

Prof. Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri

Memorial Meeting

Tuesday, 21st July, 2015

at

DELHI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

University of Delhi

Delhi – 110007



Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri
1934-2015



DELHI SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI



Ref. No. DSE/.....

MEMORIAL MEETING: PROFESSOR MRINAL DATTA CHAUDHURI

Dear Colleague,

You may have already heard the sad news that our former colleague, Professor Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri passed away on Wednesday, 19th May, 2015 in Pune.

During his association with the University of Delhi as a faculty member of the Department of Economics, Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri served as the Head, Department of Economics, from 1976 to 1979 and Director, Delhi School of Economics, from 1987 to 1991.

To pay tribute to Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri, an eminent economist and a great human being, we are organizing a memorial meeting at the Delhi School of Economics on Tuesday, 21st July, 2015 at 3.00 p.m. in the Lecture Theatre of the Department of Economics. Please join us and also share this information with your colleagues.

Please let us know if you would like to read your message at the meeting. In case you are unable to attend, you may send your message to be read out at the meeting. In both cases, you may please inform Ms. Meena Rautela, P.A. to Director, at director@econdse.org.

With best regards,

Pami Dua.
(Prof. Pami Dua)
Director
Delhi School of Economics
Dean Research (H&SS)
University of Delhi

A. Bhattacharjee
(Prof. Aditya Bhattacharjee)
Head
Department of Economics
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PROGRAMME

- Prof. Pami Dua, Director, DSE (and coordination) - Opening Remarks
- Dr. Malay Dutta Chaudhury, Brother of Late Prof. Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri
- Prof. Aditya Bhattacharjea, HOD Economics, DSE - Life Sketch
- Condolence Messages delivered by :
 - Dr. Manmohan Singh, Former Prime Minister of India (read by Prof. Pami Dua)
 - Prof. K.L.Krishna
 - Prof. Badal Mukherji
 - Prof. K. Sundaram
 - Prof. Pulin B. Nayak
 - Prof. Partha Sen
 - Prof. T.C.A. Anant
 - Prof. Kirit Parikh
 - Mr. Nitin Desai
 - Prof. J.P.S. Uberoi
 - Prof. Pranab Bardhan
 - Prof. Andre Beteille, Prof. Amartya Sen (read by Prof. Rohini Somanathan)
 - Prof. Kaushik Basu, Dr. Omkar Goswami (read by Prof. Ashwini Deshpande)
 - Prof. Abhijit Banerjee, Prof. Anjan Mukherji, Dr. Subir Gokaran (read by Prof. Aditya Bhattacharjea)
 - Prof. Prasanta Pattanaik, Prof. Bhaskar Dutta, Prof. Dilip Mookherjee (read by Prof. Sudhir Shah)
 - Dr. Sudipto Mundle
 - Prof. Ranjan Ray, Prof. Vikas Chitre (read by Prof. Aditya Bhattacharjea)
 - Prof. Adi Bhawani
 - Mr. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta
 - Prof. Meenakshi Thapan
 - Prof. B.B.Bhattacharya, Prof. Maitreesh Ghatak, Prof. Gopal Kadekodi, Prof. Shashak Bhide, Prof. V.S. Minocha, Prof. Ranganath Bhardwaj, Ms. Jasleen Kaur (read by Prof. Pami Dua)

Prof. Pami Dua, Director, DSE

We all miss Professor Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri deeply and pay our heartfelt and sincere condolences to his family and friends.

We thank Dr. Malay Dutta Chaudhuri, Mrinal's brother for being with us today. We also thank Dr. Rajat Baishya, his close relative for gracing this occasion.

I had the good fortune of being Mrinal's student and later colleague at the Delhi School of Economics. My last communication with him was on the evening of May 18th this year.

As some of you know, earlier this year on the Annual Day of the Delhi School of Economics, we had honoured all faculty who had retired while in service at the Delhi School of Economics. Mrinal was unable to make it to the function in January and had then indicated that I may send his shawl and mementos through someone visiting Pune. Since I was unable to locate anyone going to Pune, I decided to send it through courier. I wrote an email to him to this effect on May 18th around noon time informing him and asking if someone would be at his residence to receive the parcel.

Mrinal replied promptly to my email around 7pm on May 18th,

Dear Pami,

I am truly touched by your gesture. Delhi School is a special place for me.

Now I am truly home bound -- always available but unable to be hospitable.

LOVE

MRINAL

Alas, we heard the sad news before we could courier the shawl and mementos we had respectfully and lovingly packed for him. Nevertheless, I am satisfied and somewhat relieved that before Mrinal left for heavenly abode, I was at least able to convey to him that we cared about him and that the Delhi School of Economics held him in deep regard and honoured him for his contributions to DSE.

In fond memory and regard for the wonderful days Mrinal spent at DSE, on behalf of the Delhi School of Economics, I would now like to hand over Mrinal's shawl and mementos to his brother, Dr. Malay Dutta Chaudhuri.

LIFE SKETCH

(By Prof. Aditya Bhattacharjea, Head, Department of Economics)

PROF MRINAL DATTA CHAUDHURI (1934-2014)

Padma Bhushan Professor Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri, Professor of Economics at the Delhi School of Economics during 1968-1999, passed away in Pune on 19th May, 2015. He was 81 years old.

Born in Sriganai in Eastern India on 4th January 1934, Prof. Datta Chaudhuri was educated at Santiniketan and Presidency College, Calcutta, before earning his Doctorate in Economics from M.I.T., USA, in 1966. After a brief stint at the I.S.I. Delhi during 1966-68 he joined the Delhi School of Economics as Professor of Economics in 1968, where he continued to teach till his retirement in 1999.

