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Sachin Chaudhuri and 'The Economic Weekly': A Personal Memoir

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Sachin Chaudhuri was an extraordinary personality who was Founder-Editor of 'The Economic Weekly' , launched in 1949. The Weekly quickly became the pre-eminent forum for debate on the shape the newly independent nation was to take. A personal account of the Editor and his special Weekly.

The first issue of *The Economic Weekly* (EW), edited by Sachin Chaudhuri, came out on 1 January 1949 and in no time made a name for itself: what is more, it remained the premier journal in its field for well over 15 years. At the time of its launch, the editor was neither a well-known journalist nor a well-known economist. But he was a brilliant man with an inquisitive and analytical mind who could notice the minutest of flaws in an argument. A man with a sharp and fluid pen and an exceptional capacity to wield a magic wand to get people to write for him.

Over the next 17 years Sachin Chaudhuri (1 January 1904 - 20 December 1966) gave a new direction not only to the world of journalism but also to the world of intellectual thought in India.

As independent India carved out a new approach to economic development through centralised economic planning, "[Sachin] set the tone of economic thinking in the formative period of our economic planning... and taught a generation of post-war economists in our country what to write and, not unoften, how to write", wrote A K Dasgupta, my father, in a memorial tribute to his friend (A K Dasgupta, 1966).

Dasgupta continued:

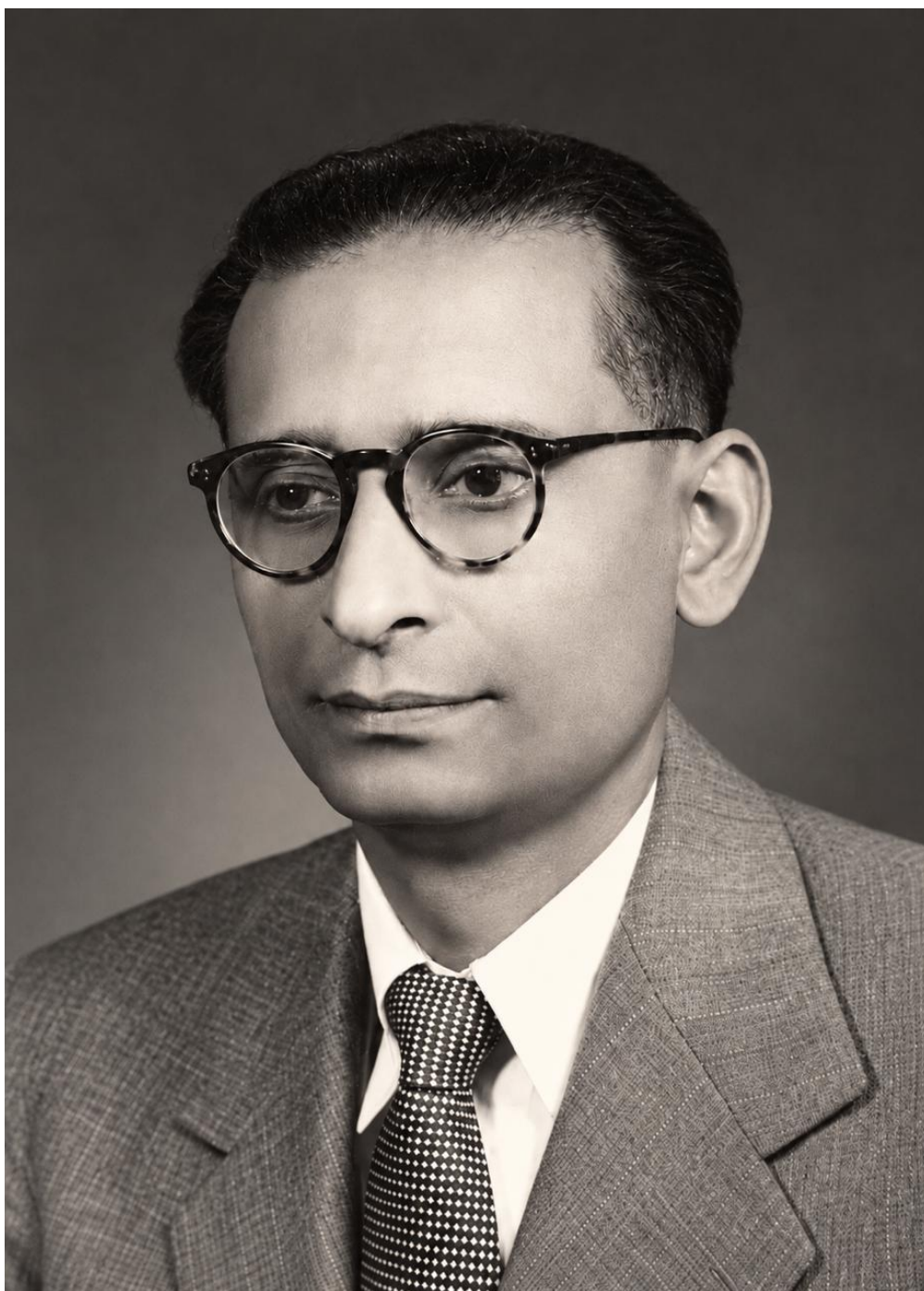
It so happens that the publication of *The Economic Weekly*... almost coincided with the First Five-Year Plan [1951-56]. It also coincided with the advent of a generation of talented young economists in our country. It is Sachin Chaudhuri more than anybody else, who brought these talents out through the pages of his paper. Most of the contributions of the postwar generation of our economists - and these contributions have been considerable - have found place in one form or another in *The Economic Weekly* during those exciting days of economic planning in our country. Indeed, many of the ideas which later became an integral part of the theory of economic development in underdeveloped countries would not perhaps have taken shape at all, but for Sachin's promptings.

