

‘The Heart Has Its Reasons’ A Story Untold

ASHOK MITRA

This is the first in a series of articles that will be published over the next 12 months to mark the 50th anniversary of the *Economic & Political Weekly*. A prolific writer in English and Bengali, 88-year-old Ashok Mitra is former finance minister of West Bengal, and a former trustee of the Sameeksha Trust, which brings out the *EPW*. His reminiscences about Sachin Chaudhuri, founder of the *Economic Weekly* which preceded the *EPW*, include famous personalities from different walks of life—politicians, academics, journalists, novelists and film personalities.

The story really begins a century or more ago. Narendra Narayan Chaudhuri who hailed from Pabna in north Bengal (Bangladesh) was a practising lawyer at the Dacca District Court. He had eight children—four sons and four daughters. The eldest was Sachindra Narayan, commonly known as Sachin. He was a student of economics in the newly-started University of Dacca during 1922–26. According to A K Dasgupta, an economist who was his classmate and lifelong friend, Sachin was the most outstanding student in the university. He was known for his sharp intellect, wit and sparkling conversational exchanges. However, he had little interest in sitting down and performing well in his examinations. He disappeared for three months before his semester exam, roamed around the Himalayas and returned just a few days before the scheduled dates of his exam. He scraped through the exam and yet again, disappeared from Dacca.

He, along with his cousin, Ajit Chakravarty (brother of Amiya Chakravarty, poet and one-time secretary to Rabindranath Tagore), set up a flat in Calcutta (now Kolkata) where they provided private tuitions as a means of living. But they really engaged themselves in meeting eminent people from various spheres of life. Sachin would charm everybody. It was during these days that he grew close to eminences such as Pramatha Chaudhuri, an author who was married to Rabindranath Tagore’s niece Indira, and D P Mukerji, who was from the Lucknow University but would come down to Calcutta during vacations. Things were upset when Ajit committed suicide. Sachin decided to leave Calcutta and proceeded to live in Bombay (now Mumbai) from the mid-1930s onwards.

The third of the Chaudhuri brothers, Hiten, exuded magnetic charm. He had left Dacca after completing his Intermediate Arts degree and wound up in Bombay where he did various jobs, including running chores for groups of businessmen. He simultaneously worked as a volunteer for the Congress party and Sarojini Naidu was a friend of his. Soon he began mingling with people from the then nascent film industry. He was a very close friend of Himanshu Rai and Devika Rani. Hiten helped Rai set up the Bombay Talkies film studio. At the same time he himself began producing films and accumulated immense wealth. He loved spending as freely as he earned and was an extraordinarily generous person. Sachin’s second brother, Deb Narayan—Debu—too soon arrived in Mumbai. Debu had studied physics with S N Bose, a physicist known for his work with Albert Einstein, at the University of Dacca and had obtained a first class master’s degree. An American firm specialising in the business of electrical goods offered him an appointment in Bombay.

Sachin would live with his two brothers alternately. He had no interest in holding on to a regular job. He would sometimes write a column on films for a newspaper or write political or economic commentaries for some daily or the other, including the *Indian Express*. It may sound unbelievable but he was even general manager of Bombay Talkies after Himanshu Rai passed away. Sachin had developed a very wide circle of friends and acquaintances among politicians, journalists and share-market buffs. Simultaneously, he would be in close touch with scholars of economics and sociology at the University of Bombay. For some time, he worked as a research scholar in the university. In the 1940s, when the research department of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) was established, he developed friendships with a number of young scholars working there.

The two younger brothers held Sachin with tremendous respect and silently bore with his angularities. Hiten arranged to rent a flat in a new apartment building that had come up in the early

Ashok Mitra can be contacted at ashokmitra.am@gmail.com.

