

Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI
DECEMBER 2004

TRIDIB KUMAR CHAUDHURI

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PREFACE

An outstanding leader of modern India, Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri was a versatile personality. He was a renowned freedom fighter, fearless political activist, eminent parliamentarian, committed revolutionary, a champion of the working class, and a prolific writer. A grateful nation honours the memory of Shri Tridib Chaudhuri on 3 December 2004 when the Hon'ble Vice-President of India and Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, will unveil his portrait in the Parliament House. We are grateful to the Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Shri Somnath Chatterjee, for his inspiring guidance in organising this function.

The portrait, painted by the eminent artist, Shri Ajoy Saha, has been donated by Shri Amalender Lal Roy, Minister of Irrigation, Government of West Bengal. We are indebted to him for donating his portrait. We are also thankful to Shri Aboni Roy, MP, for providing us with several photographs included in this booklet as also some relevant literature on Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri.

To mark the occasion, the Lok Sabha Secretariat is also bringing out this booklet containing the profile of Tridib Chaudhuri and some select photographs. We hope it will be found useful and informative.

New Delhi,
December, 2004

G.C. MALHOTRA,
Secretary-General,
Lok Sabha

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TRIDIB KUMAR CHAUDHURI

- A Profile -



Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri
(13 December 1911 – 21 December 1997)

A veteran freedom fighter, parliamentarian *par excellence* and legendary revolutionary socialist leader, Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri symbolised the golden era of Indian parliamentary politics. All through his life, he worked ceaselessly for the cause of the workers, farmers, and weaker sections of society. As a trade union leader, he always fought for the rights of the workers. He was also a gifted orator and a prolific writer. He distinguished himself in the nation's life with his single-minded devotion to the service of the country.

His Early Years

Born on 13 December 1911 in Dacca (now in Bangladesh), Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri was the son of Ganesh Govinda Chaudhuri and Tarubala Devi. His father belonged to a noted Chaudhuri family of Haripur in the district of Pabna in North Bengal (now in Bangladesh). The Chaudhuris of Haripur were a middle class family of landlords and lawyers. Ganesh Govinda was an Honours Graduate from the Calcutta University and had considerable interest in literature. Although he entered the State service, he always tried to preserve his contact with developing Bengali literary movements of those days and encouraged his family and children to engage in literary pursuits. Ganesh Govinda was posted in the district of Murshidabad in 1912. From that time onwards, he settled down in Murshidabad and eventually made Berhampore his home.

Thus, Tridib Kumar studied in various High Schools of Murshidabad. But he was relatively longer in the Krishnath Collegiate School of Berhampore. Always good in academics, he passed his Matriculation Examination in 1926 in the First Division from this school. He then entered the Krishnath College and passed the Intermediate Examination in Arts, also in the First Division.

The adolescent years and early youth of Tridib Kumar coincided with the outburst of the anti-imperialist, nationalist mass movement in India of the 1920's and 1930's in the shape of the Non-Cooperation and Civil Disobedience Movements under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. There was also a considerable resurgence of underground national revolutionary movement led by the Anushilan Samiti, Jugantar Party, Hindustan Republican

Army, etc. The literary pursuits encouraged by his father in the family and the nationalist and patriotic cultural milieu that pervaded the educated middle class in those days prepared Tridib Kumar's mind in the nationalist mould. He was soon drawn into the vortex of the national revolutionary movement even before he completed his collegiate education. In fact, he passed his B.A. Degree examination in 1933 and the M.A. examination in Economics in 1936, from the Calcutta University, while in detention.

A Valiant Freedom Fighter

By the year 1930, Tridib Kumar was inducted into the nationalist agitation as a worker of the local Congress organization and he was recruited, even as a high school student, as an active cadre of the Anushilan Samiti—an underground revolutionary organization of that time believing in armed struggle for the overthrow of the imperialist British rule from India. It was at this time that he came in personal contact with veteran revolutionary leaders of the underground movement like Pratul Ganguli, Maharaj Trailokya Chakravarty, Rabindra Mohan Sen and others. He also came close to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, both in connection with the Congress organization and revolutionary work. Already, between 1928 and 1930, Tridib Kumar was actively involved in the local unit of the revolutionary movement in Berhampore town as one of its youthful organizers and leaders. He went underground in 1930 soon after the Armoury Raid in Chittagong organized by the Bengal revolutionaries of the district in April 1930 and the promulgation of the Bengal Ordinance (later enacted as the Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1930) by the British Government for the detention in prison of suspected revolutionaries. He was arrested and detained in 1931 and kept in detention in the Hijli Detention Camp in the Midnapur district of Bengal near Kharagpur and then in the Deoli Detention Camp in Rajputana up to 1937.

The Influence of Revolutionary Ideology

The years of detention in the late 1930's were a period of re-education and ideological transformation for the revolutionaries. Most of them, including Tridib Kumar, came back after years of study and prolonged political discussion as convinced Socialists and Marxist-Leninists believing in class struggle and mass action. On release from detention in 1937, Tridib Kumar worked for about

two years as a Secretary in the office of the Bengal Congress Parliamentary Party. But his main political activity at that time was concerned with the transformation of the Anushilan Samiti into a mass and class-action-oriented Marxist Party.

After the ideological acceptance of Marxism and a socialist programme, the leaders of the Anushilan Samiti decided at first to join the then newly-formed Congress Socialist Party (CSP). This was about 1937-38. But soon differences arose between the Anushilan Marxists and the CSP leadership over the attitude to be taken towards the programme of the launching of an immediate struggle against British imperialism advocated by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, in the background of the impending Second World War and the approach towards unity with the Congress leadership. The Anushilan Marxists enthusiastically supported Netaji's line of uncompromising struggle and immediate action as against the official CSP line. The Second World War had in the meantime broken out in 1939 and political differences between the CSP and the Anushilan Marxists sharpened markedly. Eventually, in March 1940, the latter withdrew from the CSP and formed the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP) as an independent, non-conformist political party, separate both from the Communist Party and also the CSP. Tridib Kumar played a prominent part in the formation of the RSP.

Very soon after this, in 1940, Tridib Kumar and several other leaders of the newly-formed RSP and the Anushilan Marxists were arrested. He was detained under the Defence of India Rules by the British Government, along with Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The main charge against them was that they supported the anti-War and immediate-action line of Netaji against the British Government. Tridib Kumar was kept in detention as a security prisoner in the Hijli Special Jail and in the Dacca and Dum Dum Central Jails for six years during War time from 1940 to 1946.