I would go a step further. The frenetic deliberations from the mid-1950s onwards over the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61) continued the impetus to write on development and planning; the EW remained the principal forum for expression of fresh ideas. Along with veterans like D P Mukherjee, B N Ganguli and A K Dasgupta, young Indian economists such as K N Raj, D Khatkhate, K S Krishnaswamy, V V Bhatt, Ajit Biswas, A Chandavarkar and others filled the pages of EW. The period also saw the presence in India of some of the most eminent scholars from the United Kingdom and the United States, either at the invitation of the Government of India or on private initiative. Many of them, like Joan Robinson, Richard Goodwin, Daniel Thorner, Susanne and Lloyd Rudolph, David Mandelbaum, and George Rosen became part of the EW milieu and started writing regularly for the journal. This gave the *Weekly* (as it was often called) an international hue and global exposure. Anticipated or accidental, the timing happened to be just right for the EW to become a runaway success.

Just as the EW was a much-celebrated surprise when it was launched, there was bewildering disappointment when it stopped publication on 25 December 1965. The Annual Number, the flagship issue of the journal, published every year in January, did not come out in 1966. Nor did any other issue. The EW was gone. Equally bewildering thereafter was the launch of *Economic and Political Weekly* (EPW) a few months later, on 20 August 1966, again with Sachin Chaudhuri as Editor. Why the sudden switch?

It is 60 years now. While much has been written about the success of the two Weeklies, no definitive account of the abrupt closure of the EW and the sudden launch of EPW has come out. At best there has been hearsay or surmise.

A few years ago, while clearing my parents' books, papers and possessions, I found an old-fashioned velvet jewellery box. It had no jewels as we know them, but a few packets carefully wrapped and preserved by my mother, Shanti Dasgupta - packets of precious, treasured letters. One of them contained five letters from Sachin, four to my father and one to my mother, written between 1964 and 1966. The 1966 letters describe step by step why the EW closed down and what pressures from within and without made Sachin start the new EPW; and they reveal the emotional and physical agony he went through during the last few years of his life.



The Economic Weekly and *Economic and Political Weekly* are important enough in the academic history of India for their story to be told.

I have tried to translate the letters into English from the original Bengali as best as I could. It is a literal translation. The inherent emotion in the original cannot be expressed in another language without taking liberty with the text, which I did not want to do.

The letters tell a story but to set them in a context I present here, in Part I of a two-part article, a personal portrait of the EW and its editor, beginning with the launch of the journal. The letters, in my translation, will appear in Part II.

Sachin Chaudhuri, The Early Years

Sachin was quintessentially a "friends" person (in Bengali, an "adda" person). The picture that comes to mind as we think of him is of a tall, towering figure in the midst of a large group of friends, his inquisitive mind asking searching questions, commenting in his soft determined voice; brief, to the point, always with a sense of humour. He treasured his friends, in some sense he derived sustenance for himself and the EW through his interaction with them, yet he was a private, very private, person. The turmoil he went through over EW and EPW he could share only with his family, the Chaudhuris, who were extremely close-knit,¹ and with his old friend A K Dasgupta.

Dasgupta was his closest friend. About the friendship my father has written:

My own association with Sachin Chaudhuri dates back to the year 1922 when we entered the University of Dacca as undergraduates... I can still recollect vividly the day when Sachin entered the Economics Honours lecture room for the first time, having taken his transfer from mathematics-tall and slim, with those penetrating eyes which his high-powered, nickel-frame (as he wore then) glasses could only make conspicuous, and with scintillating brilliance on his face. Someone whispered, "That is Sachindra Narayan Chaudhuri." I had already heard about him and felt immediately drawn towards him. We were together for four years at the University, and the friendship that we developed there lasted without interruption till the last day of his life... (A K Dasgupta, 1966)

Sachin left Dacca in 1927, refusing a job at Dacca University. From all accounts, his life did not follow any regular pattern or profession after this, not till the start of the EW in 1949. An attempt at doing a PhD did not work out, nor did a desire to study in England, the latter because of the cold climate there. A mind like his, one would think, would not remain unoccupied. Yet the general impression, an impression that possibly he himself perpetuated, was that he flitted around, showing no interest in any particular career.² How did he then suddenly start the *Weekly* and make it so successful?

The Birth of *The Economic Weekly*

What I have read in a few published pieces is that Hiten Chaudhuri, Sachin's younger brother, made a request to his 'Dada'³ to start a journal like the EW and agreed to try and arrange for finance. It was not long before he found a financier and the EW was born. It is a touching story, and absolutely true. But for Hiten securing financial support, EW would not have seen the light of day.

Can this be the whole story though? From a brilliant student in 1927 to a brilliant editor in 1949, a 22-year jump through uncertain, uncharted trajectory is difficult to grasp. A publication requires planning, deliberation, discussion at length with peer groups and stakeholders before actually going ahead. It is not just the first glamorous issue; the whole structure needs to be conceptualised and the road ahead mapped before taking the first step. Was it possible to do so in the blink of an eye, or had there been a prelude?

Long after Sachinkaka (that is how I addressed him) was gone, I happened to ask my father once, "How did Sachinkaka think of starting *The Economic Weekly*? Somehow the impression is that he started it from point zero. Is that possible?" Over several conversations in the 1980s he gave me the answer:

True, Sachin did not pursue a particular profession, but from his undergraduate days he was interested in journalism and wrote small pieces for different journals even then. This he never gave up. Yes, he decided not to have a steady job. In some sense he was a free spirit but he always worked as a journalist, as a freelancer, part time or full time. He worked for *Advance* in Calcutta, *Financial News* and others in Bombay. I forget the name of the last one from where he pulled himself out to start *The Economic Weekly*.

