jyoti Sangh

*Poornima Pakvasa* - Founder of Ritambhara Vidyapeeth – organiser of camps of martial arts for girls - conducted schools for tribal girls.

### ***Freedom Fighters***

*Usha Khanolkar* - left studies during Quit India movement - renewed studies during 60s

*Usha Gawankar* - left school to join freedom movement - imprisoned - joined SNTD for external BA and did B.Ed. from PVDT.

*Yamu Kumbhare* - left college (Poona) during SY GA to join freedom struggle (1942) – one and half years in jail - after release - worker of Rashtriya Seva Dal.

*Pramoda Gosalia* - active participant of national movement in 30s and 40s - close association with. All India Women's Conference.

*Vimal Garnad* - left Poona college to join the freedom struggle - participant of women's movements.

### ***Education and Social Work***

*Sumitra Thakore* - Co-worker of Pushpa Mehta.

*Aruna Desai* (1940 batch) - dedicated to the cause of women's education in Saurashtra -Recipient of Nari Ratna from citizens of Surendranagar in Mumbai.

*Anutai Wagh* - graduate of early years - education of tribals - conferred D. Litt. by SNTD.

*Krishna Mote* (early batch) - educationist - writer

*Subhadra Shroff, Sushila and Sumati Vaidya* - trio who dedicated their lives to the spread of women's education in Saurashtra on Gandhian values 60s, 70s, 80s.

*Savita Shah* - closely associated with first affiliated college in Gujarat

*Kanta Shah* - Hari Vilas - organisers of Sarvodaya Parivar Trust - Recipients of Janakidevi Bajaj Award for rural reconstruction.

### ***Home Scientists***

*Pratima Kale*, a UNICEF executive is Recipient of D. Litt. from SNTD. *Elizabeth Kurien* and *Archana Mishra* are senior executives at ORG; *Sheetal Mamerkar, Anjali Nair* and *Purnima Trivedi* are dietiticians in leading Bombay hospitals; *Vandana Xavier, Pallavi Phataphod* and *Dipika Chawla* work in the area of children's media.

### ***Literateurs, Media Persons and Journalists***

*Hira Pathak* - Prominent writer and critic; *Sanjeevani Marathe, Padma Lokor, Padma Gole* - poetesses; *Sheila Kulkar* and *Vijaya Dhumale* - T.V. artistes; *Rambha Gandhi* - playwrights; *Mrinalini Desai* - writer and social worker; *Labhu Mehta* - novelist and editor; *Vasu Bhat* and *Jayvati Kaji* - AIR artistes; *Leelavati Bhagvat* - Marathi children's writer; *Nandini Fenani, Vijaya Joshi, Babiben Bharwada, Padma Fadia, Jayantika Jayantibhai, Taru Kajaria, Sheila Bhatt* - journalists.

### ***Fine Arts and Music***

*Shruti Sadolikar* - classical singer of the Jaipur Gharana; *Pramila Datar, Shubha Joshi* and *Raju Mehta* - light and folk music artistes; *Nirmala Gogate, Rajni Joshi, Jyotsna Mohile* and *Bharti Acharekar* - stage artistes; *Krishna Khatau* - Musicologist; *Sujata Bajaj* and *Shobha Patki* - artists.

### **Activists**

*Pramila Dandavate* and  
*Pramila Yagnik* – Politicians;  
*Flavia Agnes* – Activist and Legal expert;  
*Kamal Vyavahare* – First lady mayor of Pune.

### **Nursing**

*Shaila Bhalekar*, Director of Nursing P.D. Hinduja National Hospital; *Anuprita Gujar*, *Aleyamma Samuel* and *Kanyakumari Gokani* - Principals of Schools of Nursing at KEM, LTMG and Hinduja Hospitals respectively; *Salomey George*, *K. Thomas* and *Carol Noronha* Directors of Colleges of Nursing at Kottayam, Trivandrum and Goa respectively.

### **Librarians**

*Dr. Maya Avasia* of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, *Malavika Murlidharan*, Regional Librarian, British Council, *Chitra Rao* at NITIE, *Divya Mehta* at Indian Institute of Geomagnetism, *Swadha Majumdar* at National Institute of Design, *Pragnya Pathak* at Plasma Research Laboratory and many others.

