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## The Papers of Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar

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### Introduction

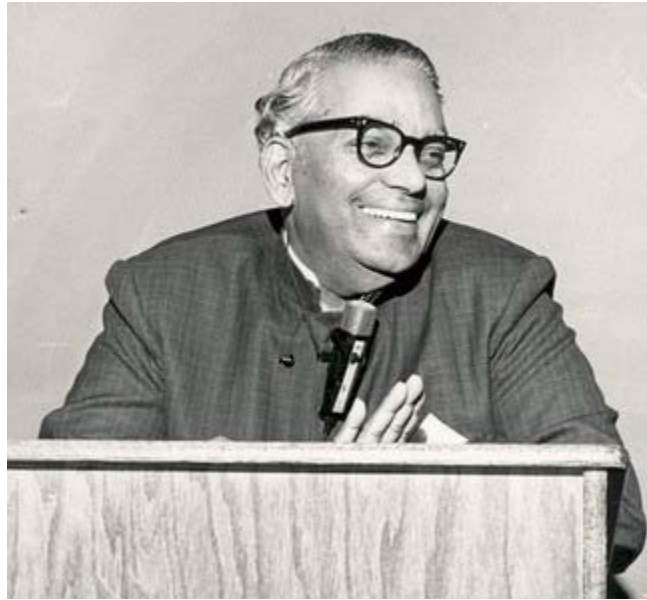
The staff at the Ward M. Canaday Center at the University of Toledo is completing its work to organize the papers of Dr. Sripati Chandrasekhar, founding editor of *Population Review*. The papers, which were donated to the Center by Chandrasekhar's family in 2002, will be available to researchers by the end of this year. The collection consists of nearly 100 linear feet of material documenting all aspects of his life and work.

As readers of this journal likely know, Chandrasekhar was a well-known international demographer, economist, sociologist, and scholar. He spent his life advocating population control for his native India, because he believed that was the best way to improve the country's economy and protect its fragile hold on democracy. He struggled to educate the Indian people on family planning methods, particularly striving to spread the word to the remote villages throughout the country. He supported abortion for women and sterilization for men, and promoted artificial birth control methods and the use of contraceptives such as the pill and IUD. Many of his views were considered controversial, and he often faced considerable opposition, particularly in rural areas of the country where large families were seen as an economic necessity.

Chandrasekhar, or Chandra as he was known to friends, was born in 1918 in Rajahmundry, India, one of six children of Sripati Sarangapani and Bavanula Rajamma. He attended Vorhees High School in Vellore, India, and Madras Presidency College, where he wrote his first paper on India's population problems. "From then on," Chandrasekhar said, "I lived and breathed demography." In 1938 he graduated with a B.A. in economics, followed by an M.A. the next year. In 1940 he traveled to New York City and attended Columbia University and New York University, where he studied demography, sociology, and statistics. In 1944 he earned a Ph.D. in Sociology from New York University, having written his dissertation on India's population problems.

After completing his education, he lectured on India's economic and social problems at The University of Pennsylvania, and in 1945 worked as an expert in Indian demography for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services. From 1945 to 1947 he traveled around the U.S. promoting India's political independence from Great Britain. In June 1947 he married Ann Downes, an American Quaker from New Jersey, and shortly thereafter returned to India to accept an appointment as professor and chair of the Economics Department at Annamalai University. In 1948 he went to Paris and served as director of demographic research for UNESCO. In 1950 he started the Indian Institute for Population

Studies (IIPS) and from 1951 to 1955 was professor and chair of the Economics Department at the University of Baroda. Beginning in 1953, Chandrasekhar spent two years at the London School of Economics as a Nuffield Fellow in demography, and attended international conferences. From 1956 to 1957 he focused his efforts again on the IIPS, and the next year traveled through communist China studying its population and social and economic trends. From 1959 to 1960, Chandrasekhar lectured in various



**Dr. Chandra giving a lecture**

countries around the world, returning to the United States as a visiting professor of Economics at the University of Pittsburgh in 1961, and lecturing across the country in 1962. From 1964 to 1965 he served as visiting professor of Demography at the University of California-Riverside and delivered National Science Foundation lectures.