Sachin's sister-in-law, Ira Chaudhuri,⁴ confirmed this. "Remember, Dada had worked for different journals both in Calcutta and in Bombay and when the EW was being considered he had been working for *India Weekly* on a regular basis."⁵

Continuing with my father's recollections:

Sachin had a wide circle of friends, academics, people working for the Government, private industry, journalists, even members of the film world! But he never left academia. To give a few examples, he was always in touch with teachers in Calcutta University, Bombay School of Economics or Gokhale Institute. He was close to Dwarikbabu [D Ghosh], Anjaria [J J Anjaria], Dantwala [M L Dantwala], H T Parekh in Bombay; Parimal [Parimal Ray], Gyan Chand, Appadorai [A Appadorai] and others in Delhi and, of course, with old friends like Biren [B N Ganguli] and me.⁶ He kept up with economics, not to speak of other subjects, no less than any of us, possibly more in a wider sense of the term. His interests had a vast range as you know. His letters were not just personal, they always had questions and views on what he had just read. Sachin was no stranger to the world of intellect or to the world of writing."⁷

I persisted, "But how did EW happen? Yes, his brother Hiten arranged for the finance, but the *Weekly* could not have happened overnight."

The answer was clear:

No, it was not sudden, not at all. From the early 1940s onwards, he had been wanting to start something of his own. He wanted it to be part *Economic Journal* with articles on economic theory, part on policy, some bits on business. He had a very distinct vision of what he wanted to do. He had been discussing it with us, Dhurjyatida [D P Mukherjee, economist, historian and sociologist], Biren, me, Dwarikbabu, Dantwala and a few others. As I said this had been going on in his mind, I should say also in our minds. We went through a great deal of introspection, discussion and tried to get a format ready. Finance was obviously the problem. When Hitu [Hiten Chaudhuri] in 1948 made arrangements for finance, the journal had been in the making already for seven-eight years. With finance assured, we, a kind of core group, including Samar [Samar Sen, economist] who had just moved to Delhi, met more often and tried to give it final shape. But it was Sachin's paper, his efforts, his determination, his vision, not to speak of his personality that gave *The Economic Weekly* its glorious start and made it what it was.