1940s—Churchill Chambers, located on Merewether Road, right behind Taj Mahal Hotel near the Gateway of India. Sachin began to live there in a lord-like fashion. There was a constant stream of visitors to his flat: politicians, academics, journalists, cinema and stage artistes—the list is indeed very long. Among them were Yusuf Meherally (the socialist freedom fighter), Sadiq Ali (a Congress leader) and his wife Shanti, Sadhana Bose (an actress and renowned dancer), Ashoka Mehta (the Congress leader who helped establish the party's socialist wing), Sharda Pandit (sister-in-law of Jawaharlal Nehru's sister Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the first woman governor of Gujarat), Ram Manohar Lohia (the socialist leader). Anybody visiting Bombay from Calcutta would, at Sachin's insistence, drop by—including individuals such as communist leader Hiren Mukerjee. Lohia used to stay with his friend C G K Reddy who at that time was working with the *Hindu* and was the father of C Rammanohar Reddy who went on to become editor of the *EPW*.

Economic Weekly Is Born

Something unexpected occurred in 1948. Hiten went to the United States (us) with a group of industrialists and businessmen to explore trade prospects between the us and newly-independent countries. An eminent economist with the highest degree from the London School of Economics and who was teaching in Madras (now Chennai), was picked up by the Birlas to edit an economic weekly published from New Delhi. He was also part of this group of businessmen. Hiten was deeply disappointed with this gentleman. In him he could find no spark of brilliance and on returning to Bombay kept cajoling Sachin to agree to edit an economic weekly. He insisted that if that rather dull so-called economist could edit an economic periodical, he, Sachin, given his depth of knowledge and circle of friends and acquaintances, would surely be able to produce a far superior periodical.

Sachin succumbed with great reluctance and his friends in academia from all over the country were delighted. Hiten discussed the problem of financing the

proposed periodical with his business friends and a family of traders known as the Sekhsaria Group agreed to provide the entire equity capital for the new venture. With finances no longer the problem, Sachin had to concentrate on the shape and contents of the proposed new weekly. It was his personal decision to have two distinct halves of the journal—the first half would consist of editorial articles, commentaries and discussions on contemporary events, while the second half would have a 100% scholarly flavour with learned papers on economics and other social sciences. It was typical of him to carry anonymous editorial pieces written by eminent scholars and others from all over the country.

The first issue of the *Economic Weekly* (*EW*) was published on the first day of January 1949. I was then studying with Dasgupta at the Banaras Hindu University and I still remember the thrill and joy that greeted the appearance of the first edition of the weekly. The very first editorial, "Light Without Heat," was written by D P Mukerji. Advertisements were few and far between but that did not deter Sachin. From the very beginning, the *EW* led a hand-to-mouth existence. A gentleman hovering on the fringe of the business world, Alphonso Fernandes, who was a bachelor like Sachin, joined the weekly as its manager. The weekly subsisted on occasional releases of funds from the Sekhsaria Group as there were very few advertisements, that is, whatever that could be arranged by Sachin's brothers. Sachin took pride in his "cottage industry" and Fernandes was a wonderful help. Very soon, the weekly began to receive serious attention not only from scholarly circles in the country but in the us and the United Kingdom as well. The only other journal of this kind with a combination of discussions on contemporary themes alongside scholarly articles was the *Ekonomiste* in the Netherlands. Few in this country or in the English-speaking world had heard of this Dutch journal.

The first half of the *EW* mostly consisted of articles and notes written by the young crowd close to Sachin, not just from Bombay but also from Calcutta, Delhi and elsewhere. Foremost among

those economists residing in Bombay were K S Krishnaswamy and B V Krishnamurthy. Others included Vinoo Bhatt (who was part of the RBI's research department then), Ramdas Honavar, Deena Khatkhate (who was also working for the RBI and later with the International Monetary Fund), Dharma Venkataraman (who became Dharma Kumar after she married civil servant Lovraj Kumar). Among the sociologists was M N Srinivasan, who went on to become the chairman of the Sameeksha Trust in the 1990s. Scholars of international repute contributed articles that the *EW* published over the years. Others who helped in the editorial work included Rama Varma, a long-time friend of Sachin who was scion of the royal family of Cochin and had immense faith in the Marxist analysis of the social process. (In the early 1970s, the then left-leaning Government of Kerala had appointed him as chairman of the Coir Board.)