In a distinguished academic career Prof. Datta Chaudhuri was the Head of the Department of Economics, DSE, during 1974-77 and the Director of DSE during 1986-91. He had been Visiting Professor at Minnesota, Harvard and Berkeley, California and was also a Member of the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton.

Prof. Datta Chaudhuri had served in several governmental committees with distinction. He was a Member of the Committee on Reforms of the Financial Institutions, Government of India, in 1991. He was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2005.

Professor Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri was a theoretical economist of the foremost rank. He was also a public intellectual who took bold positions in support of freedom of speech and expression in the best liberal tradition. He encouraged debates and shone in them. He was a proud member of the Delhi School of Economics fraternity and worked tirelessly to make it a world class institution for teaching and research in Economics.

Prof. Datta Chaudhuri's passing away is a deep loss to the community of economists and social thinkers in India.

The following colleagues paid their homage to Late Prof. Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri on extempore basis. The text of their message is therefore not available.

1. Prof. K.L.Krishna
2. Prof. Badal Mukherji
3. Prof. K. Sundaram
4. Prof. Pulin B. Nayak
5. Prof. Partha Sen
6. Prof. T.C.A.Anant
7. Prof. J.P.S.Uberoi
8. Mr. Nitin Desai
9. Prof. Kirit Parikh
10. Prof. Pranab Bardhan
11. Dr. Sudipto Mundle
12. Prof. Adi Bhavani
13. Mr. Paranjoy Guha Thakurta

**Messages Received and Read
at the
Memorial Meeting**



Manmohan Singh
Member of Parliament
Rajya Sabha

MESSAGE

The news of the sad demise of Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri was received by me with the deepest sorrow. Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri was a very dear friend and colleague of mine. His wisdom, knowledge and experience were a source of great strength to the Economics Faculty of the Delhi School of Economics. Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri was a great scholar and a great teacher and his passing away will be deeply mourned by his numerous friends and colleagues all over India and the World. I join Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri's family, friends and colleagues in recalling with gratitude his contribution to strengthening the Economics Faculty of the Delhi School of Economics. May his soul rest in peace.

Manmohan Singh
(Manmohan Singh)

New Delhi
July 08, 2015

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Prof. Amartya Sen

On Our Mrinal

Compared with the enormity of the tragedy of Mrinal's death, the misfortune of my not being able to come to his memorial meeting may seem trivial. But it makes me very sad indeed not to be able to join others in expressing our affection and our deep regard for someone who brightened the lives of so many of us – friends, colleagues, students and admirers.

I had the good fortune of knowing Mrinal very closely since out school days. He as a towering intellectual, with an extraordinary mind. With an exceptional ability to combine goodwill with commitment, and a piercing analytical ability with a deeply sympathetic view of the rough world that surrounds us.

It is difficult to think that Mrinal is not with us anymore. I am aware that we are all heading that way, and yet his absence makes us powerfully aware of the fact that the greatest of liveliness can be suddenly extinguished by forces will beyond our control. No words can possibly console us, and yet it is good to think that the solidarity of friendship as an idea can survive us.

I wish I could be in D-School today to celebrate what Mrinal did and what he meant to us, and also to express the hope that the ideas he stood for will be there even when he is gone. Mrinal will dazzle forever.

Prof. Andre Beteille

Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri was my oldest friend in Delhi. I know him in Calcutta before we both came to Delhi at roughly the same time. I came to the Delhi School directly from Calcutta in 1959, and he came to the School a few years later after spending sometime in the ISI. We continued our friendship in Delhi until he left for Pune in 2008. I never saw him after that, but spoke with him on the telephone regularly until his passing. He was warm friendly and generous, and utterly selfless in the service of the Delhi School. He served it beyond the call of duty, and never looked to any return for his service. With his passing a part of my life came to an end.

Prof. K.L.Krishna

I had the good fortune of knowing and interacting with Mrinal for more than five decades. Our association became intimate after our meeting at the University of Chicago in the summer of 1965, when he along with several other doctoral students from MIT came to attend a course on Growth Theory offered by Prof H. Uzawa. I returned to DSE in 1967 after my Ph.D and Mrinal joined DSE as Professor in 1968. We had very good rapport throughout our stay at DSE. We jointly supervised two Ph.D. theses in the 1970s, one by Prof. B Goldar, and the other by Prof K R G Nair.

Mrinal was a very versatile economist. He had a very good grasp of the core of Economic Theory, Development Economics, Economic Policy, and Economics of Infrastructure. He supervised Ph.D. theses in several branches of Economics .He was very effective in seminars, because of his proficiency in several areas. Mrinal was instrumental in upholding healthy traditions in the Department. He was endowed with great leadership qualities. He was least interested in Pelf or Power. In Mrinal's demise, the intellectual world and the economics profession suffered a great loss. He will be missed by his friends all over the world, and thousands of his admiring students. For me it is a great loss, coming soon after the passing away of Prof. Nagar, and Suresh Tendulkar a few years ago.

Prof. Kaushik Basu

The passing of Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri, on 19 May this year, marks the end of an era for the Delhi School of Economics. The Delhi School of Economics has been one of the most remarkable institutions of contemporary India; it influenced and shaped the nation's thinking on economic policy in a way that no other institution has. It is a school with which some of the world's most renowned economists and policymakers have been associated. But in many ways Professor Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri was its mainstay. As long as his health permitted, he was always there, lecturing, advising, sitting in on seminars, and holding forth in the coffee house.

I owe a personal debt to Mrinalda for when I finished my PhD at the London School of Economics and was wondering whether to return to India, it was Mrinalda's offer of a "Visiting Fellowship" at the Delhi School of Economics that clinched the decision. And right from the beginning in 1977 Mrinalda became a friend and a mentor.