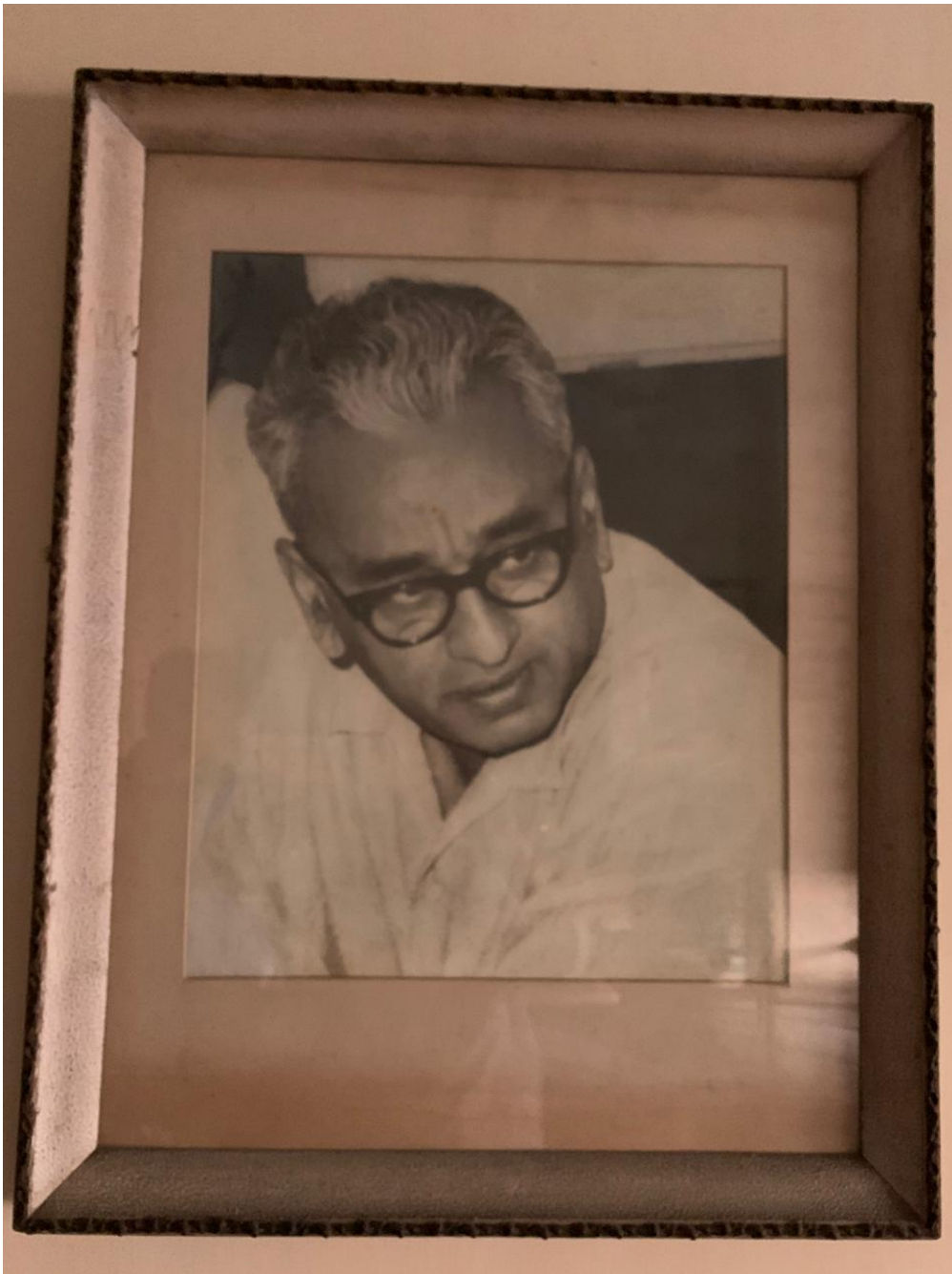
The Setting for *The Economic Weekly*

For someone as brilliant and independent-minded as Sachin to want to start a journal of his own is not surprising. Times were also such that there was a desire among intellectuals to find new avenues to express themselves, often by starting new journals. It was possibly a part of the nationalist fervour. The most remarkable journal from those days that I have seen was *Current Thought* (1939-1947), edited by Parimal Ghosh (Professor of English, Dacca Intermediate College, and well-known writer in Bengali), which was published from Calcutta. With "Freedom of thought and expression is the cause it will champion" as a motto, it proposed to discuss and examine problems "from a rational and progressive point of view". The subjects were as mixed as its wide spectrum of contributors, who ranged from Satyen Bose, Liaqat Ali Khan, Nirad Chaudhuri and A K Dasgupta to Alex Aronson (Professor of English, Dacca University). Articles ran the gamut from 'Muslim Relations in Modern India' (October-December 1939), 'Science and Civilization' (April-June 1941), 'Economics of Restrictionism' (April-June 1939) to 'A Note on the Sociology of the Best Seller' (January-March 1946).

Also remarkable was *J K Review*, published by the J K Organisation in Kanpur, with theoretical articles by B P Adarkar, A K Dasgupta, N Vishweshwara Rao (all economists) and others. In 1944-45, the emphasis in the *Review* was on the then current problems like scarcity and inflation, and the various 'plans' that were being formulated: the Bombay Plan, Peoples' Plan, and more. Around the same time, other organisations started their own journals. *The Indian Economic Journal* (launched in 1946), which two years later became the journal of the Indian Economic Association, and the *India Quarterly* (launched in 1945) of the Indian Council of World Affairs, are noteworthy.

The *Weekly's* immediate predecessor, and one that I think influenced it the most, was not a journal but a 'think tank'. When the Second World War ended Bengal had barely recovered, if a society ever recovers, from the 1943 famine and the ravages of the war. The rampant problems were post-war inflation and rise of a huge black market, two challenges that academics tried hard to grapple with. Led by Satyen Bose with Anando Gopal Sengupta (a freedom fighter, litterateur and editor of Bengali journal *Samakalin*) as secretary, a group of economists, sociologists, writers, scientists and concerned citizens started having an informal exchange of thoughts on these major issues around 1946. Registered in 1948, the group called itself Khoj Parishad. In addition to arranging conventions for

deliberations on current problems, it started publishing small books like *An Economic and Social Service (Its Premises and Implications)* by D P Mukherjee, *Devaluation* by D Ghosh, *War and Post-War Inflation in India* by A K Dasgupta, among others. The reason the Parishad was important for EW is that the core group that was involved with EW-D P Mukherjee, Biren Ganguli, Dwarik Ghosh, A K Dasgupta, and Sachin Chaudhuri himself-had all been a part of Khoj Parishad from the early days. If I remember the articles of the early issues of EW, many of them emanated from the discussions of this think tank.



The EW was not the only journal of its kind published at that time; it was, however, unique. None of the others would have the all-India impact, indeed the international impact, that EW had.

I had delved a lot into the start of EW but never asked my father how it was called *The Economic Weekly* or who had named it. What I heard in general was a murmur or a guess. A few years ago, in the pile of letters that my mother had so carefully preserved, there was one from Biren Ganguli to his friend, Amiya, my father, in Bengali. The date is not clear, but it is sometime in August 1948. I translate the relevant paragraph:

Finally, the paper has got a name, The Economic Weekly. We took the decision at the last meeting. Suggestions had come in in plenty but everyone chose this name - as it happens it is the name I had suggested.

Reminiscences of Sachin and *The Economic Weekly*

Turning now to the very personal, Sachin was a myth and a reality to me. Myth because I saw him rarely, reality because not just Sachin but the whole Chaudhuri family were an integral part of the Dasgupta family. My first encounter with Sachinkaka (as I called him) was sometime in early July 1953. I was in Bombay for a day on my own. It happened to be the busiest day of the week at the EW office. Kind that he was, Sachin arranged for his nephew to show me around the city and take me to the office around 7 pm for a brief visit.

To us, the Dasguptas, EW was a phenomenon. My image of the office was on a similar scale. Reality, however, was far removed from the idea: the office was a tiny room, close to being what we would call a hole in the wall.⁸ As you got out of the lift the passage was so small that you could walk straight into the room. A large table occupied most of the space, with papers scattered on it in a neat semi-circular way. There was the imposing figure of Sachin Chaudhuri with a pen in his right hand, elbow resting on the table, and a cigarette in the left, deep in concentration, reading a manuscript. There was no one else in the office, no assistant, no secretary, just the lone figure of the editor, writing his editorials, annotating articles, correcting proofs, arranging all that was needed to get the journal ready for press the following day.

There may have been a chair or two, but I stood near him. We could not have had much of a conversation, but I do remember him saying how sorry he was that he could not spend any time with me. Pointing to the papers he said, "I will have to spend the whole night here". I know now that this was a routine he happily followed. Back then I, a 16-year-old, felt sad leaving. Here was a giant of a journal with an intellectual giant of an editor, alone and tired in a tiny office.

Yes, the tininess of the office bothered me. At the time I did not know the space constraints of Bombay, even then a maximum city, nor did I know the ambience of Churchill Chambers, Sachinkaka's home in Bombay.

Churchill Chambers

The success of EW is intimately connected with the flat in Churchill Chambers on Mereweather Road, behind the Taj Mahal Hotel. Colaba Causeway, with its cafés and exotic shops was just a few minutes' walk away. The location could not have been more congenial. I think the flat was on the second floor. By the 1950s the lift was rickety enough to work only intermittently, and when it did, the creaky noise made you wonder if it would go up at all.