Nehru and Mahalanobis

Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (the statistician and architect of the Second Five Year Plan) was extremely influential in government circles those days because of his proximity to Prime Minister Nehru. His views were considered extraordinarily radical in comparison to those who then constituted the Planning Commission or successive Finance Ministers, such as T T Krishnamachari (TTK) and C D Deshmukh. Nehru encouraged Mahalanobis to prepare a draft of the Second Five Year Plan. The First Five Year Plan was altogether timid and had set extremely limited targets. The Second Five Year Plan drafted by Mahalanobis came as a thundering shock to the conservative crowd but they could do nothing about it.

Mahalanobis was in complete charge. He invited leading economists from across the world to visit his baby, the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), and to help him elaborate on the contents of the Second Five Year Plan. These visitors included Oskar Lange and Michal Kalecki (both Polish economists who adopted the Marxist doctrine to critique capitalism), Shigeto Tsuru (a politician and economist from Japan), Richard

Goodwin (from the us, who was President John F Kennedy's speechwriter), Joan Robinson (eminent British economist renowned for her growth model) and Nicholas Kaldor (another prominent British economist). Other visitors to the ISI included Paul Baran, the American economist who edited the path-breaking work on creative destruction by Joseph Schumpeter, and Abba Lerner, a Russian-born British economist, who was one of the earliest to speculate on what should constitute welfare economics. (There was a general expectation that Lerner would emerge as a major persona in the academic world but that did not happen; he withered away by the 1940s.) Charles Bettelheim, one of the leading French Marxist economists also came to the ISI. Mahalanobis had the foresight to accord an invitation to Milton Friedman as well and politely listened to what this extremely conservative Chicago-school economist suggested.

I might have missed a few names. But each of these visiting scholars would be trapped by Sachin. They fell in love with the *EW* and contributed more than once to it. The *EW* was tremendously appreciated by historians and American sociologists, particularly because of a series of "village studies" which Sachin had published on different occasions. Many of these economists such as Bert Hoselitz, when visiting India, would spend hours enjoying Sachin's company and were regular contributors to the journal. George Rosen was an American scholar who arrived in Bombay in the early-1950s for conducting research on issues related to public finance. He was passionately attracted to both the *EW* and to the Churchill Chambers flat. He regularly wrote for the *EW* and later, for the *EPW*. He retired to Chicago. Frank Harris, the British teacher of sociology would also write frequently on issues related to the sociology of education for both the *EW* and the *EPW*. I had been in touch with both of them for a very long time until a couple of years ago.

Daniel Thorner, the celebrated agricultural economist, and his wife Alice, a sociologist, had an interesting past. They were very close to VK Krishna Menon, who had led the overseas wing of the Indian

independence movement in London and set up the India League in 1929. Both of them had been driven out of the us at the time of the McCarthy campaign against communists. They came with their children and settled down in a flat in Bombay's Warden Road. They became a part of the *EW* family and were on most intimate terms with Sachin. I still remember learning about how their teenage daughter once broke out into tantrums and Sachin had to go across to where they lived to calm her. He had a particular charm that pacified the girl.

An entire generation of young economists who later became celebrities, like Amartya Sen, Sukhamoy Chakraborty and Jagdish Bhagwati, were encouraged to write for the *EW*. They complied with Sachin's requests. The resulting experiences helped them attain maturity. The sociologist who used to write frequently for Sachin on gender gaps in India was Rama Mehta, whose husband Jagat was a member of the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) who later became Foreign Secretary. Unfortunately, Rama died fairly early, even before the *EW* had completed its first quinquennium.

Impact of the Weekly

Let me give you two specific examples of how seriously the *EW* was taken by officials those days. The year was 1956. TTK was the Finance Minister and Benegal Rama Rau was the Governor of the RBI. On a specific issue, the RBI Governor's decision was nixed by TTK with some caustic comments. Sachin wrote an angry editorial suggesting that if Rama Rau had any self-respect, he should not swallow the offensive remark of the Finance Minister with quiet fortitude. Within 24 hours of the publication of the editorial, Rama Rau resigned. TTK had been taught the lesson of his life.