The Delhi School those days had something electric about it. With A. L. Nagar, Sukhamoy Chakravarty, Raj Krishna, K. L. Krishna it was one of the most vibrant centers of learning and research in economics. But the most constant figure through those and subsequent days and years was Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri. Unlike other well-known economists, Mrinalda wrote little. So his reputation was carried by people who knew him well, from his classmates at MIT, which included Joe Stiglitz and George Akerlof; his friends, like Amartya Sen and Manmohan Singh; to his colleagues and students at the Delhi School of Economics.

Whoever knew him could not fail to notice his phenomenal intellect. I would marvel how Mrinalda could participate in every seminar, from history to ones in abstract mathematical economics. He followed it all and never shied away from a debate.

He had a style—well quite a style—that could at times seem brash and cavalier. But he was one of the most principled and kindest persons I have known.

After his illness forced him to move to Pune, I visited him once and would phone him once every three four months for a chat. It was however never a quick chat. Intellectually isolated from his usual haunts, Mrinalda would seize the opportunity to talk--on politics, politicians, philosophy and latest developments in economics.

Sometime in early May, I realized that with one thing or another I had not spoken with Mrinalda for a longish time; and I thought I must call him one day, keeping some time in hand, to catch up. But that did not happen. The news of his death beat me to it.

Not all deaths seem personal; but this one does. We will all miss him; I certainly will.

Dr. Omkar Goswami

Strangely enough, I was at a dinner in Pune, where Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri (MDC) had withdrawn to over the last eight years, when someone informed me that he had passed away. The last rites were over. Knowing none of the family at Pune to pay my respects, I retreated to a palimpsest of memories — of MDC while I was a student of the Delhi School of Economics, and of Mrinal-da when I taught there. As the images tumbled out, I decided to write this piece. I hope he approves.

Every weekday morning, a not-so-white and, later, powder-puff blue Volkswagen Beetle made a sharp turn to enter D'School and parked on the left of the driveway, as close as possible to the barrier. The door opened, and out stepped a dark, slim, seriously good-looking clean shaved man with a shaggy haircut, wearing well cut beige or grey half sleeved safari suits in summer or a blue-and-white striped seersucker suit in winter, with matching loafers carrying a slim brown leather attaché case. As he crossed the barrier and strode along, every woman ogled at him and the guys groaned with envy. Then, spotting Naqvi Sahab outside the Coffee House, he would say, “Hey, Khaleq, how about some coffee?” Out came the Wills Filter King pack, the long deep drag and the first sip of coffee. The girls kept ogling while MDC started his working day.

For us students, everything about MDC was larger than life. In a place that enjoyed an abundance of superb teachers, he was an outstanding expositor. Even without his sense of drama in the classroom, I suspect that none who studied growth theory, planning or transport economics under MDC can claim otherwise. Every class was a masterly act. Armed with an English accent that was a perfect cross between Sylhet and Cambridge, Massachusetts, he tickled the intellect of over-achievers, took the rank and file along and regaled his first and second row women's fan club with smiles, witticisms and a *bon mot* or two.

Mrinal-da didn't write much in terms of refereed articles for major journals, though he could easily have. You didn't secure a full scholarship for a Ph.D. with Paul Samuelson at the MIT and get chosen with Joseph Stiglitz and George Akerlof to work on two-sector growth models under Hirofumi Uzawa at Chicago University unless you were very good at your subject. But unlike many of his peers, Mrinal-da chose a different path — that of teaching, running a department, reading, being an unabashed liberal, debating and writing on various matters related to political economy, often for the laity. That was his academic choice. Transforming complex paradigms into simple explanations without losing their theoretical richness and possibilities was MDC's forte; and legions of D'School students as indeed his colleagues benefited from it.

He also wanted the best for D'School. Nothing annoyed Mrinal-da more than academic mediocrity. A saying of his that I shall never forget was, “One of the most obnoxious phrases that I repeatedly hear in seminars is ‘But in a country like India...’”. I remember the subterranean battle he fought,

and won, with the Vice Chancellor of the University in blocking an unworthy professorial candidate who was being politically backed for the job. Or how he argued in favour of accelerated promotions for Kaushik Basu and Sanjay Subrahmanyam when the old guards thought otherwise.

Yet, there were occasional pangs of regret. In his valedictory address to our batch, MDC asked us to imagine waking up thirsty in a dark, hot summer night and going to the fridge for water. “As you drink the water”, he said, “let not a thought cross your mind that years have passed, and what have I really done.” It was a pithy tale with a major moral which many of my batch-mates recall to this day.

Above all, he was MDC. Here are two stories. In D’School, there was a tradition of the M.A. final students preparing the exam timetable. We did so, and took it to MDC to sign off as the head of the department. He was by the Coffee House smoking, drinking coffee and chatting with students. Suddenly a girl came up to protest about a particular exam date. MDC idly waved her away. To make her make case stronger she complained, “You can’t do this, Sir. You’re like a father to all of us.” In a trice, MDC stiffened and said, “Stop it right there! I’ve been teaching for the last 20 years and have consciously avoided being a father figure to women, pretty or otherwise. So don’t start right now!”

In our last term at D’School, Mooli (Vinay Sheel Oberoi) got his hands on a pad with the Head of the Department’s letterhead. We typed a ‘To All Concerned’ note, imitated MDC’s initials and posted it on the main notice board. It read: “After a great deal of consideration and months of soul searching, I have come to the inescapable conclusion that I am a total cat”. At first MDC thought we had written ‘total cad’. But when explained otherwise, he was chuffed for days on end. For that’s what he was. And how we will remember him as — a total cat.