The flat itself was spacious. The drawing room with comfortable sofas and chairs was actually a balcony, open on one side; the supporting rectangular pillar in the middle made it look like a separate room. Bright and airy, it felt larger than it was, and had a great capacity to accommodate as many chairs as we wanted!

The decor was simple, actually rather nondescript. The only decoration on the wall was a small black and white drawing by Sachin's brother, the artist Shankho Chaudhuri. Beautiful in its lines, it was a scene from Malad. At some point, possibly in the early 1960s, the drawing got a companion, a wooden Coptic Icon. Both were stunning, one in its simplicity - beautiful strokes of a drawing - contrasting with the icon's colours and sense of splendour.



Sachin's room, adjacent to the balcony, was sparsely furnished yet roomy and cheerful. The drawing room guests could easily flow in there; the divan and a few chairs took care of many. A small table in the corner had a flower vase, almost always with a bunch of Rajnigandha flowers, white and pristine like Sachin's attire. The minimalist simplicity is possibly what made Churchill Chambers such a welcoming home.

A welcoming home it indeed was. The warmth and joy we got there could hardly be replicated. It did come with a mandatory challenge though - all of us staying there, especially the juniors, had to read/comment on /correct / edit manuscripts that had come for publication to the EW and passed the Editor's initial test.

Every so often Sachin would come home with two bunches of articles in his hands. The first bunch generally had one or two manuscripts, those he was particularly pleased with and wanted to show my father. They would then talk about the bright economists of the next generation. My father, being a professor, used to spot talents early and direct them towards the EW. Sachin happily acknowledged Dasgupta's contribution in this matter except when it came to the brilliant young economist, Krishna Bhardwaj. They always had a tussle over who had first discovered her!

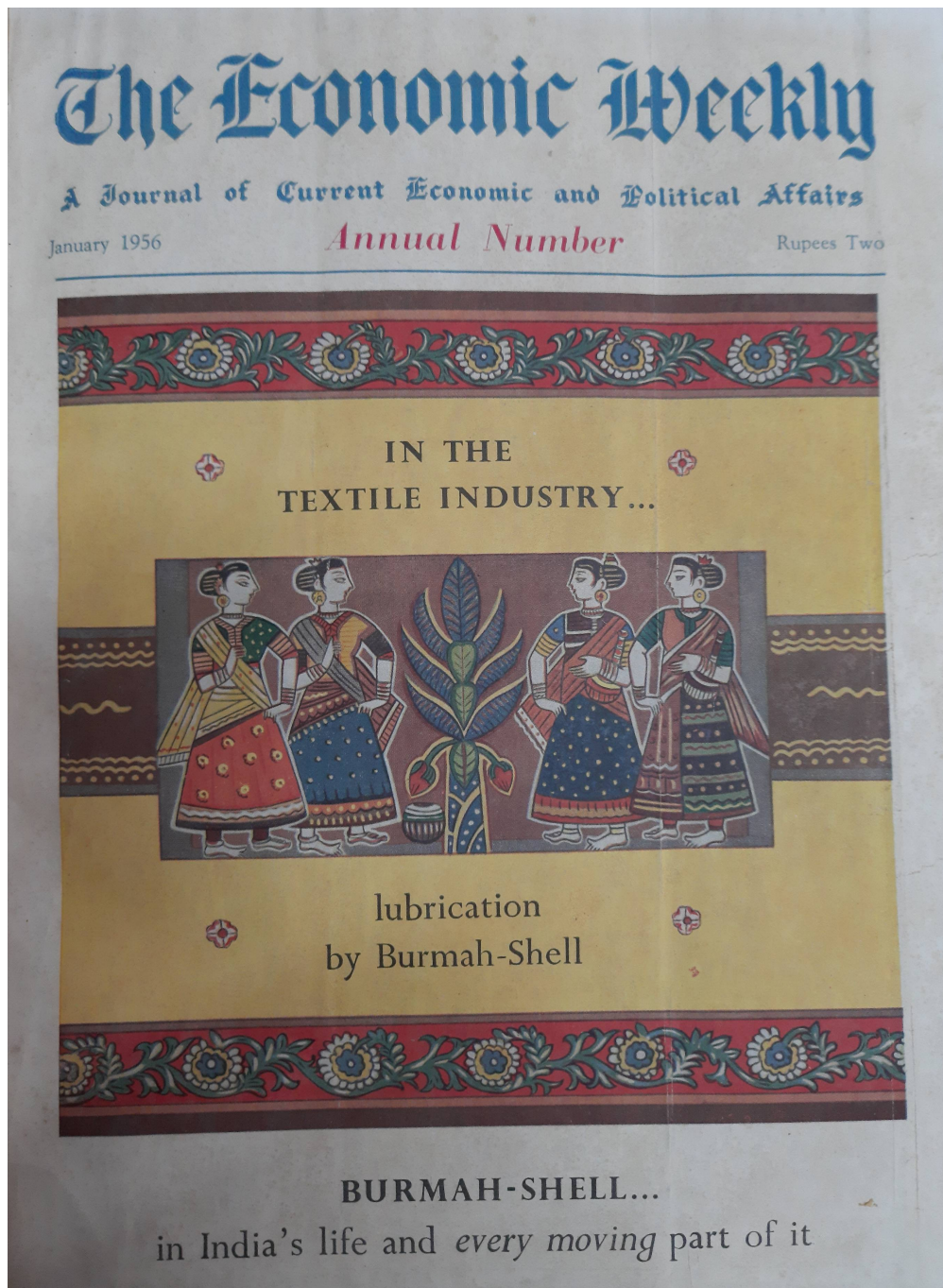
The other, a bigger bunch, had what he called "woolly", unruly, haphazard articles but with one or two interesting points worth noting. These would be given to the juniors, of whom I was one, with strict instructions: "Too long, not precisely written, some good ideas. Reduce it to ten handwritten pages - don't miss the relevant points." He would then sit with friend Dasgupta and reminisce about their Dacca University tutorials and the art of precise writing.⁹

My apprenticeship had been as a proofreader, and promotion to editing in 1964 was a huge honour but daunting. I need not have worried for no matter who edited, experienced or amateur, Sachin went over their work line by line; the final shape of an article was entirely his. For years, even in proofreading, he did the final check. And in the early 1960s when he decided to delegate it to younger colleagues, in one issue of EW 'apolitical' and 'amoral' were changed to 'a political' and 'a moral'! I remember this well because for the Dasguptas and Patels, it was as though the world had fallen!

