

Carol Leonard, Fellow in Russian Studies, St. Antony's College, Oxford University

Evidence of Padma's influence lies in the honor of this event. I look around; I see her economic work lauded, her publications in prestigious journals, and her well-reviewed books. I speak for her work as an area studies specialist, where she is a major figure. I have been influenced by her insight about Russia, her long and deep engagement in the country's problems. Concentration in the Russian area frequently comes from literature: "I grew up reading the masters, she said to Richard Pipes in conversations - Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Chekov, and Turgenev." Her enthusiasm was infectious, indeed a little hard to keep up with. "What do you think of Boris Akunin?" she asked him, "Have you read any of his novels?" "I can't say," Professor Pipes responded. Her interest would go beyond literature and economics. Her range, as we all know, is vast, even for area studies. In conversations she focuses on the economy but she crosses disciplines and mine fields. She asks, "What are the meaning of freedoms under Putin?" She asks about ethics, of reform, of the ends and means problem in historical perspective of Russia. Her range goes where she tells it to go. She seeks mastery, continually, of new material. To steal a line from Woody Allen, who is at tune with nature, Padma is at tune with herself. Part of her knows that she knows a great deal. But part of her isn't quite satisfied.

Before Russia, she worked on the Indian economy. But she never quite left it. She would lead various interviews and conversations toward India. "India..." she would start. Strobe Talbott said, "Yes?" "India in the early days..." Her years of very great distinction have also been those spent as a specialist on the Soviet and Russian market economy – many major books, many major articles. She wrote about planning productivity, about grain production. Her article in 1992 in the *American Economic Review* was a major work on agricultural reform. Her assessment of the role of the weather factor in Russian yield performance has particular importance. She served as a consultant for international agencies – Food Policy Research Institute in Washington, the FAO, the Ford Foundation, WIDER, UNU, on Soviet-Russia grain imports. Between books on Russia, she wrote about financial contagion. It was after that, or during that, or even before that, as she was pondering political economy that she focused on decision-making and decision-makers in transition. This recent book, based on a powerful and important set of interviews, with particularly perceptive Russian and American statesmen and scholars, turned into *Conversations on Russia*.

On a personal note, I met Padma in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she was a research associate at the then Russian Research Center and an advisor to these various institutes and international organizations. I was sometimes able to attend the Wednesday economics seminars that Marshall organized, and Padma often spoke. When I met her, I was a social historian of Russian serfdom. I had some acquaintance with economic history. I was an early stage economist, I guess. I had met Joe Berliner, and he said that because of our shared interests that she was someone with whom I should be speaking. His remark underscored the hugely improbable to me, that the two of us should share an interest in Russian grain production. And it was very thrilling. We arranged a lunch at the Center. I recall first her sensationally elegant entrance and her gracious respect for me. We had much to talk about but I recall that she spoke about rural markets in India. Her comparative approach seemingly set

even my narrow historical problems in a very large context. I thought about development and markets and urbanization and the persistence of rural dilemmas.

Later that month, I invited her with her family to dinner. I remember Anu. And I first met her distinguished husband, Jagdish. As time went on, I followed her into the 20th century, and I began to study grain production in Russia and reforms of the agrarian regime. As I came to know her better, I became a great admirer of particular qualities, which I celebrate with you: Of course, the foundation of her work – perfectionism. Her historical sense, her exceedingly careful use of data combined with a blackboard sense of economics. She examines her theory and then she works on the empirical side. I admire her savvy. She simultaneously conceives of a research topic and the resources required to do it, that is, to do it well. One thinks of many works which show that rigorous research base. She demonstrated the continued relevance of weather as a factor in late Soviet agriculture with the implications of a weak technological base of agricultural production. She wrote about work without wages, that early transition experience. And she recently wrote, of course, in the same close analytic and empirical form, using an impulse function to analyze Russian monetary phenomenon.

Padma's approach, her capacity, can be described with the high praise Jane Austin would bestow on particular pianists who take the pain to aspire to true excellence. Of all these traits, the one that has particularly fascinated me, however, is her fearlessness. She is gifted with the courage of her convictions and she has the power to express them - force of candor, but without offense. But now I have come to understand something of the extraordinary journey by which she comes to these qualities. This is a story she will tell us in print some day. One episode she may allow me – and I repeat here with emphasis because this is about influence – that her student told us the same story this afternoon over lunch, that she had completed the University of Bombay, graduating with a *summa cum laude*, the very best in her class. And she argued to those who designed to give her her grant that she would go only to Harvard and not to the women's college, to which they wanted to send her. She wanted to compete, she said, against the best, all of the best, regardless of gender – fearless but not aggressive. She came to work with me in Russia in 1995 at the Ministry of Finance to advise the deputy minister for agriculture and food processing on creating a market based budget. She stayed for two months. Her warmth was appreciated, and her clarity and comprehension of the Russian space of knowledge was invaluable. The task of conveying principles of state support in a market economy to members of the Department of Agriculture and Food Processing in the Ministry of Finance and Industry can scarcely be described. I remember some moments of frustration. But I remember the friendships that she struck up. Not aggressive – well, sometimes maybe a little aggressive. It was in her interview with Chubais. She said, "Ultimately, the public felt cheated. What in your view, were the gains of privatization?" Then, "I did not hear the question." She then moved to ends and means, and after he gave a fairly non-committal philosophic paragraph or two, "Give me an example," she said. "I can't think of an example," he said.

Finally, let me now share with you her willingness to share with us matters of the heart. And that includes nationhood, the sense of country – the country she chose to study, Russia, and her sense of the country where she gained citizenship, the U.S. Leaders inspire their nations, which she well understood. Nations have the lion's heart, Churchill once said, and great leaders roar. She chose to give voice to both nations through the reflections of these senior figures about what had been accomplished and why. She had the wit and the knowledge and the courage to venture successfully into this territory. And like all great writers, she kept her own perspective. Thank you, Padma.