### **Polytechnic Alumni**

*Sonali Raheja* and *Priti Kothari* have won national and international awards in dress design; *Sridevi Deshmukh* in Jewellery design; *Asma Sheikh* is a Clinical Executive at Bausch and Lomb; *Anita Patil* in interior design; *Sonal Tolia* and *Mitchell Gudino* are Executive Secretaries and *Pinky Kaka*, *Rupa Patki Nahar* and *Anjali Tulu Damania* are among the many who are successful entrepreneurs.

### **Computer Scientists**

*Dr. Sunita Mahajan*, Sr. Scientist at BARC; *Rajashri Parthasarathy*, *Ila Dandekar*, *Pooja Koregaonkar* and *Ramona*

*D'Silva* are senior executives in software companies and training centres.

***Pharmacists***

*Dr. Kavita Inamdar* and *Ms Madhumita Bose* are R & D Managers Camlin India and Proctor and Gamble, *Rekha Mazgaonkar* is Production Manager at Pfizer, *Gauri Chaudhari* and *Poonam Manji* are Product Managers at Goodrich and Knoll India Products, *Parimal Sail* and *Padmaja Pillai* are marketing executives at Boehringer Mannheim and Charak Pharmaceuticals.

## Appendix 5

# Convocation Addresses

1919 - 1950

DATE	NAME
June 15, 1919	: Chancellor Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar
1920	: *
1921	: *
June 18, 1922	: Chancellor Sir Mahadeva B. Chaubal
1923	: *
June 15, 1924	: Dr. Diwan Bahadur G. S. Rao Revolutionary, Kharwa State, Rajasthan.
June 28, 1925	: Rt. Hon'ble Fisher Member of Parliament.
June 27, 1926	: Shri Moropant Vishwanath Joshi Lawyer, Social Reformer & Political Worker.
June 19, 1927	: Shri Shankaranarayan
June 17, 1928	: Sir Syed Ross Masud (Nawab Masood Jung Bahadur) Retd. Director of Public Instruction, Hyderabad State
June 23, 1929	: Principal A. B. Dhruva Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Banaras Hindu University

\* *Information not available*

# *Convocation cancelled because of political situation; address included in the annual report*

Appendix 5 - Convocation Addresses

- June 15, 1930# : Shri C. R. Reddy  
Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University
- June 28, 1931 : Dr. Smt. Muthulaxmi Reddy  
Social Worker in the field of women &  
children
- June 18, 1932 : Shri Ramanand Chatterji  
Nationalist Leader and  
Political Journalist.
- June 24, 1933 : Smt. K. Radhabai Subbarayan  
Member of Senate & Syndicate  
of Madras University
- June 30, 1934 : Smt. Sarojini Naidu  
National Leader & Nightingale of India.
- June 29, 1935 : Shri C.V. Raman  
Eminent Indian Physicist.
- June 27, 1936 : Shri Manubhai Mehta  
Diwan, Baroda State
- June 26, 1937 : Wrangler Dr. R. P. Paranjpye  
Former Vice Chancellor,  
SNDT Indian Women's University
- June 25, 1938 : Hon'ble Shri K.M. Munshi  
Minister in Cabinet of Bombay Presidency
- July 15, 1939 : Hon'ble Shri B.G. Kher, Chief Minister,  
Bombay Presidency
- June 29, 1940 : Shri M. Visvesvaraya  
Eminent Engineer, Administrator  
and Statesman
- June 20, 1941 : Dr. C. Ramalinga Reddy  
Vice-Chancellor, Andhra University
- July 4, 1942 : Shri Nalini Ranjan Sarkar  
Member of Viceroy's  
Executive Council
- July 3, 1943 : Dr. Sir Chimanlal Setalvad  
Eminent Lawyer, Bombay

Appendix 5 – Convocation Addresses

1944	:	Dr. Amarantha Jha Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University
1945	:	Shri C. R. Rajagopalachari Member of Governor General's Executive Council
July 20, 1946	:	Shri Diwan Bahadur Hiralal L Kaji Vice-Chancellor, SNDT Women's University
July 12, 1948	:	Smt. Vijayalaxmi Pandit India's Ambassador to USSR
1948	:	*
1949	:	*
1950	:	*