The second instance I recall relates to the time I was in Washington DC between January 1959 and January 1963 as a member of the family of the Economic Development Institute. I went to a reception arranged by the Indian Embassy to celebrate 15 August 1959. A smart aleck belonging to the IFS, presumably of the rank of First Secretary, was pontificating to a group of American journalists in a

relatively loud tone that the then Defence Minister of India Krishna Menon was the main culprit preventing the development of friendly relations between India and the us. He added that plans were afoot to expel Krishna Menon from the government. Sachin had insisted that I must send a couple of articles for the *EW* on whichever subject I thought fit. I sent a note on what had transpired at the Independence Day reception. It raised a furore in Parliament and Nehru himself had to intervene to pacify the upset MPs. Besides me, among the anonymous contributors to the *EW* were two persons with the same name, Samar Ranjan Sen, a diplomat who was stationed in Moscow and Samar Ranjan Sen, an economist and civil servant.

By then, the *EW* had been recognised as the foremost social sciences journal to be published from Asia. Contributions from scholars from different countries helped *EW* achieve international recognition. These writers not only enjoyed writing for Sachin's journal, when they visited Bombay, they equally enjoyed the long hours of intimate conversations they had with him at his Churchill Chambers flat. Sachin came to be known across the world for his laughter, which would start as a gentle cackle and its finale would be a full-throated roar—which, rumour would have, could be heard from the Gateway of India.

Naipaul at Churchill Chambers

Let me mention an episode from the late-1950s concerning Vidiadhar Surajprasad (vs) Naipaul that may seem quite incredible. Naipaul had met Sachin accidentally and was captivated by his personality. He insisted on spending a full week in his flat in Churchill Chambers. Sachin's cook and all-round help, Paresh, would take care of Naipaul. Those days Paresh had time to have romantic involvements with the female helpers who worked in several other apartments in the same building. Naipaul was fascinated by Paresh's versatility and wrote a story in which the central figure was none other than Sachin's valet. After Sachin passed away, Paresh managed through some stratagem or the other to arrive in Los Angeles where he set up an Indian

restaurant, married an American citizen of Mexican origin and lived happily ever after.

The *EW*'s financial situation was always precarious. But so what? It was at the centre of national and international attention. I remember one occasion when I had to visit Bombay for an assignment. As was my standard practice, after I arrived at the Santa Cruz airport in the morning, I took a cab to Churchill Chambers. By the time I reached there, Sachin had already left for office. After refreshing myself, I went over to the *EW* office and made my entry into Sachin's cabin. Sachin got up immediately and started searching the pockets of my trousers and shirt. I was baffled but was soon speedily enlightened. Sachin had invited a young researcher, perhaps a student of Bert Hoseltiz, who had planned to conduct research in an Adivasi village close to Thane. Sachin had invited her to have lunch with him. The researcher had already arrived and was talking to one of the young scholars who was writing an editorial for the *EW*. Fernandes had frightening news for him. There was not even a five-rupee note in the office cash box. Sachin appropriated whatever modest sum I had on me and proudly ordered a cab to take her to lunch at a posh restaurant serving exotic food. Such narratives were typical of the manner in which the *EW* survived for nearly 16 years.

I met Sachin for the first time in 1954 when I had joined the Ministry of France for a brief stint. He had heard of me from both A K Dasgupta and D P Mukerji, and his family used to live very close to our residence in Dacca. He, therefore, knew all my antecedents. He took an immediate liking to me and I was among the foremost of the anonymous writers of editorial pieces for the *EW*. In fact, the entire Chaudhuri family was an integral part of my own household.

An Unusual Character

In several respects, Sachin was a most out-of-the-ordinary character. He had foibles and idiosyncrasies which are now an integral part of my memory cells. During 1957 and 1958, whenever he visited Delhi, I would go to receive him at Palam airport in my little Fiat car.

For the next few days, I had to suspend all my other activities and cart him around for visiting friends and close acquaintances at their residences or when he would go around to the different ministries to meet ministers or senior civil servants. He would always don a spotless white *khadi dhoti* and *kurta*. Every time I would accompany him to the entrance of a ministry, the personnel at the reception table would assume that he was a very important politician and would salute him with great deference. Sachin would respond with a brief nod of the head. Those were days when strict security arrangements were unheard of.