Prof. Abhijit Banerjee

Mrinalda passed away just over a month ago; despite his obvious intellectual brilliance, it will not be as a scholar that he will be remembered, but as a teacher of economics and much more, by his students at the Delhi School of Economics as well as others, like me, who simply had the good fortune of getting to know him. Every time we met, including the very last time, when he was clearly ailing, the usual pleasantries would be abruptly cut short, “*accha shono, ami ei boita porchhi kintu aamar kache clear noy keno.*” (listen I am reading this book or article, and it is not clear to me why...?). Always a deep question on a difficult book or article, always formulated to invite you to join the conversation even though he had probably thought deeper about it than you ever will. It was always ideas that ultimately excited him, though he had a great love for the little ironies that life throws out.

I know many generations of Delhi School students who took Transportation Economics as a special field; the only reason for this rather arcane choice—MDC, Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri. Was he a great teacher? Depends on what a great teacher is supposed to do—people attended his classes not because they expected to learn the most content, but because it was an introduction to a wider world of ideas. Most bright students, like those attending Delhi School, can get through course materials on their own, given some pointers and a little help with the concepts. What they cannot learn by themselves is why it matters, where it fits in the broader pantheon of ideas. I have no idea of how Mrinalda taught Transportation, but I am certain that he used it as a way to make his students think about big and important ideas.

Thank you Mrinalda for being who you were!

Prof. Anjan Mukherji

I am really sorry for not being able to be with you all on 21/7 as I have to be in Patna on that day and I could not push that back. We need to appreciate the contribution that Mrinal-da made to the institution of DSE and for those of us, who were not involved with that institution, we need to record the extraordinary kindness and generosity he always showered on all of us. He was, for all of us, a role model. We tried in our own way to be like him in building up our own institutions and show the level of commitment that he showed to his own institution and his students. It was a very hard act to follow, let me tell you.

Mrinal-da stories are legendary and each of us who were privileged to know him surely has his/her own story to tell. In the 70's, on one of visits to D School, we went down to the Coffee House, he asked me what I would like. On hearing that I wanted a cup of tea, he said "Riffraff drink tea, I shall have a coffee "; another bit of witticism was born. The witticisms were always delivered in his quaint accented English and were always great fun. Or much later, closer to his retirement, while interviewing research scholars, he said that he would not open his mouth and we as experts were supposed to be the ones asking questions. But throughout the interview, we hardly got a chance to ask anything, he kept asking questions on a wide variety of topics while I drank coffee (I remembered his stricture and tried hard to be not riffraff). Or when I saw him the last time at AIIMS, he was quite unwell and the doctors still did not know what was wrong and we were asked to wear masks so as to keep Mrinal da safe from whatever germs we might be bringing in. Mrinal-da looking peculiarly vulnerable from the hospital bed, did tell us that the masks were also to protect us from whatever he may have picked up. Teachers like Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri are rare and we should be grateful that we had the opportunity to spend some time with him. I pray that his soul rest in peace and request you to kindly convey my heartfelt condolences to your colleagues and to the bereaved family.

Dr. Subir Gokaran

MDC taught our batch (1979-81) the growth theory part of the macro-dynamics course. It didn't really catch my interest. I hardly had any personal interaction with him during my time on campus. I met him more than ten years later and mentioned to him that I had learnt very little from him. His comeback was "you mean to say we were still teaching that **** then? I thought we had stopped it long before!" We met several times after that, at IGIDR, NCAER and other places and other events. Our conversations were similarly entertaining!

The one I remember most, though, was a more serious one. He spoke about how he and his colleagues made the effort to create and nurture a D School ethos: collective, collaborative, mutually supportive and encouraging...all good things which we take for granted when they are there and rarely appreciate how difficult they are to sustain. I think he captured the essence of why many of us have such a strong attachment to the institution despite having spent a brief two years here.

Prof. Prasanta K. Pattanaik

I am deeply sad to know that Mrinal passed away. I knew Mrinal for 44 years and I had the privilege of being his colleague for about five years at the Delhi School of Economics. For me, Mrinal was much more than a valued colleague; he was also a dear friend to whom I could go anytime seeking advice and help. His intellectual interests spanned a very broad range of areas in and outside economics. The last conversation I had with him was a little more than three years ago. During that telephone conversation of forty-five minutes or so, he talked about micro-theoretic modeling of institutions, politics in Odisha, and Genghis Khan. He barely mentioned his illness; he referred to his illness only to express his regret that it prevented him from writing a book on Genghis Khan, which he wanted to write. Not only was Mrinal an eminent economist, but he was also a perfect example of a decent person. Unfailingly courteous and compassionate, Mrinal was incapable of doing anything mean. I shall cherish the memory of his numerous spontaneous acts of kindness and generosity towards me.

Prof. Bhaskar Dutta

My first encounter with MDC or Mrinalda was not a very pleasant one. We were on opposite sides of an interview table. I was just about to join DSE as a Masters student and was being interviewed for one of the scholarships available to Masters students. He asked me a question about which I had no clue, and I left the room both deflated and resentful.

But first impressions are typically transitory. Over the years, I got to know him in different roles – teacher, colleague, and friend. He was a truly wonderful human being, one of the few persons I know who was entirely free of malice. He was not the most famous economist to have been on the faculty of the Economics department in DSE. But, he was arguably one of the most important – his charisma played a stellar role in maintaining the reputation of the department through the good times and bad.