**1951 – Date**

<b>DATE</b>		<b>NAME</b>
August 18, 1951	:	Raja Maharaj Singh Governor of Bombay and Chancellor of the University
1952	:	*
August 22, 1953	:	Smt. Durgabai Deshmukh Member, Planning Commission Government of India Eminent social worker
Sept. 11, 1954	:	Dr. C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer Vice-Chancellor of Benaras Hindu University and Annamalai University
Sept. 17, 1955	:	Dr. Harekrushna Mahtab Governor of Bombay and Chancellor of the University
Sept. 29, 1956	:	Shri A.L. Mudaliar Vice-Chancellor, University of Madras

Appendix 5 – Convocation Addresses

- Sept. 28, 1957 : Shri K. C. Desai  
Officiating Vice Chancellor of  
SNDT Women's University
- Sept. 20, 1958 : Dr. K. L. Shrimali  
Minister for Education,  
Government of India
- Sept. 9, 1959 : Shri Sri Prakasa  
Governor of Bombay and  
Chancellor of the University
- Sept. 24, 1960 : Shri Govind Ballabh Pant  
Minister for Home Affairs,  
Government of India
- Sept. 16, 1961 : Shri Y. B. Chavan  
Chief Minister of Maharashtra
- Sept. 9, 1962 : Dr. P. Subbarayan  
Governor of Maharashtra and  
Chancellor of the University
- Sept. 21, 1963 : Prof. D. S. Kothari  
Chairman,  
University Grants Commission,  
New Delhi.
- Sept. 9, 1964 : Dr. Zakir Husain  
Vice-President of India
- Nov. 11, 1965 : Dr. P. V. Cherian  
Governor of Maharashtra and  
Chancellor of the University
- Dec. 29, 1966 : Shri M. C. Chagla  
Minister for External Affairs,  
Government of India
- Dec. 12, 1967 : Dr. S. Chandrasekhar  
Minister of State for Health,  
Family Planning and  
Urban Development,  
Government of India



Appendix 5 – Convocation Addresses

- Dec. 7, 1968 : Dr. Karan Singh  
Minister of Tourism & Civil Aviation,  
Government of India
- Sept. 9, 1969 : Prof. V. K.R. V. Rao  
Minister for Education and Youth  
Services, Government of India
- Nov. 14, 1970 : Dr. M. C. Setalvad  
Former Attorney General,  
Government of India
- Sept. 11, 1971 : Shri Madhukarrao D. Chaudhari  
Minister for Education,  
Government of Maharashtra
- Sept. 9, 1972 : Prof. Anand Namjoshi  
Minister for Education and Sports,  
Government of Maharashtra
- Sept. 9, 1973 : Shri Ali Yavar Jung  
Governor of Maharashtra and  
Chancellor of the University
- Oct. 10, 1974 : Smt. Lakshmi Menon  
Chairperson, Kasturba Gandhi National  
Memorial Trust, Indore
- Dec. 1, 1975 : Begum Zehra Ali Yavar Jung  
Social Worker, Bombay
- Feb. 24, 1977 : Prof. Nurul Hasan  
Minister of Education, Social Welfare  
and Culture, Government of India
- Nov. 30, 1977 : Prof. Satish Chandra  
Chairman,  
University Grants Commission,  
New Delhi
- Jan. 1, 1979 : Prof. Sadanand Varde  
Minister of Education, Cultural  
Affairs, Youth Affairs, Youth  
Services and Sports,  
Government of Maharashtra

Appendix 5 – Convocation Addresses

- Nov. 11, 1979 : Smt. Sharda Mukherjee  
Governor of Gujarat
- Dec. 12, 1980 : Dr. H. N. Sethna  
Chairman, Atomic Energy  
Commission Bombay
- Dec. 12, 1981 : Air Chief Marshal O. P. Mehra, PVSM  
Governor of Maharashtra and  
Chancellor of the University
- Dec. 12, 1982 : Air Chief Marshal I. J. Latif, PVSM  
Governor of Maharashtra and  
Chancellor of the University
- Nov. 11, 1983 : Dr. Madhuri R. Shah  
Chairperson,  
University Grants Commission,  
New Delhi
- Nov. 11, 1984 : Dr. R. Ramanna  
Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission,  
Bombay
- Feb. 10, 1986 : Shri P. V. Narsimha Rao  
Minister of Human Resource  
Development, Government of India
- Nov. 11, 1986 : Hon'ble. Smt. Justice Sujata Manohar  
High Court, Bombay
- Nov. 11, 1987 : Prof. Yash Pal  
Chairman,  
University Grants Commission,  
New Delhi
- Nov. 26, 1988 : Shri S. K. Kirloskar  
Industrialist, Pune
- Nov. 20, 1989 : Shri Justice P. N. Bhagwati  
Chief Justice of India
- Dec. 15, 1990 : Smt. Ela Bhatt  
Ramon Magasasay Awardee  
and Hon. Secretary, SEWA,  
Ahmedabad