Churchill Chambers was always alive with people: Sachin's immediate family, distant relatives, motley groups of friends from various disciplines, the Dasguptas, the Krishnaswamys, later the Patels, visitors from all over India and abroad. It was a happy home. It was an 'open house'.¹⁰

A Home, an Office

Looking back, I realise Churchill Chambers was not just a home, in a way it was an extension of the office; as if the reception room, the meeting room and the executive dining room were all there. The EW office in Fort, small as it might have been, was the core: manuscripts were sent there, and the accounts, the editorial and technical work needed to put the journal together, everything was done there. Sachin and his small team spent long hours in the office to ensure that each issue was printed and distributed on time. An editor, however, cannot work in isolation. Manuscripts may come to the office but the mechanics of keeping up a continued flow of issues is not simple. Anyone familiar with Sachin's 'second cable' or 'third cable' to contributors would know how much he had to coax and cajole them, especially when they were friends. Nor is it simple to write all that an editor has to, week after week, without getting stimulation from a world outside. Sachin needed to interact with people. But he did not enjoy visiting them in their offices; he preferred to meet them at home, in small groups, the essential Sachin, the "friends" person.



And this is where Churchill Chambers played an important role. It was an ideal place to get together, exchange news and ideas and have animated conversation. The groups that gathered there varied: cohesive, disparate, old friends, acquaintances, journalists, activists,

academics, writers, and designers, Sachin had the charm to bind them together. But for the warmth of this open space of light and breeze and his ability to keep an open house, Sachin could not have edited the EW with the felicity he did.

If the office was the place of deadlines and hard work, Churchill Chambers was the source of relaxed inspiration. This intellectual interaction was possibly the part of running the EW he enjoyed most.

The scene of action was the so-called drawing room, the balcony, where thinkers got together, argued, laughed, teased and gossiped. This is where they all expressed their ideas, their vision of a new India. I remember V K R V Rao and my father's hearty laughter, P C Mahalanobis's serious face, J J Anjaria's soft voice saying, "But Dasgupta....," M L Dantwala's equally soft voice discussing serious issues with a sense of humour, the young Ashok Rudra (a multifaceted intellect) making fast-paced and fiery arguments, and Sachin quietly injecting his own well thought out questions, arguments and answers. The exchange of views more often than not sprouted like seeds into articles, commentaries and notes for EW.

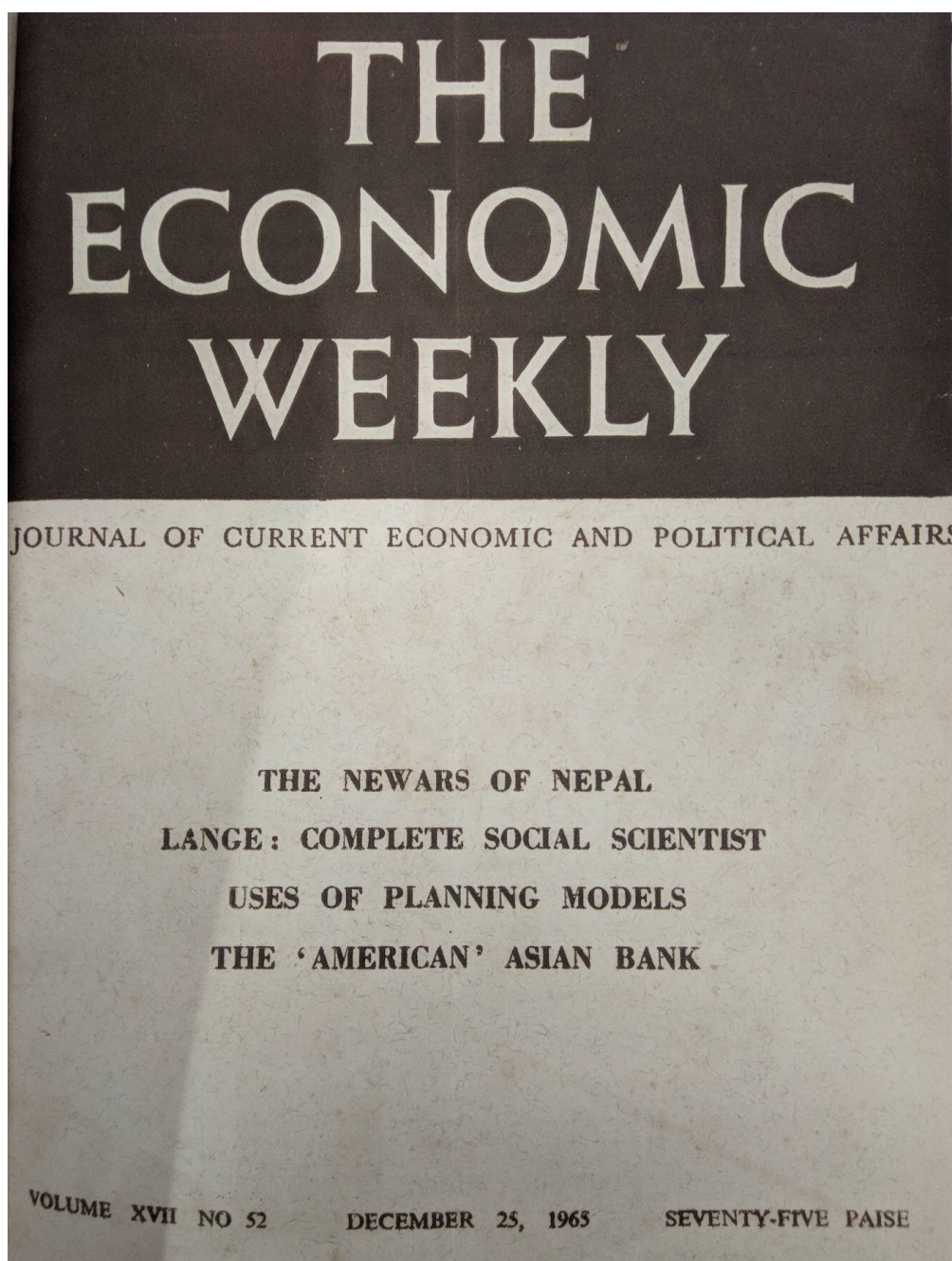
Tea and snacks were served in an almost constant stream. Sachin's hospitality was well known. Also well-known were the dinners Sachin hosted at Churchill Chambers from time to time: a beautifully laid out table, low in the Santiniketan style, elaborate meals, not necessarily lavish, but elegant. There was refinement at the Chaudhuri homes.