His Political Philosophy

Tridib Chaudhuri advocated the Marxist-Leninist conception of Socialist working-class rule in politics, but at the same time he strongly upheld democratic and humanist values. According to him, Socialism means an economic organization of society where all social productive forces are brought under public social ownership and production is socially planned, controlled and directed for the satisfaction of social needs according to

predetermined social priorities, and not for individual profits. Under Socialism, the equal human rights of all members of society to enjoy a full life is recognized as a matter of course; but the right to any income (*i.e.*, the right to a share of the collectively produced social dividend or net national product) has to be earned by everybody by his work, by the performance of socially necessary labour, and not to be secured as a matter of right accruing from the proprietorship over the means of social production. As a committed socialist, he believed that 'He who shall not work, shall not eat' was the basic principle of Socialism. He was of the view that unearned private income in the form of rent, interest, profit, dividend on the share of joint-stock companies, etc. which come from ownership of private property, has no place in a socialist economic system.

Tridib Chaudhuri was fully convinced that an economy based on the institution of private property is the very antithesis of Socialism, just as Socialism is the antithesis of the system of private property. According to him, capitalism, as a social and economic order, is essentially based on the inviolability of the right to private property which cannot be taken away by anybody from its rightful owner except through voluntary alienation or by exchange on the free market or (if it is requisitioned by the State) on payment of just compensation. The fundamental law of every capitalist State guarantees every citizen the fundamental right to private property (provided he has any property to own). In his opinion, so long as such fundamental law prevails, Socialism in the true meaning of the term will remain a distant dream.

His Association with the Revolutionary Socialist Party

After Independence, Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri played his part in building up the Revolutionary Socialist Party, as the party's General Secretary as a non-conformist Marxist-Leninist party in India having no extra-territorial, ideological or political affiliations. According to Tridib Chaudhuri, Lenin's well-known dictum, "Without a revolutionary theory there cannot be a revolutionary party" also implies logically that "Without a revolutionary party there can be no revolutionary theory." This is to say, a revolutionary theory, howsoever correct it may be, cannot be worked out in actual practice if there is no party to unite revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice through its programme and to rally the masses behind it. He was of the opinion that in the India of the day, the correct revolutionary theory can only be a theory of

Proletarian Socialist Revolution as a prelude to the socialist transformation of India's socio-economic structure that had become historically urgent and unavoidable for solid socio-economic reasons. He believed that the only political 'practice' that can be recognized as correctly 'revolutionary' in that context is the 'practice' of working out and moving step by step directly towards a programme of Proletarian Socialist Revolution, towards seizure of State-power by the workers from the hands of the capitalist class and towards creating the necessary pre-conditions for a socialistic transformation of the country's economy and social structure.

Describing the role of the RSP, Tridib Chaudhuri observed:

"Historically, RSP has carried forward the glorious traditions of the old anti-imperialist and national revolutionary movement of India in the new phase of Left and Marxist-oriented toiling people's movement in the country. Today, the political situation and correlationship of class forces have become vastly changed since 'transfer of power' and national Independence.... The workers, peasants and other toilers have to be organized on lines of class struggle for the overthrow of capitalism and capitalist class rule for a socialist transformation of the economic and political structure of the country under the leadership of the working class. RSP has addressed to the best of its ability to the new revolutionary tasks that have come to the forefront in the current post-Independence phase of politics".

He further observed:

"...The RSP has sought to play its rightful part in the new political context of the post-Independence period in building up the united strength of Leftist and Marxist parties and a united front of these parties... As a Marxist-Leninist working class party, it has sought to derive political guidance from its own independent understanding of Marxist-Leninist ideology all these decades. The extent of success and the correctness of the political line that it has followed so far can be judged only by the future development of the socialist working class movement in India".

A Distinguished Parliamentarian

Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri was elected to the Lok Sabha from the Berhampore constituency in West Bengal for seven consecutive

terms and was a member of the Lower House from 1952 to 1984. Later, he became a member of the Rajya Sabha in July 1987 and again in August 1993 till his death on 21 December 1997. He was the leader of the RSP in Parliament.

During his tenure as a member of the First Lok Sabha, Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri participated in the Liberation Satyagraha Movement against Portuguese colonialism for the liberation of Goa. He entered Goa in July 1955 with a batch of volunteers and was arrested and sentenced by the Portuguese authorities for twelve years. He was, however, released after 19 months of imprisonment, just on the eve of the second election to the Lok Sabha in 1957. The then Prime Minister and Congress President Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, describing Tridib Chaudhuri as a 'National Hero', decided not to put up any Congress candidate against him in his constituency. In 1974, during his fifth term in Parliament, Tridib Chaudhuri was unitedly put up as a candidate for the office of the President of India by a majority of the Opposition parties. Though he lost the election, the contest attracted a good deal of admiration from the political public on account of the dignified way in which it was conducted on the basis of national issues. During the Emergency, he acted as a spokesman of parties opposed to the Emergency.

An outstanding parliamentarian, Tridib Chaudhuri evinced keen interest on a wide variety of subjects like workers and farmers' rights, independence of the Judiciary, international situation, rise in prices of essential commodities, etc. His speeches in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on a large number of national and international issues throw light on his thorough grasp of subjects, his analytical power, his grassroots understanding and his extraordinary high oratorical skill. He was a champion of the toiling millions and an ardent defender of the downtrodden and the oppressed. In fact, he fought for broadening the democratic rights and liberties of the people and all along he challenged and fought against any encroachment on them. This has been the running thread of all his speeches along with the content of anti-imperialism, social progress and friendship with socialist countries.

Tridib Chaudhuri was very active during the Question Hour in Parliament. He always used to put the Government on notice with penetrating questions. He raised Questions on subjects like unemployment, shortage of food, issues relating to employees of the tea industry, jute mills, workers' rights, foreign policy, agriculture policy, etc. He voiced people's concerns and sought the

redressal of their grievances on a wide array of subjects dear to his heart.

Tridib Chaudhuri was also a master of all parliamentary techniques and forms and he used all the possible openings—special mentions, calling attentions, half-an-hour discussions, adjournment motions, etc. to put across his points of view on varied issues. Besides, on major issues like foreign policy, President's Address, Finance Bill, Appropriation Bill and discussions on the working of various Ministries, he used to enliven the proceedings with his brilliant speeches laced with solid arguments. He also spoke time and again about the plight of the people in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), stressed their democratic and human rights and the need for India to mobilize world public opinion.

Tridib Chaudhuri shall be remembered for his well informed, authentic, thought-provoking and critical analysis of a wide array of issues, expressed on various occasions on the floor of both the Houses. The laborious and painstaking research which he used to undertake before coming to participate in the discussions, his deep and penetrating thoughts, his confidence and his straightforwardness all contributed to make him a distinguished parliamentarian. His practical ideas and concrete suggestions were listened to by the House with great respect. Dignified, soft-spoken and extremely courteous in his dealings with friends and opponents alike, Tridib Kumar was always held in high respect in the political circles.