In April 1964, Chandrasekhar was elected to the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of India's parliament) as a member of the Indian National Congress Party representing Madras. In this capacity he was able to promote population control measures on the parliamentary level. He was so successful in getting his message heard that three years later Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed him Union Minister of Health and Family Planning. As Minister he launched a massive campaign to promote smaller families and proposed a "cafeteria approach" to birth control for women. Eventually his campaign included advocating for compulsory sterilization for men with large families, but this measure was unsuccessful as it was considered too drastic. He also advocated delaying the age of marriage, improving education for girls, and letting women join the workforce.

Chandrasekhar often met with world leaders to discuss and advise them on the issues of population control, and to gain support for India's programs. In January 1968 he met with U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson, who assured him that although the country was



**Dr. Chandra and LBJ in the White House**

cutting back on foreign aid, it would continue to support India's family planning program. That same year he was elected chairman of the International Association for Voluntary Sterilization.

From 1971 to 1975 Chandrasekhar taught sociology and demography at various U.S. institutions, including the University of California-Los Angeles. In 1975, he returned to India and became Vice Chancellor of Annamalai University. He spent the last 20 years of his life traveling around the world teaching, lecturing, and attending conferences on population control.

For his life's work, Chandrasekhar saw the average number of babies born to Indian women reduced from six to three, but better living conditions and improved health care resulted in longer life spans, effectively nullifying the reduction in the birth rate. Today, India's population level remains dangerously high.

Chandrasekhar died June 14, 2001, in San Diego, California.

Chandrasekhar accumulated a vast amount of material during his lifetime. His papers have been divided into seven major categories: correspondence, records of the Indian Institute for Population Studies (IIPS) and *Population Review*, Chandrasekhar's writings and speeches, photographs, biographical material, printed material, and research files. As work on organizing the collection continues, additional sections may be added. Most of the material in the collection is in English, however a small portion is in Tamil or Teluga, languages of the region of Chandrasekhar's origin, and a few other scattered languages.

The correspondence files cover the years 1938 to 2000, with a large concentration occurring during the late 1960s and 1970s. Chandrasekhar communicated with many well known personalities during his life, and his collection includes letters from such notable figures as Indira Gandhi, Zakir Husain, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Henry Kissinger, Pearl Buck, Margaret Sanger, and Al Gore. The vast majority of the correspondence documents his day-to-day business and professional life, but it also offers a glimpse into his personal life through the letters and cards of family members and close personal friends.

The materials on the Indian Institute for Population Studies (IIPS) and *Population Review* document the history of IIPS from 1950-1981, and the journal for the years 1949-1950, and 1955-2000. It is composed of editor's files, correspondence, and government reports and communiqués. This is where the researcher will find material such as unpublished manuscripts, promotional materials, and IIPS membership lists.

Throughout his entire life Chandrasekhar was a prolific writer, publishing over 30 books and hundreds of articles. The collection's category of papers, articles, and speeches, contains a large amount of this work, some of it in published and printed format, while some remains in typescript and manuscript format. In addition to book manuscripts and articles, this section contains the text

of speeches and addresses, conference papers, and other material he wrote during the years 1937 to 1996. Much of his written work covers the topics of population control, family planning, and birth control. However, he also wrote about many other subjects, including migration, Indian culture and history, environmental and health issues, and food production and nutrition. There is a tribute to Indira Gandhi, an article about Chandrasekhar's meeting with Mahatma Gandhi, several articles on China's population, and even a typescript of a short article he submitted to *Reader's Digest's* "Life in These United States."