It is actually difficult to pin down quite why he became the legend that he was. Was it his unique accent, laughingly said to be a cross between Sylhet and Boston? Or was it his car, a Volkswagen Beetle when all others around him had at best staid Ambassadors or Fiats? Perhaps, it was his immaculate dress or the manner in which he carried himself? Or maybe it was his courage during the Emergency when he was an activist, but refused to leave the country even though there were rumours that he could be arrested any day?

Everyone who came into close contact with him will have his or her favourite anecdotes about this remarkable man. Here are two which illustrate quite different facets of his character. In 1978, I was a lowly Research Associate while MDC was the Head of the department. The post of Research Associate was new- I was probably one of the first to be appointed as one. Not surprisingly, the rules regarding this position were vague and no one in the department knew quite what they were. I went to him to request a few days' leave since I wanted to go to Kolkata where my twin daughters were to be born. "Write me a letter applying for leave. I will not forward it to the university. If any question is raised, I will say I granted you leave and face the music." He was apprehensive that if he wrote to the university, some babu would turn it down on flimsy grounds. He was so refreshingly different from the many academics I know who are hypercritical of rules when they do not occupy administrative positions, but swear by the mantra "rules are rules" as soon as they assume positions of power. He was always an exceedingly considerate man, ever willing to step forward and help others even at some personal cost.

The second anecdote reveals what I will call – for want of a better word – the "mischievous" side to his character. A few of us including Mrinalda were very enthusiastic bridge players. (In the interest of full disclosure, I have to admit that our skills fell quite a bit short of our enthusiasm.) But getting four players together was not always an easy task. One afternoon, we had to go to the Head's office and request Mrinalda to join us for some bridge. Without a moment's thought, he picked up the phone to call his wife. "Look, I have to go an important meeting and will be a bit late." Off we went in his Volkswagen Beetle to the meeting, which was rather long that day.

I will miss him, as indeed will everyone who came into contact with him.

Prof. Dilip Mookherjee

I am grateful for this opportunity to be able to share with you some of my thoughts and remembrances of MDC on this occasion, even if I cannot attend personally. I arrived at the Delhi School in July 1976 with high expectations of being able to learn economics from the very best teachers who were internationally renowned. Yet I had very little concrete idea of which kind of field I would pursue specifically and which professor courses I would take. The first year involved core courses and a brief exposure to all the different fields and teachers the School had to offer. In the second year we had to choose between various electives. The theory offerings were somewhat diminished by the recent departures of Pranab Bardhan and Prasanta Pattanaik, and along with many of my friends I drifted into econometrics. MDC had taught segments of first year core courses on planning and on growth theory. He was evidently an excellent teacher and a colourful personality, with stories and legends galore. Yet the only elective he offered was on Transport Economics, which did not seem sufficiently exciting to take up. So my formal interaction with him remained limited.

Yet there were various informal interactions. I recall a debate on the newly initiated 6th Plan at the IEG where he stood out from the other panelists such as TN Srinivasan, Hanumantha Rao, Ali Khusro with his customary dash and humour. He and Dharma Kumar hosted a series of lunches at their respective houses for groups of second year students and I remember a long winter afternoon chatting with the two of them about just about everything under the sun. Then came an interaction just outside the Delhi School main gate that was to leave a lasting impact. My classmate Dilip Abreu and I had to write an essay to accompany our applications for an Inlaks scholarship and we asked him for some advice. The conversation soon turned to recent developments in the economics of asymmetric information --- he told us we ought to read the startling new papers of Akerlof and Stiglitz which were beginning to transform price theory in a way that would make neoclassical economics come to grips with fundamental problems in development economics.

MDC invited us to his house to talk more about this topic. He also happened to lend us his own photocopy of articles from the now famous 1976 QJE Symposium on asymmetric information. Abreu and I read these articles with great interest, which were unlike anything we had seen before, and appeared strange, exciting and intriguing. We went back to return then to MDC's house, which led to further discussions. Eventually they shaped the essays we were to write. MDC's recommendation accompanied our applications. And much to our surprise, both of us won the scholarship.

Thus were the two of us launched into graduate school abroad. Abreu was admitted to Oxford and I to LSE. We also had applied to schools in the US such as Princeton and Stanford, and were unsure where to actually go. Again MDC's advice proved instrumental in our opting for the UK, besides the fact that Stiglitz was then teaching at Oxford and Akerlof at the LSE. MDC had been a graduate student with the two of them at MIT in the 60s, and he volunteered to write to Akerlof on my behalf. As soon as I arrived at the LSE, Akerlof agreed to be my advisor. I had discovered my vocation.

These interactions decisively directed my research and interests in economics thereafter. I spent many years thinking about asymmetric information and its rich implications for development

economics. I continued to interact with MDC and derive intellectual nourishment from our exchanges. These included seminars at DSchool, conferences we attended together at Berkeley and the World Bank, and numerous private discussions in our respective homes in Delhi and Boston. As his sons were going to schools in Boston there were many summers we spent together. His 1997 piece in the Journal of Economic Perspectives on the markets versus state debate in development economics had a pivotal influence on my thinking. The paper I subsequently wrote for his Fechschrift volume was essentially an extended commentary on that article. I still recall the long and detailed email he wrote me after seeing my paper.

And thus MDC continued to be a teacher, mentor and friend. More than that he defined my intellectual heritage, the twilight zone between the world of abstract ideas and that of pressing policy concerns in developing countries. And of course he was wonderful company --- urbane, witty, with a fund of stories and anecdotes, never at a loss for words, perpetually curious, anxious to read, learn and above all participate heartily in a discussion, Along with all of you, I miss him terribly.