An Eminent Trade Union Leader

A close friend and champion of the workers, labourers, peasantry, youth and students, Tridib Chaudhuri was associated with various trade unions and their welfare organizations. He held senior positions in the United Trade Union Congress (UTUC), which was the trade union wing of the RSP. He left no opportunity to raise forcefully on the floor of the House, matters like employment policies, rights of employees, recognition of trade unions, participation of workers in management, strike by trade unions, workers and their wages, uplift of the downtrodden, etc. On all such occasions, he spoke with considerable passion. Employment and labour issues received his particular attention.

His Literary Achievements

Besides being a skilful orator, Tridib Chaudhuri made his mark as a prolific writer too. One of Tridib Chaudhuri's principal

contributions had been to act as the spokesman of an independent and non-conformist Marxist point of view in the Leftist movement in Indian politics represented by the Revolutionary Socialist Party. He was the Editor of the Revolutionary Socialist Party's theoretical organ, *Call*. His memoirs on the Goa Satyagraha in Bengali '*Nineteen Months in Salazar's Prison*' evoked a good deal of popular interest in the late 1950's when it was first published. Along with Dr. Nihar Ranjan Roy, he was the Joint Editor of the well known Bengali literary-cultural monthly *Kranti* for several years. He also penned several political and polemical tracts expounding the RSP's points of view on the issues of the times. As a General Secretary of the RSP for more than three decades, he wrote two brochures: 'Why RSP?' (Historic Need for a Party of Socialist Revolution in India Today) in 1970 and '*Four and Half Decades of the RSP*' in 1985.

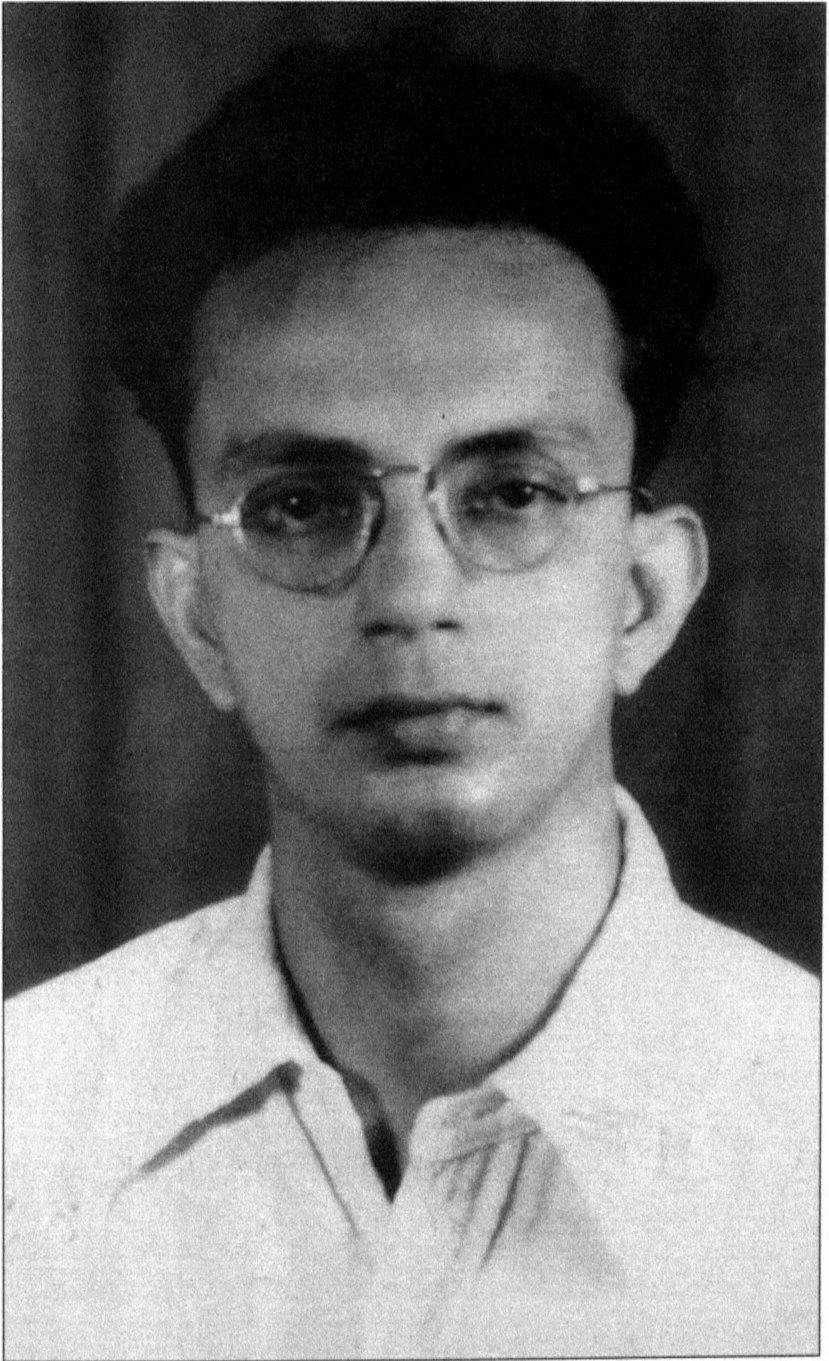
His death and tributes

Tridib Chaudhuri remained unmarried. In his dress and living habits he was a typical Bengali, generally moving about in simple *Dhoti* and *Kurta*. His general outlook of life and socio-religious affairs was scientific and secular, common to all Marxists.

Tridib Chaudhuri died on 21 December 1997 at the age of 86 when he was a member of Rajya Sabha and the leader of the RSP in the Parliament. The then President, Shri K.R. Narayanan, in a message, expressed shock and sadness over his death and recalled his role in the freedom movement. The then Prime Minister, Shri I.K. Gujral, condoling his death, described him as an able parliamentarian and a champion of the downtrodden. Paying rich tributes to Tridib Chaudhuri, the then Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Shri Krishan Kant, said: "In the passing away of Shri Tridib Chaudhuri, the country has lost a veteran freedom fighter and a distinguished parliamentarian". In his obituary reference to the passing away of Tridib Chaudhuri, the then *pro-tem* Speaker of Lok Sabha, Shri Indrajit Gupta, described him as a veteran freedom fighter, an able parliamentarian, a man of letters and active social worker who worked relentlessly for the uplift of the working class, the youth and the trade unions.