Appendix 5 – Convocation Addresses

- Dec. 12, 1991 : Dr. Chitra Naik  
Member, Planning Commission  
Government of India
- Dec. 11, 1992 : Shri Nani Palkhiwala  
Eminent Jurist, Bombay
- Jan. 8, 1994 : Dr. Banoo Coyajee  
Eminent Medical Doctor and  
Social Worker, Pune  
Raman Magasasay Awardee
- Jan. 9, 1995 : Dr. Kiran Bedi  
Inspector General of Police (Prisons)  
Government of India.
- Jan. 5, 1996 : Dr. Usha Mehta  
Gandhian Scholar & Retd. Head Dept.  
of Civics and Politics,  
University of Bombay.
- Dec. 20, 1996 : Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam  
Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister  
and Secretary, Dept. of Defence  
Government of India.



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4. Bhansali, Kamalini H. & Desai, Neera : Promoting Gender Justice Through Extension : Experiences of SNDT Women's University. Paper presented at 67th Annual Conference of the Association of Indian Universities at Pondicherry. Delhi : A.I.U. 1993.
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20. Genesis, Growth, Current Status and Future of Women's Universities and Colleges. Papers presented at Round Tables Seminar, January 2-4, 1992.
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# Process of Social Department for Equality of Women

Articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India guarantee the fundamental rights to equality of the sexes. The State is thus charged with the responsibility of implementing these principles through social, economic and political justice to all Indian citizens, both men and women.

## **1. Policy Initiatives including Reports of Committees and Commissions**

- (1) Education of Girls and Women in India : Submitted to the XVth International Conference on Public Education, Geneva, July 1952. New Delhi : Central Advisory Board of Education, 1952.
- (2) Education of Girls and Women in Rural Areas, India/Raksha Saran. New Delhi : Ministry of Education, 1962.
- (3) Committee to look into the Causes for lack of Public Support Participation in Rural Areas for Girls' Education and to enlist Public Co-operation, 1965. New Delhi : Ministry of Education, Government of India, 1965.

*Chairperson : M. Bhaktavasalam. The position of girls' education in the less advanced states, ways*

*and means through which public support and cooperation may be mobilized more effectively, programmes necessary for a qualitative improvement are discussed, followed by a summary of recommendations.*

- (4) National Committee on Women's Education, 1968. Report. New Delhi : Manager of Publications, 1969.

*Chairperson : Durgabai Deshmukh. Gives a historical survey of women's education in India from 1800-1947 and makes recommendations on education of girls (primary and secondary) curricula and syllabi, training and employment of women teachers, professional and vocational education, special education facilities for adult women and role of voluntary organizations in women's education.*

- (5) Towards Equality : Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. New Delhi : Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, 1974.

*The report, among other items, strongly recommends to the Government to frame a comprehensive policy on women's development to fulfill the constitutional mandate of women's equality and involvement in national development after assessing the impact of constitutional, legal and administrative provisions on the social status of women.*

- (6) National Advisory Committee on study of Educational Backwardness of Girls in Selected States. New Delhi : National Council for Education Research and Training, 1981.

- (7) National Policy on Education and Programme of Action. New Delhi : Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1986.

*The Programme of Action was drawn up for the implementation of the NEP. One of the thrusts is conceptualisation of education for women's equality and their empowerment, drawing urgent attention on the need for removal of disparities in education among boys and girls and achieving basic change in the status of women.*

- (8) National Perspective Plan for Women : 1988 to 2000 AD. New Delhi : Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1988.

*The Report emphasises problems of unemployment, inequality and subordination faced by women and has made several recommendation for their development and welfare.*

- (9) Mahila Samakhya : Programme for Education for Women's Equality. New Delhi : Ministry of Human Resource Development, 1988.