I would perform the same chore whenever he would visit Calcutta during 1963–65. My apartment on Hungerford Street was quite spacious and could easily accommodate him, but given his cardiac condition, he did not want to climb stairs. A particular routine would, however, be observed. The moment he would get into my car, he would order me to go to a particular *paan* shop which would sell *gundi paan*. The rest of the chores could wait. On the rare occasions when he stayed with me either in Delhi or in Calcutta, we used to play a silent prank on each other. He would quietly pick up a book that he wanted to read from my bookshelf without bothering to let me know. When on the next occasion I would visit Bombay, I would retrieve that book from his bookshelf and bring it back with me. This did not deter him from repeating the ritual. This game continued indefinitely.

A New Beginning

Something altogether unexpected happened in late 1965. Hiten was abroad for some weeks and Fernandes told Sachin that no funds were available to pay wages to part-time employees who used to put together the weekly. Sachin had to personally talk to one of the Sekhsarias and a person he met made a relatively unkind comment. Sachin was infuriated. He thought that he had had enough and decided to stop publishing the *EW* and moved to Calcutta where he stayed for a few months. Meanwhile, Hiten returned to India. By then the weekly had become history.

But Sachin's admirers would not give up. They persuaded him to return to Bombay and start a new weekly by assuring him that he would not have to worry about finances and that they would arrange the funds necessary for the proposed new journal. Among the friends and admirers who raised money for the now newly-named *Economic and Political Weekly* were: N P "Potla" Sen of India Tobacco, B N Datar who was labour advisor to the Union Government, Dharma Kumar and her husband Lovraj and Sachin's great admirer from the world of commerce, Has Mukhbbhai D Parekh, founder of Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC).

Sachin had made up his mind to have me as his executive editor and managing trustee of the Sameeksha Trust, a new body that would own the *EPW*. I was told I would be made a formal offer with a total monthly salary of ₹1,500. I was then working with the Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (IIMC) but decided to accept the offer to join Sachin in his new journal. The problem deterring me was one of housing in Bombay. I could move in with Sachin in Churchill Chambers but my wife was reluctant to accompany me. Her concept of privacy was something Sachin was unable to comprehend but that was that. I applied for one year's leave from the IIMC, which its governing body immediately agreed to. I assumed I would soon become the executive editor of the *EPW*.

Enter Romesh Thapar at this stage. He too was very close to Sachin and was his great admirer. Since the early 1960s, Sachin would stay with him whenever he visited New Delhi. Earlier he would stay with Nandita Kripalani (Tagore's

Permission for Reproduction of Articles Published in *EPW*

No article published in *EPW* or part thereof should be reproduced in any form without prior permission of the author(s).

A soft/hard copy of the author(s)'s approval should be sent to *EPW*.

In cases where the email address of the author has not been published along with the articles, *EPW* can be contacted for help.

grand-niece) and her husband Krishna (who was nominated by Indira Gandhi as a member of the Rajya Sabha) but they had moved out of Delhi and gone to Santiniketan. Romesh, a former communist, had many friends in left circles and was on most friendly terms with Indira Gandhi as well. After the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in January 1966, she was elected by the Congress Parliamentary Party as his successor despite the stiff opposition from those belonging to the so-called Syndicate, the party's conservative wing. The Syndicate comprised K Kamaraj, Morarji Desai (who later became Prime Minister of India from 1977 to 1979), Neelam Sanjiva Reddy (who later became the President of India in 1977) and Atulya Ghosh, the tall political leader from Bengal. While the Syndicate had no alternative but to accept Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister, it insisted on packing the cabinet of ministers by its trusted individuals. A Calcutta barrister who happened to have a name identical to that of Sachin Chaudhuri was Atulya Ghosh's choice as finance minister. He was altogether innocent of economic issues and the Ministry of Finance became the hand-tool of a group of bureaucrats who were on the closest of terms with the top brass of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington DC.