TRIDIB KUMAR CHAUDHURI

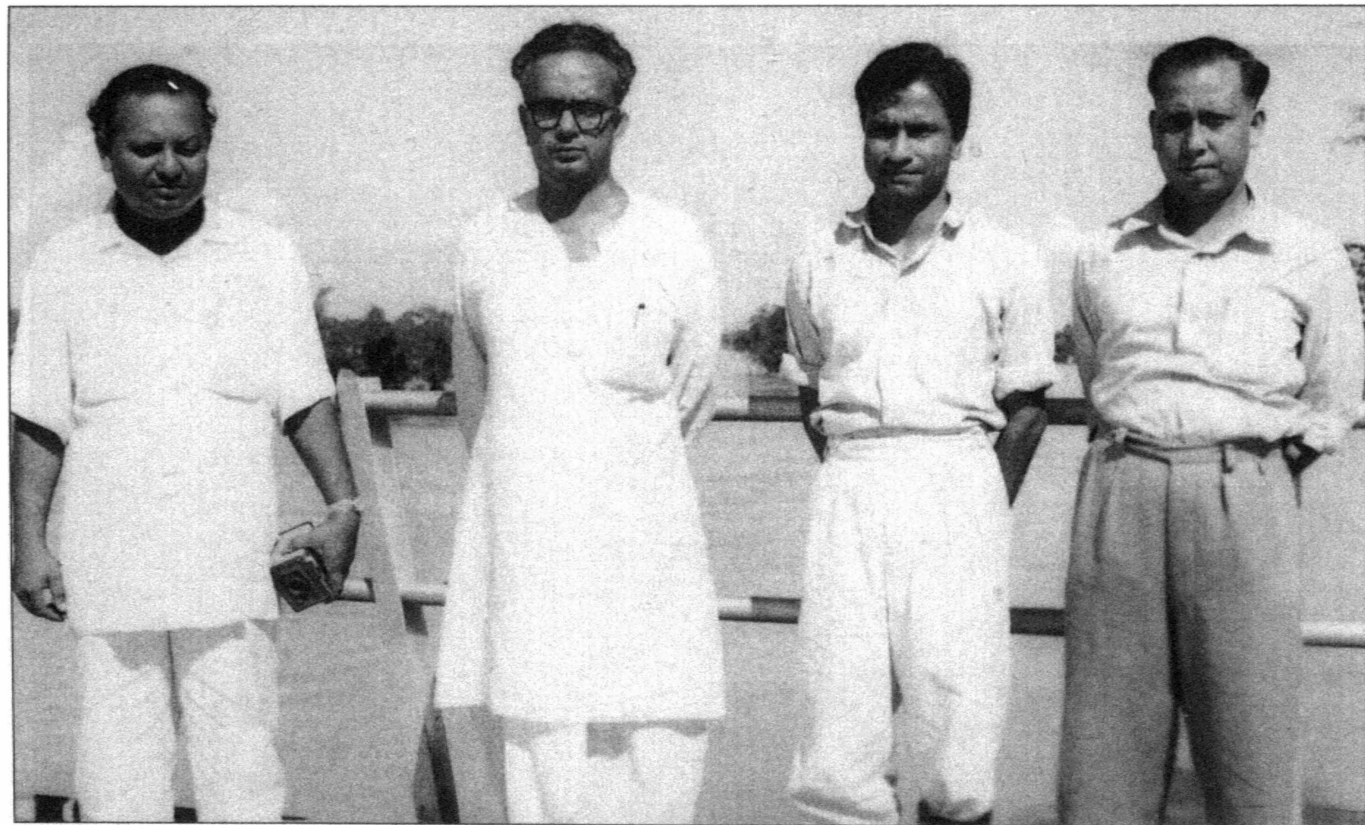
- A Pictorial Profile



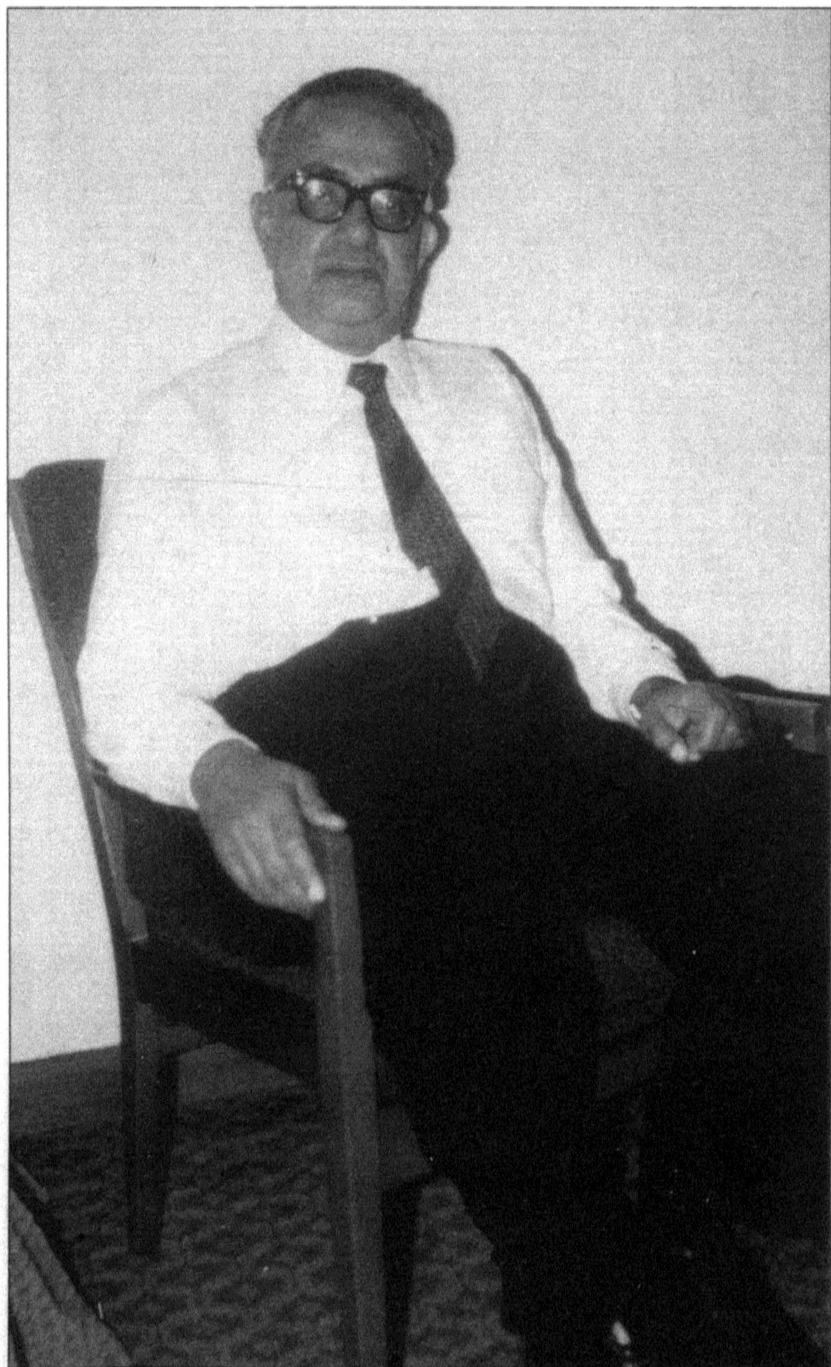
Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri in his early years



