

## Tapan Mitra: In Memoriam

Tapan Mitra, Goldwin Smith Professor of Economics at Cornell University, passed away in Ithaca on February 3, 2019. Born in 1948 in Calcutta (now Kolkata), India, he studied at Presidency College and the Delhi School of Economics before entering the University of Rochester as a Ph.D. student. Prior to joining Cornell in 1981, he taught at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle and the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Tapan Mitra was on the Editorial Board of *Economic Theory* and of the *International Journal of Economic Theory* at their inception and was a Fellow of the Society for the Advancement of Economic Theory (SAET). He was also a Fellow of the Econometric Society, and had held a Sloan Fellowship.

A prolific researcher, Mitra was duly acknowledged as a leading economic theorist of his generation. His definitive and pioneering contributions to the efficiency and equity of inter-temporal allocation of resources gave a shape and cast to capital theory and to economic dynamics that will surely stand the test of time. Committed to the highest standards of scholarship, of precision and rigour, and blessed with rare analytical power, his touch enriched many subjects: chaotic dynamics, renewable and exhaustible resources, their sustainability and extinction, choice of technique in development planning, forestry economics, and undoubtedly others. He investigated convex and non-convex environments, with or without discounting, and whereas he did not neglect continuous-time dynamics, the setting of discrete-time was his favourite and formidable forte. Acutely sensitive to the role of prices on allocation and decentralization, he showed no hesitation in working on challenging problems that he regarded as fundamental, irrespective of their current professional popularity. A craftsman of the highest degree, a mathematical economist's economist, his striking and decisive examples had as much an impact on serious economic scholarship as did his theorems and his proofs. To repeat, his pen unified the literature, opened up new directions and invariably redefined the state of the art.

In all of his pursuits, Tapan Mitra displayed an uncommon level of grace, kindness, and sincerity, with a never-failing emphasis on the positive. His sixtieth birthday was celebrated in a conference at Cornell, the proceedings of which were published in the *International Journal of Economic Theory* in 2010. His loss is a loss not only to his students and his co-authors, the line between the two not always clear in this case, but surely also to substantive and advanced economic theory. The authors of this obituary mourn, undoubtedly with many others, the passing of a friend and an example. As one poet said of another,

Thou in our wonder and astonishment  
Hast built thy self a live-long monument

M. Ali Khan and Mukul Majumdar  
February 10, 2019