Indira Gandhi Invites Left

There were major crop failures in 1965 and 1966. Food prices kept rising sky-high and the general price index moved up rapidly. Bureaucrats, including one who was closest to the Prime Minister, persuaded her to devalue the rupee, as had been advised by Washington. Once devaluation occurred, both the Bank and the Fund would accord generous assistance and liberal imports of foodgrains would straightaway bring down prices, she was told. Precisely the reverse happened. The devaluation was of a stiff order and domestic prices rose even further. There were no supplies of foodgrains from the US either. Indira Gandhi was distraught and Romesh Thapar was at that moment her closest advisor outside the government and the Congress party. He suggested that her

only recourse was to invite the left to come to her support and that he would do the liaison work to achieve this end. It happened that C Subramaniam, who was minister for food and agriculture between 1964 and 1966 and was somewhat detached from the Syndicate, came along to help Indira Gandhi.

K T Chandy, founder and director of IIMC and my boss, had an interesting past. He had joined IIMC after retiring as director of Hindustan Lever where he was the company's legal brain. When he was a law student in London in the 1930s, he was very active in Krishna Menon's India League. Chandy was also associated with the young crowd which got recruited into the Communist Party of Great Britain, individuals such as P N Haksar, Snehangshu Acharya, Bhupesh Gupta, Mohan Kumaramangalam and Jyoti Basu.

On Romesh's advice, Subramaniam invited Chandy to take over as the chairman of the Food Corporation of India, which would compulsorily procure grains from surplus-raising farmers and distribute what was produced at subsidised rates to the country's poor. However, it also became necessary to set up an Agricultural Prices Commission (APC) to settle the procurement prices of different foodgrains. A Bombay economist who was a socialist by conviction was appointed as chairman of the commission but left within a few months as he could not adjust to the ways of bureaucracy in New Delhi. Romesh argued long and hard with Sachin Chaudhuri to allow me to join as the chairman of the APC. He said my services would be required only for a few months and I could join the *EPW* thereafter. At heart, Sachin was a firm Nehruvian and he agreed to let me join the APC tentatively for a year on the understanding that I would try to make my stay in New Delhi as brief as possible.

The new weekly made its appearance on 20 August 1966. Maybe because of the excitement which accompanied its publication, Sachin had a serious cardiac attack which incapacitated him. Krishna Raj, who had joined the *EW* in 1960, was completely devoted to the cause of the journal and had the highest admiration

for Sachin, took over charge. Silently, he, along with the assistance of the ever-loyal Fernandes, continued to keep publishing the issues of the new journal.

After Sachin Chaudhuri

In the third week of December that year, I had to be in Bombay for an official meeting for the APC and was supposed to return to Delhi by an evening flight on a Sunday. Following his cardiac arrest, Sachin had moved to the 45 Pali Hill, Bandra, bungalow owned by Hiten. I went over to Pali Hill on that Sunday morning and spent the day with Sachin. When the taxi arrived in the early evening to take me to Santa Cruz airport, Sachin slowly walked alongside me and installed me into the taxi. In his last words to me, he told me that I must visit Bombay more frequently as he could not cope all by himself. Hiten was away at that time and the only person staying with Sachin was the daughter of his youngest sister. Despite the state of his health, he had invited Surendra Patel and his wife Krishna Ahuja for dinner on Monday evening. Sachin's niece greeted the Patel couple when they arrived; she was arranging dinner when Sachin suffered another cardiac attack. By the time he could be taken to hospital, he was already dead. I returned to Bombay on Tuesday evening. By then the members of his family, including Sachin's brothers, had arrived. The next day a small group of us took Sachin to the crematorium.

As the fleet of cars was ready to leave for the crematorium, Hennadi, Debu-da's wife, who was a great one observing grammar, noticed that I was wearing a pair of trousers. She hurried inside the house and emerged with a *dhoti*, which she asked me to don before joining the funeral. I meekishly obeyed her. Certain rituals were gone through at the crematorium. I do not remember the details. Once the body was gently shoved into the burner and the shutters came down, all of a sudden I felt something happening inside me. I rushed to a corner and a flood of tears came out of my eyes. It was again Hennadi who watched the scene from a distance. She slowly approached the spot where I was standing, drew me

close to her and patted my back. It was all over.