Tridib Chaudhuri in a pensive mood



Tridib Chaudhuri and co-workers during flood relief
work in Murshidabad (1953)



At St. Ermins Hostel in London during a visit to London (1972)



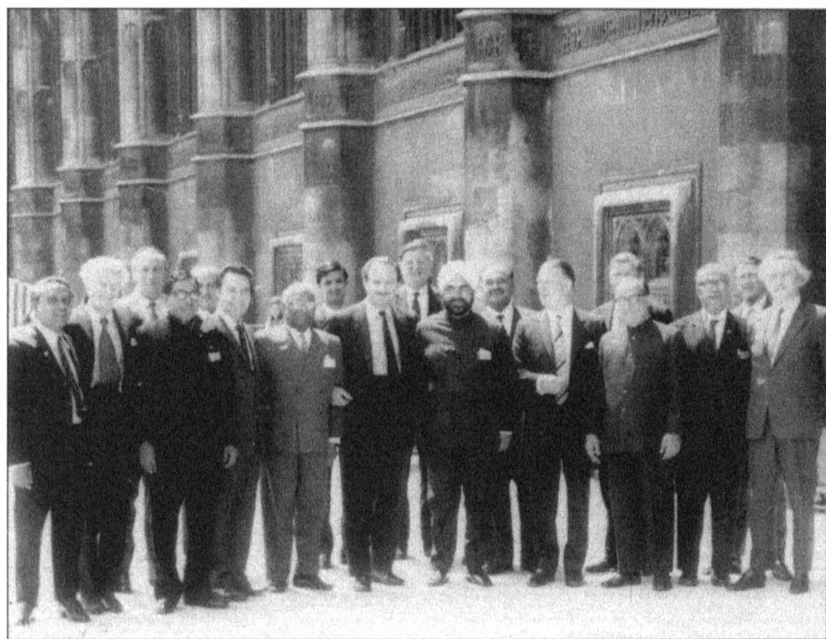
At the India Club, Yorkshire, London (1972)



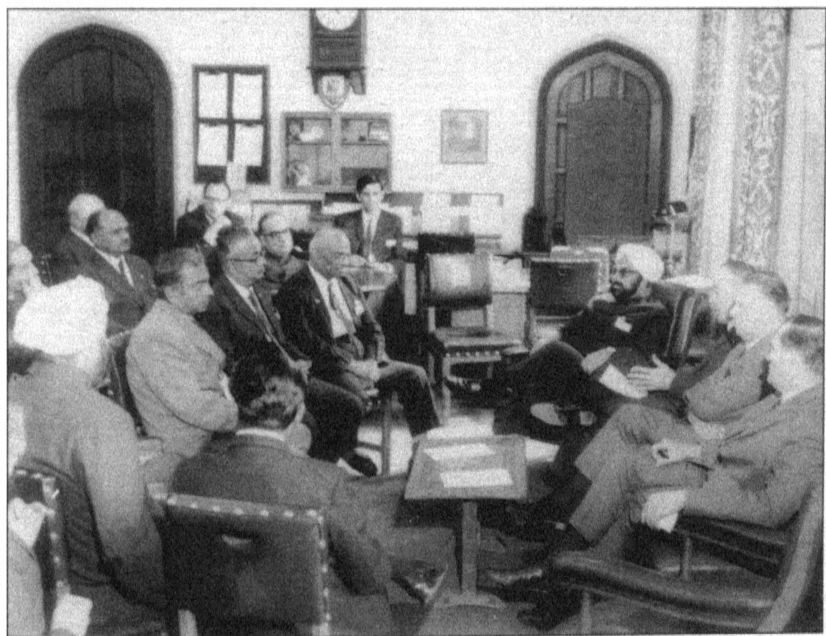
With friends in London



Tridib Chaudhuri and the then Lok Sabha Speaker
Dr. G.S. Dhillon in Russia (June-July 1974)



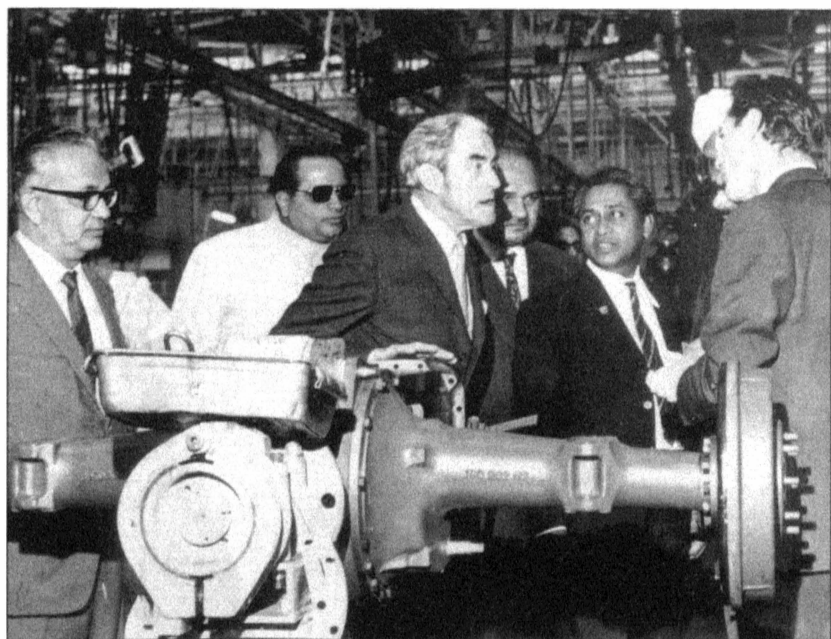
During his Russia visit (1974)



With Soviet Leaders (1974)