The photographs and photographic materials include numerous images of Chandrasekhar at various ages, and recall some of the major events in his life, people he



**Dr. Chandra in his office in La Jolla**

met, and places he visited. Friends, family, and acquaintances are also represented here, including several well-known personalities. In addition to photographs of his wife, children, and siblings, there is a photograph of Chandrasekhar's father, Sripati Sarangapani Naidu. Among the significant events in his life documented here are his meeting with President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968, receiving the Kaufman Award and his visit to Hungary, both in 1969, and numerous speeches and addresses he delivered. Well-known personalities represented in the photographs include Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Zakir Husain (autographed), Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Margaret Sanger, and former Michigan Governor George W. Romney. The series also contains photo albums documenting special events in his life. However, perhaps the most unique item to be found is a reel of 16 mm film showing Chandrasekhar's February 12, 1969, appearance on the *Today Show*, during which Joe Garagiola and Hugh Downs interviewed him on the subject of India's family planning program.

The biographical files contain a wide variety of material documenting Chandrasekhar's life and work, and cover the period from 1918 to 2000. This is where the researcher will find the notes, essays, and snippets he had begun recording in preparation for writing his autobiography.

Material such as biographical articles from magazines and newsletters, press clippings and releases, and his curriculum vitae, provide additional detail. Items such as his awards and honorary degrees, diaries, appointment calendars, travel itineraries, and mementos allow a personal and sentimental glimpse into his life.

The printed material is composed of published and professionally printed matter Chandrasekhar gathered in the course of his research. This section includes newspaper clippings, newsletters, newspapers, article reprints, pamphlets, government publications, conference materials, journals and magazines, and maps, and covers a range of subjects too numerous to list.

The research files are composed of research notes and remnants of material not placed elsewhere in the collection. Currently, there are major divisions for these topics: Birth Control and Family Planning, Population and Demographics, Women, Abortion, Alaska, Canada, China, and the Indian Diaspora. Additional categories may be added at a later date. There is also a miscellaneous subject containing notes and remnants on various topics.

In addition to the manuscript materials, the University of Toledo was also given Chandrasekhar's personal library. It, also, contains material on a wide variety of subjects, and is currently in the process of being assessed and catalogued. Unique items will be added to the Canaday Center's rare book collection, while the more general items will



**Entrance to The Ward M. Canaday Center**

become part of the University Library's circulating collection.

This collection will serve as an important resource for a wide variety of researchers. Demographers interested in world population, and historians interested in family planning and public policy related to population control, are likely to be the most frequent users. However, students of women's history and status, migration and assimilation, and India's history, culture, and religion, will also find using this collection of great use. In the future, we plan to promote the collection on the Canaday Center's

Website (<http://www.cl.utoledo.edu/coll/canaday.html>) and hope to digitize selected portions and make them available on the Internet. Persons interested in more information about the papers should contact Kimberly Brownlee, Manuscripts Librarian, Ward M. Canaday Center, University of Toledo, for more information. Telephone 419-530-5578, [kbrownl@utnet.utoledo.edu](mailto:kbrownl@utnet.utoledo.edu).

#### **Commentary by Dr. Daniel M. Johnson, President, University of Toledo**

In the mid-1990's, I was Dean of the School of Community Service at the University of North Texas. Following a chance visit, I invited Chandrasekhar to be a Distinguished Visiting Professor

of Demography and Sociology. Because I, too, am a demographer, I was very familiar with the work of Chandrasekhar from my days as a graduate student when I conducted research on the population problems of India. Chandra accepted the invitation and taught graduate seminars and gave lectures on India's populations and world population problems during his year at the University of North Texas.

Chandrasekhar and I developed a strong and meaningful friendship that lasted until Chandra's death. We talked often about the need for demography education, Chandra's continuing work on the "history of women in India," and other papers and presentations that occupied him until the last few weeks of his life. When I moved to Alaska in 1997 to become provost at the University of Alaska Anchorage, we continued our correspondence and telephone conversations.

I learned a great deal about demography and India from my friend, Chandra. We spent many hours talking about future projects and, particularly, the importance of keeping population in check in order to advance the quality of life around the world. Chandra was clearly a "demographer-statesman."

### **References**

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