Prof. Ranjan Ray

The passing away of Professor Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri, or MDC as he was known widely, or as Mrinal-da to his junior colleagues, is an extremely sad piece of news. MDC was a legend in more sense than one. I have known him for over four decades, first as a MA student at DSE in the late 60s/ early 70 s, and later as a colleague in the mid 80s through to the mid 90 s. I therefore felt both a sense of personal loss and as a part of the wider community of ex DSE students and faculty.

During my student days, DSE could boast of an economics faculty that stood out as one of the best in the world with the likes of Professors Sen, Chakravarty and Nagar in its ranks, and even then MDC added significantly to its fame and lustre. He taught us planning models and his lectures were stimulating and thought provoking. Mrinal da challenged orthodoxies and encouraged us to think outside the box. He played a significant part in making the DSE such a unique institution. He, along with Professor Nagar, provided the DSE with a continuity that was quite unique at a time when many a star left for the West.

When I joined the DSE faculty in 1985, it was with a sense of trepidation, since most of my then colleagues including MDC were my former teachers. But Mrinal da put me at ease from the very first day with a chat over coffee. We developed a friendship that remained strong till the end. I used to ring him at Pune and he was as affectionate as ever. When, on leave from the UK, I was undecided on remaining at DSE and settling down in India, Mrinal da wrote me a letter where he told me that one decision he has never regretted was his decision to return permanently to India from the US. That letter moved me considerably. Another letter that he wrote to me that will always be a treasure for me was when the book that Kaushik Basu, Pulin Nayak and myself edited in his honour, was launched in Delhi. It is a reflection of the esteem and affection for MDC among his friends that three Nobel Laureates who were all his batch-mates , namely, Professors Sen, Stiglitz and Akerlof so readily agreed to contribute to that volume.

MDC had an outstanding intellect. He could hold his own in any seminar or at any conversation. He was tremendous company able to converse on a wide range of subjects. He was a keen cricket fan and the last exchange I had with him related to India's performance in this year's world cup. To me, the attribute of MDC that stood above everything else was that he was a true gentleman or a quintessential 'Bengali Bhadrak'. I admired the courage he showed in speaking out against the Emergency and risking his security. Mrinal da's death marks the end of an era. With his passing away, I have lost a revered teacher and a dear friend. May I join the DSE students and faculty in expressing my grief and in praying for his soul to rest in peace.

Good bye, Mrinal da.

Prof. Vikas Chitre

Though I live in Pune, I learnt about Mrinal's passing away only through the newspaper, on reading Omkar Goswami's article. I have been meaning to visit all these days but never managed to do that in recent months, though I live not very far from his residence. Professor K. L. Krishna often asked me about Mrinal's well-being whenever we met and I used to say to myself I should visit Mrinal at the earliest. When Mihir Rakshit visited our Institute for a programme recently and called on Mrinal. I wanted to visit Mrinal with him but did not do so as Mihir had to catch a flight to Kolkata and I thought there would be no time to pick me up. So, now there is a poignant sadness in me for not having seen Mrinal recently.

I called on Mrinal's brother, Malay, after hearing about Mrinal's passing away. He told me that the end was peaceful for Mrinal, at about 10.20 in the morning on the 19th of May. The cremation took place at about 7 in the evening after their sister reached Pune from Bangalore. Mrinal's sons in the US are expected to be in Pune in the next few days. As it so happened, Mrinal's elder son's Ph. D. viva was scheduled on the same day that Mrinal passed away. And his younger son was writing the last paper of his MS exam on the same day.

Mrinal did his Ph.D. at the M.T.T. in the US. I understand that Professor Louis Lefebvre, the well-known regional development and transport economist, was his Ph. D. Supervisor. Later, he contributed a long 75 page chapter on Interindustry Planning Models for a Multiregional Economy, in a book on Economy-Wide Models and Development Planning, published by the World Bank. Mrinal extended the Leontief input output framework of inter-industry model to expand it to include multiple regions, and developed optimal strategies for regional planning in this framework by formulating a dynamic multi period, multi commodity, multi regional optimization problem, including a transport sector and transport costs in the analysis.

Over years, Mrinal moved away from the purely technical issues of planning to wider issues of political economy of policy making, reform and economic development. His lucid paper on "Market Failures and Government Failures" published in 1990 in the Journal of Economic Perspectives when he was a Visiting Professor at Harvard, displays his keen understanding of the economies and the politics of the Asian countries and how these influenced the different development paths traversed by the major Asian countries like India, China, South Korea, Philipines, Singapore and Hong Kong. In this essay, Mrinal examines how the debate on market failures versus government failures needs to be taken beyond investment plans and their implementation to creation by the state of market and non-market institutions which impact the processes and the pace at which economic agents bring in and absorb change, particularly productivity enhancing change.

Mrinal was also the one who authored in the late eighties or the early nineties the report which strongly advocated replacing direct instruments of regulating the economy by indirect instruments - one of the corner stones of the process of liberalization in the country. Unfortunately, I could not now immediately locate a copy of this report. So, I cannot talk specifically about it.

Mrinal was also a member of the famous, first Narasimham Committee on the Financial System, set up by the Ministry of Finance, Government of India in August 1991. The Committee submitted

its Report in November 1991. This Committee's Report is well-known for clearly outlining the direction of major changes in the financial system of the country, particularly the country's banking system, which the country followed through in its financial sector reforms. Mrinal wrote a separate Note, along with Manu Shroff, to this Report. In the Note, they argued most forth-rightly that to ensure true autonomy in the working of the public sector banks and the financial system, as recommended by the Committee, the practice of Government nominating officials on the Boards of public sector banks and financial institutions. In fact, they went a step further and also strongly recommended that the Banking Department of the Ministry of Finance be abolished altogether.