*This document outlines the objectives and action points of 'Mahila Samakhya' - a programme initiated in ten districts of Gujarat, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh, to create a mechanism whereby women are given an opportunity to plan and monitor their own education, and reach out to a new body of knowledge.*

- (10) Shramshakti : Report of the National Commission

on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector. New Delhi : Department of Women and Child Development, 1988.

*The Commission examined issues concerning women's workforce in the informal sector, pointing out to the dismal and insecure conditions of women. The report has made valuable recommendations for improving their status and conditions.*

- (11) Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society : Reviewing of National Policy of Education, 1986. New Delhi : Department of Education, 1990.

*The Report popularly known as Ramamurti Committee Report reviewed the NPE (1986). Inter alia it has focused on education for women's equality as a vital component of the overall strategy of securing equity and social justice in education and made several recommendations.*

- (12) Policy for Women, Government of Maharashtra. Mumbai : Department of Women, 1994.

*The Policy is an attempt to identify the steps needed to improve the position of women in Maharashtra by starting a process of ensuring equality for women, through attitudinal changes.*

- (13) Vision 2 0000 : Policy for the Advancement of Women in Tamil Nadu. Chennai : Tamil Nadu Corporation for Development & Women Ltd., 1994.

- (14) Fourth World Conference on Women. Beijing 1995 :

A Country Report. New Delhi : Ministry of-Human Resources Development, 1995.

- (15) National Policy for the Empowerment of Women (Final Draft). New Delhi : Ministry of Human Resources Development, 1996.

## **2. National Machinery**

- a. The Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development acts as a machinery within the Government to co-ordinate efforts of Government and non-Government organisations. Some States in the country have set up their own Department of Women and Child Development. The National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD) assists the Department of Women and Child Development in the areas of research and training.
- b. The Central Social Welfare Board which is an apex organisation at the national level, acts as an umbrella organisation networking through State Welfare Boards and through them, with thousands of voluntary organisations (NGOs).
- c. The National Commission for Women (NCW), a statutory body, oversees the implementation of constitutional and legal safeguards and the protection of women's rights and privileges. Some States in the country have set up State level Commissions.
- d. Women's Cells are set up in the Central Ministries/Departments of Labour, Industry, Rural Development, Science and Technology.

In addition there are several other policy and programme initiatives and legal enactments in favour of women, adolescent girls, girl child, etc. The organisations under National Machinery network with academic bodies, Women's Studies centres, NGOs, grass-root level organisation and Departments of Government.

*Main Source : Fourth Conference on Women, Beijing : A Country Paper. New Delhi : Department of Women & Child Development, 1995.*

### **3. Initiatives of academic institutions and NGOs**

- a. The Indian Association for Women's Studies (IAWS) established in 1981 is an arena for discussing women's issues from new perspectives, sharing experiences with academics, activists and those involved in policy making through the bi-ennial conferences.
- b. The University Grants Commission, the apex body of higher education, has promoted women's studies in the Universities since 1985. Twenty-two women's studies centres in Universities are set up with UGC's support.
- c. Outside the education system some Research and Development Institutes conduct research and organise training programmes, seminars, symposia etc. on burning contemporary issues concerning women.
- d. Major cities have witnessed emergence of new groups, with a different focus when compared to conventional women's organisations. These organisations function as autonomous women's groups



pressurising public and political opinion on women's issues.

- e. Another trend is setting up of interest groups with feminist perspectives in areas like media, law, etc. through journals and newsletters.
- f. Books and articles written by scholars and researchers continue to be published critiquing women's problem.



***K**amalini Bhansali, Professor Emeritus in Non-Formal Education at SNDT Women's University retired as its Vice-Chancellor in November 1989 after serving the University for almost three decades in different capacities. Her contribution to the cause of women's education and university management in India won her an Honorary Fellowship of Sheffield Hallam University, U.K., the Symons Award of the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the Tagore Literacy Award of the Indian Association of Adult Education.*

Interweaving University events and personal experiences into a fascinating and readable narrative, this book tells the story of the development of a unique institution – the first women's university in the country. The transformation of a small venture, initiated by a dedicated social reformer, Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve, over 80 years ago into a institution committed to academic excellence and innovation is seen through the eyes of an active participant in the process. The book is a part of Dr. Premlila Thackersey Birth Centenary Celebrations.