

## Remembering Amulya

On a Sunday morning in July 1974, I went to a meeting of students concerned with India's development, to listen to the views of a Professor of Chemistry in the famous Indian Institute of Science. This was in Bangalore, where I had recently joined the Indian Institute of Management. The talk was by Professor Amulya Kumar N Reddy, and it led to many interesting changes in my life.

For the first time, I heard about the social dimension of technology. While science—the principles of science—were universal, how they were harnessed to meet the needs of society contained in them essential elements of that society. Economists had long differentiated between need and demand, but in this talk it took on a new dimension. Demand, the ability to pay for what you want, was behind the production decision. What could be sold would be produced. And the methods by which they were produced would also follow the same principle. The scale of demand and relative factor prices would decide the production process—and this was technology. If technology was developed in a situation of labour scarcity—as in the US—it would save on labour. India had an abundance of labour, and its technology should use this abundant factor most intensively. Would imported technology do so? It set off a trend of thought and led to exiting lines of research.

After the meeting, some of us had a chance to interact with the speaker. When he found I was teaching economics, he asked me if I knew of the writing in the Economic and Political Weekly of Prabhat Patnaik, which he admired greatly, and from which he had learned a great deal. I did indeed know Prabhat, and this set off more discussion. I was invited home that evening, and thus began a series of sessions over rum generously poured by the Professor. I was seeking guidance and wisdom, and he offered friendship.

He began to invite me to discussions in the cell for the Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas—ASTRA—and the group in ASTRA did great work in the next few years. I made many new and valuable friends. I learned much from these interactions, and brought in the lessons to my teaching. Those were the days when the IIMB had a focus on the public sector, and there was great freedom to experiment. The students responded to a course on appropriate technology with great enthusiasm. They published two volumes of case studies over the next few years<sup>1</sup>, which led to a deeper understanding of the factors involved. Amulya was a quiet but important influence behind this work.

The work he started in ASTRA has been written about a great deal, and there is little for me to add here. To support that work, he set up the Karnataka State Council for Science and Technology, an innovative organizational structure that functioned with low overheads. The KSCST became a model, not just for S and T in other states, but for the management of development projects in Karnataka. At least one other influential project—the Mahila Samakhya—was set up on the lines of the KSCST.

On retiring from the IISC, Amulya set up the International Energy Initiative to take forward the idea that he and others had developed in the pathbreaking book *Energy for a Sustainable World*. This concern, not just to work on the theory, but to find ways of implementing the

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<sup>1</sup> L Paul Rajan, editor, *Cases in Appropriate Technology*, IIMB, 1977 and A.V. Krishna editor, *Cases in Appropriate Rural Technology*, IIMB, 1978. The second set used the Guidelines developed by Amulya for the UNEP in 1975-76.

recommendations of that theory is the unique mark of Amulya's work. I hope we have learned this lesson.

There are many who have been influenced in their professional work by Amulya. There are many who feel anguish today at his passing. The last few years were difficult for him because of ill health, but he kept working, as each issue of Energy for a Sustainable World will show. Amulya has moved on, but the work he initiated has developed a momentum of its own, and will continue. A teacher and researcher could not ask for more.

I got married in December 1974. My father was caught up in work abroad, and could not come for the function. I picked up courage, and requested Professor and Mrs Reddy to take on the onerous role in the religious rituals. He did this with great élan. He was quite amused to find that all through the rituals I had in my pocket a copy of Lenin's 'What Must Be Done?!' He and my wife have laughed about this over the years. He asked me then—and on many occasions since, to feel free to call him "Amulya". For me this was a problem. He was an elder, a respected professor who was like a teacher, even if had not formally been one. How could one address him so familiarly? All this time I stuck to "Professor". At least now that he is no more, I should respect that wish, and title this piece accordingly. This is in remembrance of Amulya.

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