Life at home, extravagant in outward appearances, blended with the austerity of the office in a rather seamless way. They complemented each other with an inbuilt reciprocity. The editor and his team worked in concert, at home and office, to maintain the high standard of *The Economic Weekly*.

The Chaudhuri Family and *The Economic Weekly*

Despite the presence of a financier (the Sekhsarias, a prominent group of cotton merchants in Bombay), finance remained rocky at EW throughout its existence. Mr. Fernandes, Sachin's loyal and hardworking assistant, tried hard to get advertisements, but they were extremely difficult to come by. EW was fortunate to receive voluntary assistance from many well-established economists of Bombay, specially from those at the Reserve Bank of India,¹¹ but basic expenses like rent, salaries, press and other bills were not easy to meet. Every commitment was fulfilled, but it was an unending source of stress for the editor. The EW office had to be austere; there was no other choice.

Years after Sachin's death, years after EW had closed down, long after Churchill Chambers had ceased to be the residence of the Chaudhuri family, it was disconcerting to read about Sachin's "indiscriminate hospitality" which purportedly compelled colleagues at the office to adjust the dinner expenses at Churchill Chambers into EW's meagre budget (Mitra, 2013). I knew this was not true. There was no way Sachin would jeopardise the bedrock of EW - its finances. I put it down to unintentional misunderstanding; 'lost in transmission' is not an unusual phenomenon.



The discrepancy, however, rankled. Finally, after a long time, I decided to talk to Ira Chaudhuri, the last remaining original source.¹² After explaining the context, I asked her directly who bore the expenses of the continued hospitality at Churchill Chambers and if it had any connection with the EW budget. Her answer was immediate: "The brothers, of course and Dada, whatever he could, they took care of it all. EW had a budget of its own, totally separate from expenses at Churchill Chambers. Expenses at home, whatever the purpose, were borne by Dada and the brothers. The question of taking anything from EW funds did not arise."¹³ She explained that the dinners at Churchill Chambers were generally for contributors or would-be contributors to EW, well-wishers who helped in various different ways, for people who helped EW achieve the standing it had. Sachin was not able to compensate anyone monetarily. An open house, a dinner and an intellectually challenging evening was his way of expressing his deep appreciation.

I realised then that one could be devoted to Sachin, be deeply involved with the work of the journal, even know Sachin and the family well - at one level most of us did - but not well enough. Not well enough to know the inner dynamics of the Chaudhuri family and what 'Dada' or EW meant to them. They are an extraordinary family. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the debt we owe them for the high standard and survival, for the years it ran, of *The Economic Weekly*.

Sachin Chaudhuri and the Dasguptas

Sachin Chaudhuri is now a legend. Tall, sharp featured, intense looking, aristocratic, generous, loyal and charismatic, we who knew him have our own individual ways of remembering him, the EW and those times. As I recall those times, the magical times, what comes foremost to my mind is the picture of a friendship between my parents and Sachin, one that had a rare quality of innate understanding, regard and complete acceptance. As I watched Sachin in my parents' home, I realised the depth of that quality.

From 1958 to 1965 (except for about a year in between) my parents lived in Delhi; Sachin came several times a year, definitely after the Annual Number (January) and Special Number (July) came out. Unless my parents happened to be out of town, Sachin always stayed with them. There was never a change in that tradition. In January and July, as soon as the special issues came off the presses, Sachin took the next flight to Delhi, arriving in my parents' home in Defence Colony rather late at night, saying as he entered, "Here it is, fresh off the press, ink not dry." There was never any change in that either!

This was a different Sachin, relaxed, easygoing, the duties of the EW not a weight, at least not for a while. The central motif of each morning was 'tea', unending, unlimited cups of tea with talk as friends dropped by. A little after midday my mother would declare, "Here is the board, tea stall is now closed." That never deterred him. He would plead, "Please, just one more, no sugar, no milk, just a bit of light tea liquor." I knew of no occasion when he was not indulged.

After lunch Sachin would go out to meetings or to visit friends and later, I understand, to the home of Raj and Ramesh Thapar, the founder-editors of Seminar. They were old friends and he was extremely fond of them. Besides, as he said, there were always "interesting" people there.

Unlike Churchill Chambers, the Dasgupta home had a routine, especially for mealtimes. Sachin adhered to it in a rather Sachin-like way. Dinnertime was shifted from 8:30 pm to 9 pm to accommodate him and he always arrived by that hour. He never dined anywhere else and he never came late. The point was not the time when he returned but which "interesting" person, or how many "interesting" persons, he brought with him, ostensibly for dinner. The count was something like 'one, two -- many'.

