

**Conference & Dinner in Honor of Padma Desai (Bhagwati)'s Lifetime
Achievements
April 26, 2007
5:30 pm – 9:15**

**Remarks from President Lee C. Bollinger
TO BE READ IN ABSENTIA BY THE EMCEE**

In Padma Desai's toast to her husband, Jagdish Bhagwati, on his 70th birthday, she noted, "All I can say is that sheer good luck combined with an independent spirit and determination to chase ideas, with Jagdish as a stimulating intellectual companion, has brought me where I am."

This determination to pursue ideas has led to an extraordinary body of work and an expertise on Russia and the Soviet Union that forms a critical voice in our understanding of this international power and its economic development. This conference in honor of your career is a testament to the global significance of your work, from comparative economics to Soviet reform. As director of the Center for Transition Economies here at Columbia, your leadership has created a space where--like this conference--leading scholars can explore issues central to a world in rapid transition.

For my generation, which grappled with questions of social justice, the dominant framework we used to address the problems of our time was the law. For today's generation, it is economics. At Columbia we are fortunate to be a leading force in applying this discipline to the challenges of global citizenship and Professor Desai's analyses continue to form weighty contributions to this dialogue.

In her birthday tribute to Jagdish, Padma referred to her husband as "a particle" because, according to the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, you cannot know a particle's velocity and location at the same time. Though we know your location now, Padma, you too seem always in motion, and Columbia is fortunate to have captured you in our small, but growing, orbit.

Thank you for 27 years of scholarship, teaching, and leadership at Columbia.