Prof. Kshitish Chandra Das succumbed to a massive myocardial infarction on the morning of February 11, 2015. With him, India lost one of the doyens of the hematology in this country. He has trained many hematologists of repute spread across India and in all continents of the world. He was one of the founder members of Indian Society of Human Genetics and was one of the pioneers in establishing cytogenetics in this country.

He was born on March 1, 1933 in Bengal. After completing his initial education in Bengal, he joined the hematology unit of Department of Pathology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research (PGIMER) at Chandigarh, India in 1965 as a Senior Lecturer. He became a professor of Hematology in 1975 and continued to head the department till 1985. During his tenure, he made PGIMER Chandigarh the best center for diagnosis, study, research and management of hematology. He was one of the pioneers in hematology research in India and was well-known even in international arena for biochemical studies in megaloblastic anemia. He also established a very successful and busy Hematology Department at Kuwait University. His initiative resulted in the development of MRCPath training program in Kuwait, in close association with Royal College of Pathologists of London.

During his commonwealth fellowship at RPMS, London (from 1967 to 1969) he worked with Prof. A.V. Hoffbrand on folate transport mechanism across lymphocyte membranes and the role of Vitamin B12 coenzymes in the facilitation of the process and vice versa. Later on, a lot of his studies in this area were published with Prof. Victor Herbert from the USA. During his tenure in PGIMER, Chandigarh, many dignitaries such as Prof. J.V. Dacie (UK), Prof. P.M. Mannucci (Italy), and Prof. D.G. Pennington (Australia) visited the department. He established a simple radioassay for Vitamin B12 binding proteins using hemoglobin coated charcoal, DEAE, and QUSO-G32. As early as 1979, he strongly recommended developing a hemopoietic stem cell transplantation set up at PGIMER, Chandigarh. His department was one of the few departments in the country where experimental hematology was practiced in India using radioisotopes, microbial assays, cell culture studies and large and small animals to answer various hematological problems. He used 3H thymidine uptake inhibition assay for detecting the effect of various chemotherapeutic agents on leukemia cells. He established his own factor VIII assay technique using rabbit serum as the source of the factor VIII deficient system. In a classical study, he used ex-polycythemia mouse bioassay of erythropoietin to study anemia of thyroid deficiency. He stimulated, advised and inspired many of us and was in many ways responsible for putting this institute into a remarkable research trajectory.

He received 15 national awards including Manorama Sapre Oration Award of “Indian Society of Hematology and Blood Transfusion — ISHBT” (1978), J.B. Chatterjee Memorial Oration Award of ISHBT (1988) and Bhatia Memorial Oration Award (ICMR) (1993). The latest one was the “Life Time Achievement award” bestowed upon him by ISHBT during the national conference held in Mumbai in November 2013. He published nearly 260 research papers, mostly in high impact International Journals (including Nature, Blood, British Journal Haematology, Acta Haematologica, and American Journal of Hematology) and some in National Journals, and contributed 12 Chapters to Text Books and Monographs.

In his family life, Prof. Das was a happy man. His wife worked as Professor of Sanskrit language in Government College at Chandigarh, and his two daughters Dr. Monalisa and Dr. Monisha are well-established doctors at Canada and USA. He has mentored us like a real Indian Guru and always relished the success of his students. India has lost a great hematologist and we have lost our great guru. May his soul rest in peace.

Neelam Varma, Kanjaksha Ghosh

Department of Hematology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh, ‘National Institute of Immunohaematology, Parel, Mumbai, Maharashtra, India

Address for correspondence:
Prof. Neelam Varma,
Professor and Head - Hematology, Postgraduate Institute of Medical Education and Research, Chandigarh - 160 012, India. 
E-mail: varmaneelam@yahoo.com

How to cite this article: Varma N, Ghosh K. Remembering Prof. K. C. Das. Indian J Pathol Microbiol 2015;58:417.