Watching Sachin when he brought 'many' was amusing. Two taxis would arrive just before 9 pm and Sachin would come in with five or six guests. There was no question of alerting my parents - I don't think either party even thought of it. After introducing everyone he would quietly, almost surreptitiously, go to the kitchen, pick up the lids of dishes to check if all of the guests could be asked to dinner, and then look a bit disappointed. He need not have worried. My mother would immediately start cooking at that hour as if it were the most natural thing; dinnertime did go a bit haywire, but it was all part of their camaraderie.

After dinner when things quietened down, the two friends would start their nocturnal discussions, as my father called them, just like in their university days. The picture is still clear, the two friends sitting side by side on two cushioned chairs: my father leaning to the back rather straight, Sachin leaning on his right side looking straight into empty space and smoking. There would be periods of silence - silence was very much a part of their conversation - then suddenly Sachin would thump on the wooden arm of the chair, say, rather firmly, "That's it!" and jump up. It was almost like 'Eureka'. What their conversation was about I do not know, possibly Bertrand Russell, or some issues in economics, maybe Tagore, possibly the EW.

I do remember one conversation that my father related. Discussing aesthetics, Sachin said, "In China the sense of aesthetics is different. Two friends walk over to a garden in silence as night falls. They sit side by side in complete silence hour after hour, gazing at a single bud - a large bud jutting out of a long vertical unadorned thorny branch, ready to bloom. Complete silence; late at night the bud opens out into a beautiful flower - a matter of just one moment - the moment is then over. The friends get up, go their own way, in silence.¹⁴ I wonder which was more precious to them, the beauty of the flower or the tranquility of silence.

One thing is for sure, friends Chaudhuri and Dasgupta, nature lovers both, might have waited to see the flower bloom but not in complete silence!

In an article about our father, my brother, Partha Dasgupta has written:

His closest friend, and the person with whom he had greater intellectual understanding than with anyone else, was Sachin Chaudhuri... In their personalities and gifts they complemented each other. They took each other so much for granted, that I believe neither appreciated how much each owed the other. Without my father's articles, The Economic Weekly (and

subsequently, Economic and Political Weekly) would not have so rapidly established its dominance in economic theory over all other journals in the Indian subcontinent. By the same token, but for Sachin's promptings my father would not have written those articles (P Dasgupta, 2003).

"They took each other so much for granted" is possibly the warmest way to remember the unique friendship.

My very personal memory is that of an affectionate, indulgent, occasionally strict and exacting uncle, who over time became a friend, who was by our side whenever needed, who lit up our home -- any home, for that matter -- as he entered, who brought cheer and joy even as we argued and debated, whose only demand, as always was endless cups of tea, "no sugar, no milk, just a bit of liquor", one whose death took away from our lives a certain vibrancy, a certain grace.¹⁵

Sachin Chaudhuri left a legacy of excellence. It was my privilege to be near and watch him closely as he steered *The Economic Weekly* and slowly created a legacy that has survived for decades.

(Part-II: 'The End of The Economic Weekly and the Birth of Economic and Political Weekly' will be published shortly.)

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Footnotes:

1 Ashok Mitra has written extensively about Sachin's family, the Chaudhuris of Bharenga, a progressive zamindar family of East Bengal. (See Mitra, 2012.)

2 He rarely talked about those years, not unless one asked. And I never thought it proper to ask.

3 'Dada' is the Bengali term for elder brother.

4 Wife of Shankho Chaudhuri, Sachin's youngest brother.

5 Ira Chaudhuri, telephone conversation with the author, 16 February 2016.

6 All of them were economists other than A Appadorai, whose work was in international relations.

7 Throughout the 1950s I remember letters from Sachin to my father with diagrams in blue ink, possibly illustrating points he had made.

8 The EW office was always in the busy Fort area of Bombay. In the early 1950s the EW office was located in Noble Chambers, Parsi Bazaar Street, now renamed as Syed Abdullah Brelavi Road.

9 My father never got over his attachment to Dacca University, not until his last day. Sachin never talked about his life there except when it came to the art of reasoning and compact writing learnt at the tutorials of Professor K B Saha. It is interesting that although Sachin's speech was in the impeccable Bengali of West Bengal, when he was disheartened by an article, without thinking he would slip into his old East Bengal dialect.

10 Keeping an open house was a family tradition of the Chaudhuris. Reminiscences of Dacca of the 1920s and 1930s recall with fondness and admiration the evening get-togethers at their Zindabazar Lane home, where artists, musicians, writers, poets, academics of various disciplines, even students were welcomed with great warmth. The open house was at its peak when Sachin was in Dacca and continued till the mid-1930s when his youngest brother left. Dacca was a major centre of the Arts at the time. (See Patel, 2017.)

11 This has been well documented in the pages of EPW.

12 It was a conversation over the telephone, in Bengali, a continuation of the one cited earlier. The translation is literal, from notes I had kept. Date: 16 February 2016.

13 In fact, Ira Chaudhuri and Hena Chaudhuri (wife of Sachin's brother Debendra) managed the kitchen and made all the 'behind the scenes' arrangements to make these evenings special. I am grateful to Ira Chaudhuri for explaining this and other details to me in the previously cited conversation.

14 I can well visualise the scene: Sachin talking in his slow meandering way, moving his long, pointed fingers as if acting out the story, a smile on his face, sitting back and suddenly turning to face my father, saying, with a soft clap, "Suddenly the bud opens". Slow reminds me, Sachin told me he was a slow thinker! Once I was annoyed that he took two days to answer a question I had asked and told him so. His rather tender reply, "You see, Bibi [my nickname], you do not realise I am a very slow thinker. You ask me a question, it takes me a long time to absorb it and then work out an answer. Don't ever think I don't take your questions seriously".

15 'Raunaq' was the word used by our household help, Premballabhji, who kept the cups of tea flowing in the Patel home. It is a difficult word to translate.

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