The brothers, particularly Hiten and Sankho, the sculptor, were insistent that since Sachin wanted me to be his successor, I should immediately inform C Subramaniam that Sachin's death has transformed the situation and that I would have to give up my assignment with the APC in Delhi. Hiten assured me that he had already solved my residential problem in Mumbai. His friend Yusuf Khan—better known as Dilip Kumar (who he had introduced to the world of cinema)—and his wife Saira Bano would occasionally occupy the ground floor at Hiten's house and potter around in the garden. Hiten had already spoken to Yusuf who had agreed to discontinue such occasional visits so that my wife and myself would have the ground floor entirely at our disposal. Yusuf had readily agreed.

Hiten and Sankho were arranging a formal meeting of the Sameeksha Trust whose first chairman was P B Gajendra-gadkar, the then Chief Justice of the

Bombay High Court and brother-in-law of B N Datar. The other members of the trust were my teacher A K Dasgupta, B N Ganguly of Delhi and my friend the economist K N Raj. There were only two decisions that the trustees had to make—the replacement of Sachin as managing trustee by Hiten and my appointment as the editor of the journal. A most astounding thing happened at the meeting of the Sameeksha Trust. My teacher, A K Dasgupta, expressed virulent opposition to the proposal to appoint me as editor of the *EPW*. Dasgupta, after several months, expressed deep regrets to me for what he did. He said he had been advised by a person extremely close to him that it would be a grave mistake to make me the editor, as, at the very last minute, I would refuse to join and stick to the allurements of holding an important government position. I was disappointed and, much more than that, embarrassed that I had to go back and tell the Food and Agriculture Minister that something unexpected had happened

and that I would not join the *EPW* in Bombay.

The proper course of action would have been to appoint Krishna Raj since he was already de facto in that position. But again, at Dasgupta's insistence, he suggested the name of a person who had apparently agreed to join *EPW* at the proffered salary of ₹1,500 per month. I know who Dasgupta's advisor was but would never disclose the person's identity.

What surprised me was that I knew the person selected as editor of the *EPW* was someone Sachin disliked. I remember occasions when Sachin kept him standing in his cabin while speaking to him. I asked him why. Sachin cryptically remarked: "The heart has its reasons." After the editor moved on to a position of great eminence in officialdom, the Sameeksha Trust installed Krishna Raj as editor of the *EPW*.

Here ends my story.

[As told to Paranjay Guha Thakurta, editor, *EPW*. Writing assistance was provided by Varda Dixit and Bhavya Srivastava.]

New in EPWRF India Time Series Module on Educational Statistics

The screenshot displays the EPWRF India Time Series web application. The main heading is "EPWRF India Time Series" with a navigation menu including Home, Report, Upgrade, Profile, Load Saved Query, and Logout. The left sidebar shows a tree view of "Educational Statistics" with categories: Literacy in India, School Education, Higher Education, and Special Category Items. The "School Education" category is selected, showing a list of sub-categories: Number of Schools, Teachers, Enrolment, Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), and Drop Out Rates (DOR). A "Description" box for "School Education" states: "School Education provides state-wise data on Number of Schools, Teachers, Enrolment of boys and girls, from 1980 onwards. Data regarding Ratios namely Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), Drop-out Ratio (DOR) and the Gender Parity Index (GPI) have also been included in this sub-module /section. Data for Number of Schools, Enrolment, Teachers and PTR is given across levels of education viz, Intermediate/Pre-". The "Select Parameters" section includes dropdowns for "By Gender" (Boys, Girls, Persons), "All India State UT's" (All-India, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam), and "Year" (1980-1981, 1981-1982, 1982-1983, 1983-1984). At the bottom, there are buttons for SUBMIT, CHART, EXPORT, PRINT, and SAVE QUERY.

Features

Presents all-India and state-wise annual data from 1981 onwards.

Structured in three sections :

- Literacy in India
- School Education
- Higher Education

Includes data on SC/ST students and school education in rural areas.

With this, the EPWRF ITS now has 16 modules covering a range of macro-economic, financial and social data.

For more details visit www.epwrfits.in