Mrinal was also very critical of the labour laws in the country and the union response to them and the adverse impact on employment in organised industry which laws like Industrial Disputes Act created. He examined this question in detail in his paper, "Labor Markets as Social Institutions in India" written in 1996. He argued that "these labor laws and procedural norms have, in the past, hindered the growth of labor-intensive industrialization in India. India's current efforts at economic reforms are being adversely affected by its inability to initiate institutional changes in these fields." We all know the difficulty which successive governments have had in reforming the labour laws.

In 1995, while assessing the achievements and failures of the Narasimha Rao Government, in his essay, "Liberalisation without reform", Mrinal wrote quite sharply: "The area of failures is also quite large. The spending behaviour of the government and the operational characteristics of the public sector remain largely unreformed. Narasimha Rao's government has been extremely careful in not hurting the political and bureaucratic vested interests, which have grown over the years around these institutions."

I first met Mrinal in 1967, when I went to ISI, Delhi, to give a seminar on my recently submitted University of Rochester Ph. D. thesis on Dynamic Programming Models of Demand for Money. After I ended my fairly mathematical presentation, a boyish looking Mrinal, sitting on the first bench, (and I looked equally boyish those days) asked me whether I was talking about some 20 per cent cash balance which people hold with them. I still remember his simple looking question. I do not remember what I replied to him – whether I simply said yes, and kept quiet or elaborately replied how my work showed that under uncertainty of receipts and payments the sensitivity of this proportion to interest rates would be low, but unlike what the Cambridge economists talked about, this proportion would vary with the mean or total expenditure, depending on the probability distribution of receipts and expenditures, and how such a consideration would be important for banks and other similar financial institutions in deciding their portfolios.

Many years later, I met Mrinal again when he visited Gokhale Institute when Prof. Rath had invited him for some lectures. I vividly remember asking Mrinal after the lecture - what can make academic institutions sustain inspite of differences of opinion among the faculty members. I always remember the reply, which he gave. I shall never forget it. He said: It was the sense of shared values- concern for academic excellence. I have always been touched by the deep concern that members of DSE faculty have always shown for the other faculty members.

Mrinal once told me how he skillfully intermediated in a tense situation which arose when many good students complained about the very strict marking of a paper by an equally outstanding teacher, namely, Professor Nagar. The students complained that good and bad students have all got poor marks. Mrinal was director of DSE at that time. Mrinal said it was not easy to make a strict professor like Prof. Nagar change his marking. But in a teachers' meeting, Mrinal finally took courage and asked Professor Nagar whether the latter would object to a non-linear transformation of his marks so that the better students could be distinguished at least somewhat. After some thought, Professor Nagar agreed and the crisis was resolved.

Mrinal has been described as a legendary professor of Delhi School of Economics, who drove a Volks Wagon on DSE campus which drew as much attention in those days as he himself. He taught growth theory, planning or transport economics and is remembered for his clear and insightful exposition of growth theory.

He was awarded Padma Bhushan in 2005.

In Mrinal's sad demise, the country has now lost a great economist - a clear thinker and forthright speaker.

Prof.B.B.Bhattacharya

Prof. Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri, MDC to all his students, and Mrinal-da to his junior colleagues and friends, was a legendary teacher of the Delhi School of Economics. Ever since he joined DSE in late 1960s, he remained a faithful teacher and well wisher of DSE and all its students and colleagues. As far as I remember, Mrinal-da never left DSE after joining it.

Mrinal-da was a very friendly person. He combined hard economics with traditional Bengali adda. He was famous for it. Any topic could incite his interest and he would theorize about it, even a trivial one, sometime making us laugh, but all with good humour. Even to someone like me who joined as a student when he was a professor at DSE, he became very friendly both academically and personally within a short span of time. He was never a status conscious person, though I know at times he took tough decisions. I remember, when I had to submit my Ph. D. thesis at DSE, some technical administrative problems was about to delay submission of my thesis , Mrinal-da, then Head of the Dept., took a personal interest and sorted out the problem immediately by directly talking to the university officials. Even later I found him to be equally conscientious about his duties.

While Mrinal-da taught at DSE I served in its sister institute, IEG. We interacted several times both officially and personally. Though I was not a regular member of his Adda group, whenever we interacted -whether academically or socially - we had very pleasant exchanges. Mrinal-da was a classical teacher - the tribe unfortunately is dying - who took keen interest in the welfare of the student and colleagues, and not concerned only about his own affairs. He was also not a narrow specialist. He liked to broaden the discussion encompassing broader philosophy of knowledge.

I shall definitely miss his friendly and erudite Adda.

Professor Maitreesh Ghatak

Mrinalda was one of a kind, a vanishing breed both as an academic and as a person. I took a topics course in Delhi School (Transport and Infrastructure it was called, I think) that I was not really attracted to in terms of the topic but just because Mrinalda was the teacher.

Professor Gopal K Kadekodi

My memory goes back to 1967 when I met Mrinal at the Indian Statistical Institute, New Delhi, where I was a student then. He had just come back from Harvard University and joined ISI. He taught me several aspects of Regional and Transport Economics then. Later on I met him after I returned from USA with my own doctoral work, to join IEG in 1973. I distinctly remember of his high sense of humour, extremely friendly with youngsters and many of us at IEG. His commitment to Economic research was very directional, and would not switch his academic impulse or loyalty in one or the other way. That is why perhaps, he was never in the mainstream of governmental good books. But his academic outlook would remain always a milestone for many generations to come.

I pray Almighty to give the departed soul, an eternal peace of highest order.

Prof. Shashank Bhide

I met Prof. Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri on a few occasions when he visited NCAER or when there were seminars and conferences at the Institute of Economic Growth. But even in these occasional meetings his friendship and encouraging words to keep up the work were very important for someone like me beginning a research career at that time.