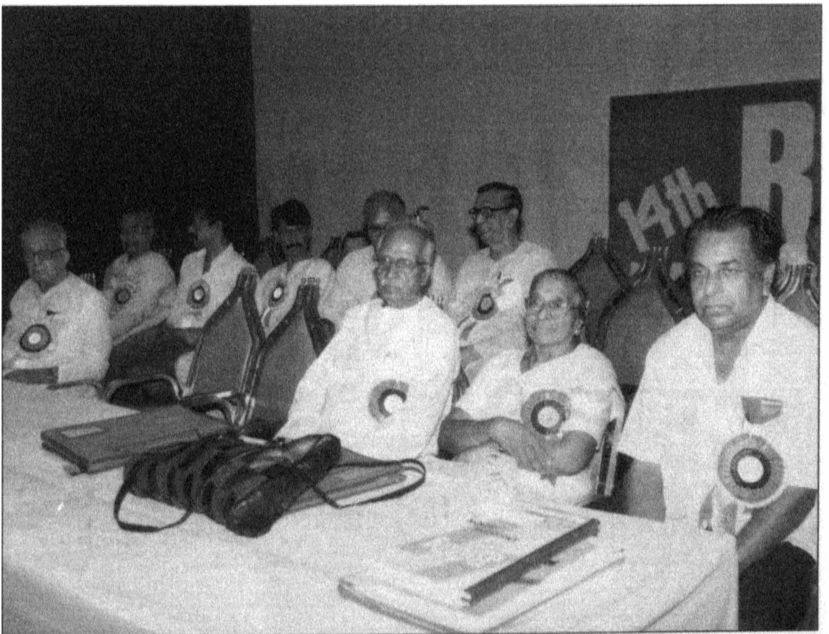
During his Russia visit (1974)



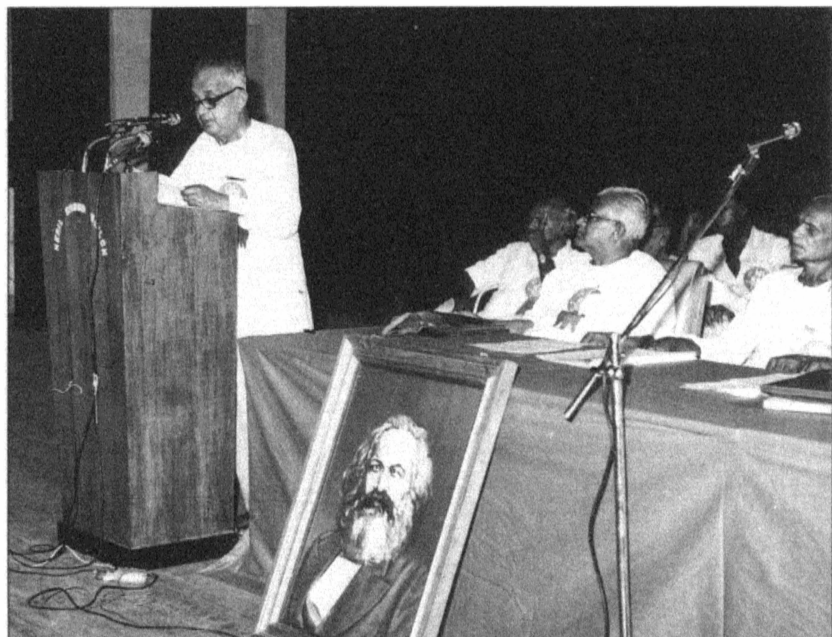
In an Industrial Complex in Russia (1974)



During his visit to Russia (1974)



With Party leaders at the 14th National Conference of the RSP at the Mavalankar Auditorium, New Delhi (1985)



Tridib Chaudhuri addressing a meeting with freedom fighter and Kisan leader Balrup Sharma and Pratul Chaudhuri (1986)



Addressing delegates at the RSP's National Conference, Quilon, Kerala



Paying homage to martyrs at Quilon, Kerala



With Party leaders at Quilon, Kerala



With the Central Committee members of the RSP



Taking salute from RSP workers at Trivandrum, Kerala



Leading a procession of RSP workers in Trivandrum



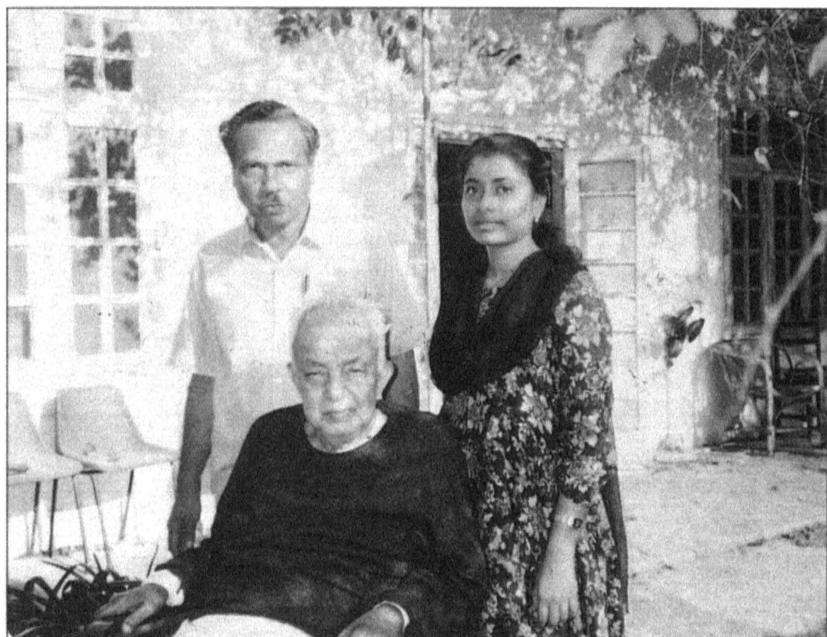
Paying homage to departed Comrades and martyrs in Trivandrum



With RSP leaders in Trivandrum .



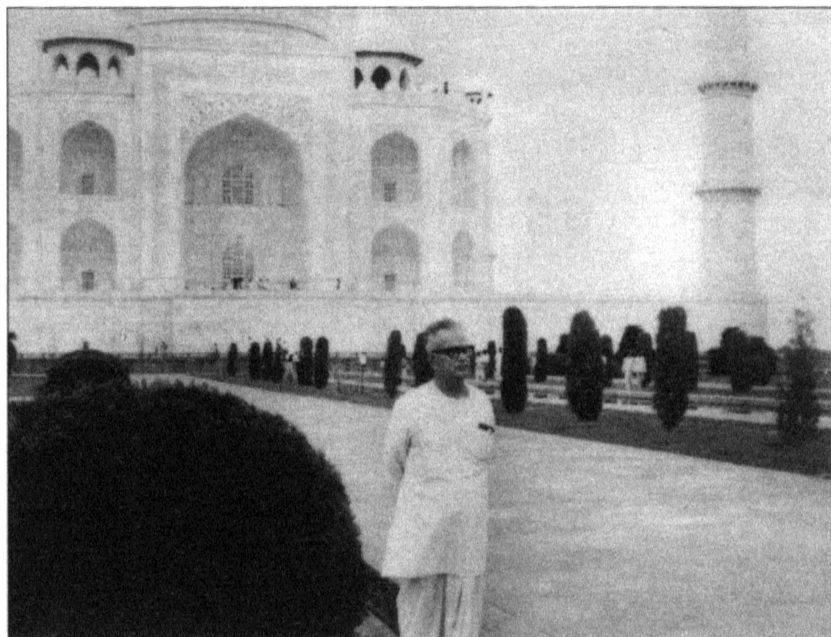
Addressing Party delegates in Trivandrum



