

Ashish Bose was a Renaissance man

Professor Rakesh Batabyal JNU

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Ashish Bose 1930-2014

With the death of Ashish Bose, India's foremost demographer, the academic community has lost one of its shining members who not only taught well and researched well but also talked to the powers that be: An inalienable quality of an intellectual.

Born in 1930, Bose spent his formative years in Kolhapur and then moved to Delhi to **study at the Delhi School of Economics**. He was one of the first demographers in India: The country had the world's second largest population and so became the field for all sorts of theory building and data crunching by foreigners.

Bose, more than anybody else, gave a special dimension to Indian demography by providing it with a human face: He linked it to the larger developmental debate.

Bose symbolised this in the area of demography the most. During the family planning campaign in the early 1970s, he had his first brush with US experts who presented a solution: Advertising the family planning logo on the elephants walking through villages. In his typical sharp and witty fashion, Bose called it an 'asinine solution to an elephantine problem' and stopped such idiotic attempts.

This was quintessential Bose who could explain a problem in a few words: It is this uncanny ability that made him coin the term Bimaru states to convey the fact that the most-populous states did very badly when it came to social indices and he wanted the political leadership, in this case Rajiv Gandhi, to take note and initiative.

He was concerned about the regional and gender differences and it was his ability to smell things from his field surveys that led to **Darkness at Noon: Female Foeticide in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh**.

The monograph made the crisis public and indicated the skewed developmental processes.

Bose was a quintessential Renaissance person: sought solutions to major problems..