I will always remember his reassuring and encouraging influence.

Prof. Meenakshi Thapan

Growing up in the Delhi School of Economics in the 1970s and 1980s is deeply enriched in my senses, emotions and mindscape. It was a heady time, with some fantastic teachers, some crazy ones, and brilliant peers. Life was about Sociology and Economics, about being in an ambience that was filled with truly inspiring teachers, and it was an intoxicating atmosphere, endowed with bright minds, keen interests, and a love of the intellect, untarnished by competitiveness or flagrant self-interest. Of course, there was rivalry and we vied for our favourite teacher's attention but we loved them all and discussed their utterances with deep reverence, affection and glowing admiration.

In those days, students of Economics considered Sociology a "soft" subject not worthy of their serious attention. They swotted for "Trix" (Econometrics), had hard discussions on important topics that were deeply connected to the country's present and future, while we sociologists simply talked about villages, ritual, religion and unfathomable kinship studies. There was an intellectual divide that was overcome by deep friendships and sheer acceptance of the other without any real misgivings. It was DSchool that held us together.

Mrinal Datta Chaudhuri (MDC) (1934–2015) did not teach us Sociology but his mere presence in DSchool made him an inextricable part of our lives. Drinking our morning coffee outside the DSchool café, we watched MDC walk into DSchool every morning with a swagger, a bounce in his step, a twinkle in his eye. It was a joy to have him around; his teaching skills (in his impeccable Bengali-accented English) were legendary; students from the Economics department regaled us with tales of his jokes in class, his conversations with students, and his brilliance as an economist; together, we whispered about his imagined love life, and could not imagine him being unattractive to the female eye! To our young and impressionable eyes, he was the most swinging and eligible (married) professor on campus! MDC was the only economist faculty member we mere Sociology students could dare to talk to without being snubbed or scolded. He was always open and welcoming, listened keenly to our questions and problems and had a solution for everything. Perhaps he was the Director of DSchool at that time.

In those days, teachers at DSchool spent the entire day there. We could walk into our teachers' offices in the late afternoons and evenings and share not just Sociology but our angst with them. They were always ready with quick responses and solutions. Our friends in economics told us MDC was one such teacher, not just with a terrific sense of humour, or keen sartorial sense (all of which we adored) but also someone they could rely on in difficulty.

As a sociologist, I am unable to comment on MDC's life as an economist and can only share my deep feeling of affection and loss for a kind, humorous and friendly teacher from the "other side," so to speak. In remembering the DSchool of days long gone by, we mourn the passing of someone who was uniquely special to all of us, and touched us in one way or another. Nostalgia threatens to overcome us when we see our teachers greying, ageing and then passing on. No doubt, this is life, but it reminds us about how to live the present, especially if we occupy the offices and classrooms that these giants have left us.

Prof. V.S.Minocha

I came to know Professor Mrinal Datta-Chaudhury in 1969 or so. Delhi University was in turmoil in the late sixties. Institutions like Delhi School of Economics faced the possibility of losing their distinct “elitist” character under pressure of protesting crowds. The challenge was boldly faced under my teacher K.N.Raj’s leadership. That was how I got associated with Mrinal for the first time.

I also recalled the subtle and intellectually sophisticated manner in which he as Director kept the Emergency bug out of DSE. A man of tremendous intellectual potential, which he would say was euphemism for laziness, and a sharp mind it was always a treat to hear him speak in a seminar or in a tea-time conversation. The vast stock of knowledge he had was unbelievable.

I had the privilege of closely interacting with him as Director because he would see to it that I am on board representing Commerce in any inter-departmental committee charged with discussing a substantial problem related to common facilities and SE as a campus integrating four departments including Commerce. (This was before the Faculty of Commerce and Business was created). In one particular instance he profusely thanked me for putting forth an argument that prevented further over-crowding of DSE Campus.

Frankly, I had few occasions when Mrinal and I, just the two of us, would discuss some academic matter.

I offer my homage to a great Indian economist and a fine human being with a touch of aristocracy by observing two-minute silence.

Prof. Ranganath Bharadwaj

I am deeply aggrieved to hear the loss of my friend, Dr. Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri. I send my condolences to the bereaved family.

Jasleen Kaur, Former Principal, Cambridge School, Indirapuram

I would like to pay homage to Prof. Datta Chaudhuri. He was a great soul. I still remember the pep talk he and Prof. Badal Mukherji gave me in July 1976 when I was on the verge of leaving D'School and both of them succeeded in persuading me to stay on. Ever encouraging and cheerful, MDC was a very fine human being.

He was a remarkable person with distinctive style - his sartorial dress sense, his inimitable manner of speaking, his lucid lectures on the economics of location and transportation - everything was done with a flourish, carrying the unmistakable stamp of MDC.

I am really going to miss him, especially on Teachers Day when we'd try to meet as long as he was in Delhi. May his soul rest in eternal peace and may God grant all his family members the courage to bear this great loss.

Dr.Ratna Sudarshan

Thank you for the invitation to attend this [Memorial Meeting). I could not meet you after but it felt good to be in DSE looking at the lovely photo you had up, remembering Mrinal, as a professor but probably even more his generous friendship in later years.

I do not know his sons, but if you are compiling messages please do include my deepest condolences; whenever I met Mrinal he would always share some news about his sons, they were so much in his mind and heart.

Prof. Radhakrishna Rokkam

Very sad to hear the demise of Professor Mrinal Dutta Chaudhuri. I came in close contact with him when he was on the Board of IGIDR. He helped the IGIDR in its faculty recruitment and contributed to the proceedings of its board. He was very well informed and objective.