Tridib Chaudhuri with Shri Aboni Roy, member, Rajya Sabha
and a student (1995)



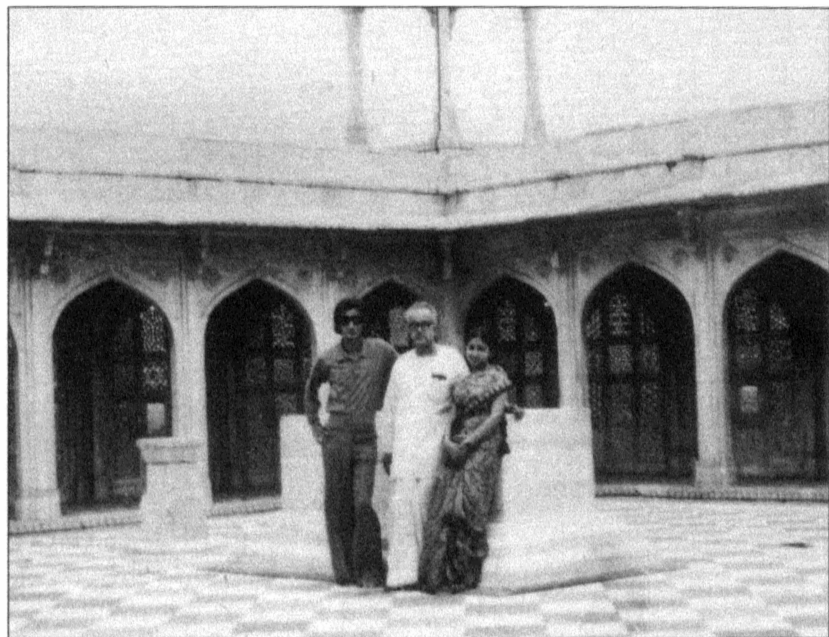
With RSP leader Shri Baby John



At the Taj Mahal (1976)



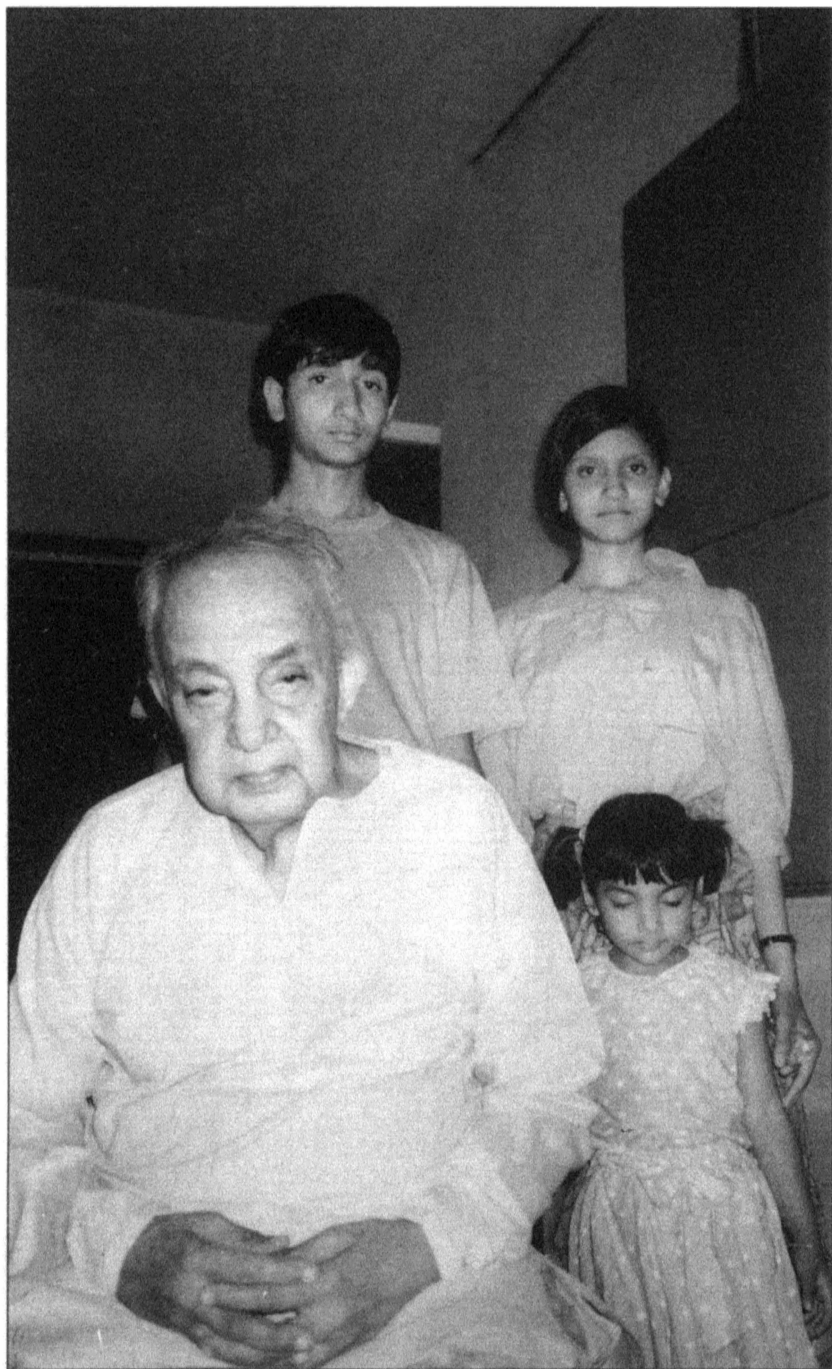
At the Taj Mahal with family members (1976)



