

*Professor Asoke Nath Mitra*  
*A tribute in a few words*



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## *A.N. Mitra: Our revered teacher*

- Perhaps what I say is shared by the entire bunch (~10) of students who had joined Delhi University for M.Sc, after our undergraduate education at Presidency College, Kolkata got horribly vitiated.
- We had heard a lot about Prof. Mitra and his research accomplishments. Now we would have him as a teacher.
- He taught us QM III (Relativistic QM) and QM IV (QED).
- Prof. Mitra's teaching style was unique.
- If he meticulously prepared for the lectures, it did not show. It was as if we were in a joint exploration to derive a result from the basics.
- When the final result was accomplished, *he* seemed as thrilled as ourselves about the outcome. We learnt to calculate!

## *M.Sc Project Viva-Voce*

- My M.Sc. project was on 'The Goldstone Boson and Symmetry Breaking' under the supervision of Prof. Kamal Datta (1973).
- I struggled with several published papers and wrote up the project report, never grasping the subject satisfactorily.
- I wonder how the viva-examiner was chosen! For me the examiner would be Prof. A.N. Mitra. I was completely terrified!
- The Viva-Voce exam was in the office of ANM, with Prof. Kamal Datta also present.
- Prof. Mitra was not harsh at all. But he probed deeply about my understanding of 'spontaneous symmetry breaking', which was, I feel now, quite cursory.
- ANM was nonetheless generous, as always, in giving a good grade!

## *Later in life*

- We knew that Professor A.N. Mitra had made fundamental contributions on the three-body problem. He was regarded as an authority on the Quark Model.
- But we hardly knew his stature in the broad arena of particle physics. This we learnt as we gradually entered research.
- After my doctoral studies abroad, I chose to return to India and took up a teaching position at Calcutta University.
- I was confused whether it was the correct decision. When I met Prof. Mitra next he was highly supportive and I knew immediately that I had decided right.
- I had the fortune to meet him later at Delhi U and elsewhere when he was always encouraging in my endeavours. My belief is that he was happy to see me at the helm of the Harish-Chandra Research Institute later.

## *A few correspondences*

On my return to Calcutta U after a stint at the Harish-Chandra Research Institute (this is what ANM wrote):

Dear Amitava,

May 20, 2011 11:00 pm

Congrats ! This looks like the right place for you, inasmuch as a Palit Professorship is any day a higher position than the directorship of an institute. Of course my ``claims" on your success continue unabated, and they will take many forms at different times.

Best regards

ANM

## *J.N. Mitra Scholarship at Calcutta U*

Dec 04, 2013 5:10 am

dear Amitava,

perhaps you would recall that you had once very kindly agreed to ack as my representative in connection with a scholarship in the memory of my father (prof jatindranath mitra) for post graduate studies in physics/math at Calcutta University. I wonder if it is still continuing, as i have no news about it from calcutta U for quite a few years. One reason could be that that the fund is noe regarded as inadequate. would you mind checking with CU about its current status ? .If the reason is inadequacy of funds, what is the minimum amount needed for its continuance ?

I shall be most grateful if you kindly let me know how much extra should be paid for its continuance. Hope you do not mind the inconvenience.

thanks and best regards

ANM

# *J.N. Mitra Scholarship at Calcutta U*

Respected Sir,

Dec 04, 2013 8:50 am

It is always an encouragement to receive a mail from you.

Please give me one week time to check and get back to you. Whatever may be the reason, the University ought to have informed the donor or his representative.

Warm personal regards,

Amitava

# *J.N. Mitra Scholarship at Calcutta U*

Respected Sir,

Dec 04, 2013 5:33 pm

I have checked with the University that the Professor Jatindra Nath Mitra Scholarship is being granted to students from the Departments of Applied Mathematics, Mathematics, and Physics by rotation.

I have asked them to send to you (and me) the names of the recipients of the scholarship in the last four years.

Warm personal regards,

Amitava



## *Concluding thoughts*

- Professor Asoke Nath Mitra was an ideal example of an academic. He was a motivating teacher, an eminent researcher, and a role model for his students.
- He kept track of how his ex-students were developing in later life and continued to help them in their career path. I learnt from him physics and much, much more!