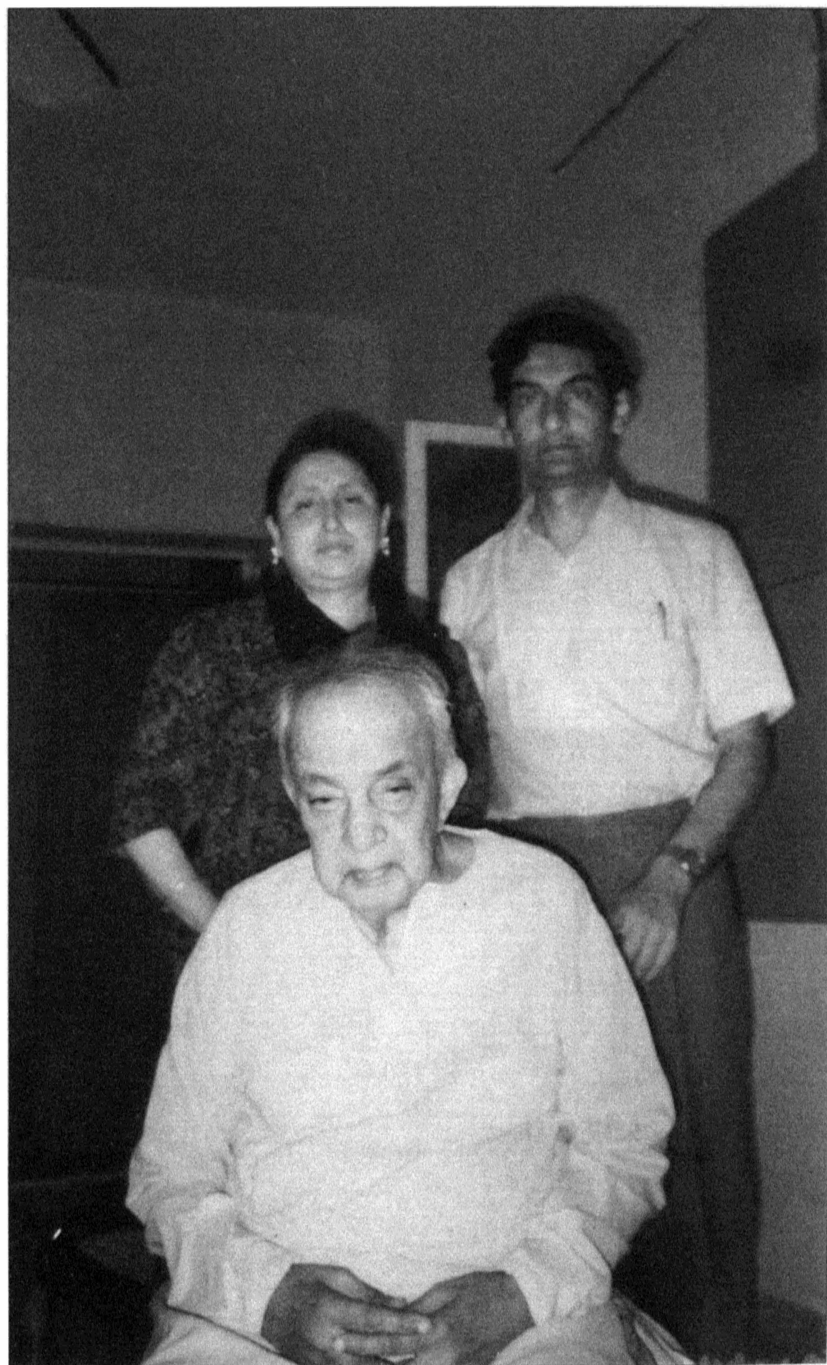
At Fatehpur Sikri (1976)



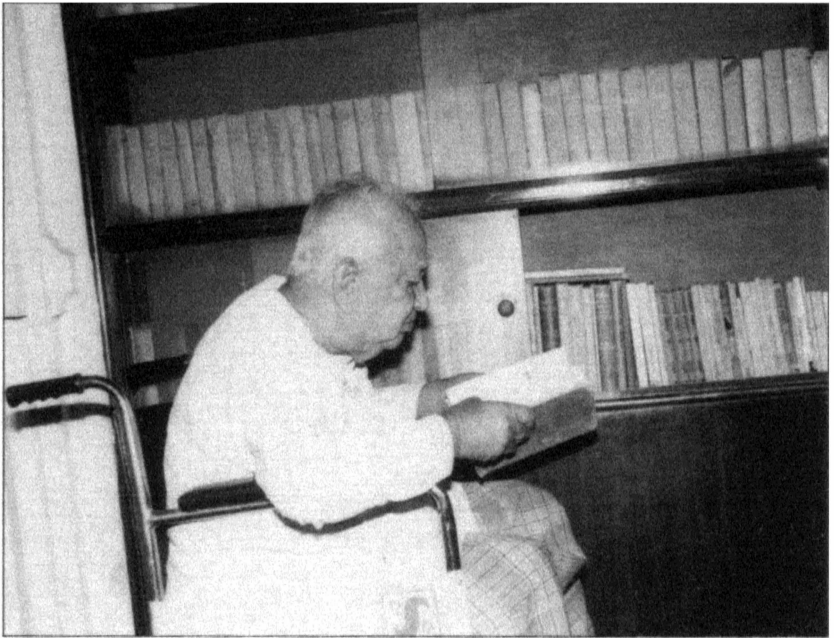
With his granddaughter (1981)



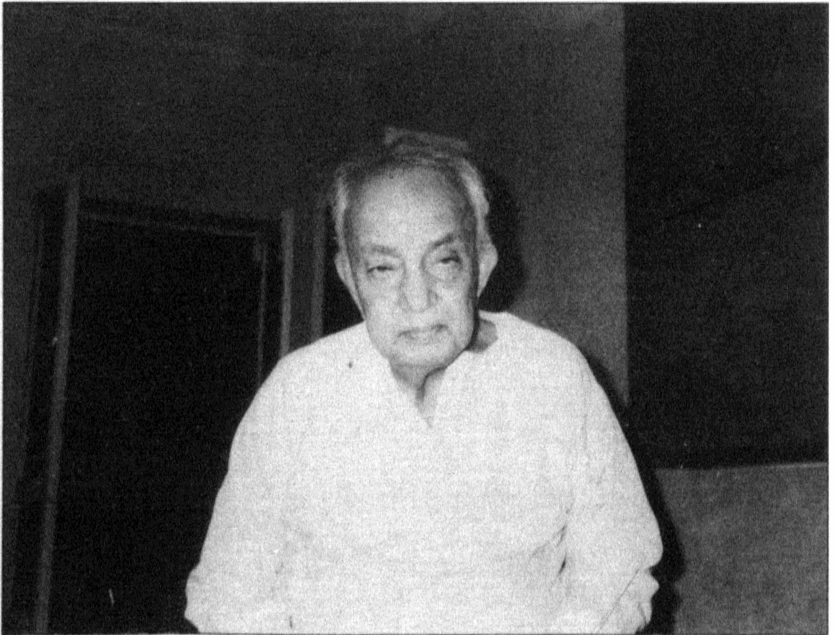
With his grandchildren (1995)



With Sarmistha Sanyal and her husband (1995)



In his Study



Tridib Kumar Chaudhuri in his old age