Economist J.C. Sandesara is no more. He breathed his last at his residence in Mumbai on April 10, at the age of 90, as I was informed by his son, Harshad, through an e-mail message. He was a great scholar who groomed the economics of small industry as an academic constituency in India, and has triggered debates and policy initiatives in the hitherto badly neglected terrain since late 1960s.

To me, Sandesara was more than all these. He was my mentor who kindled in me the spark of Industrial Economics, an area where serious academic investigations were so rare in the 1980s. And that was the time he was adorning the directorship of the Department of Economics at the University of Bombay. My first meeting with Sandesara was in the year 1978. The brilliant teacher and scholar who inspired thousands of his students in the University of Bombay, had, to his credit, a large network of eminent scholars across the world, including stalwarts like George Rosen, who had significantly influenced policy making in India, during its early days of industrialization. As such, he became the bridge between several internationally known scholars, on the one hand, and the Indian policy makers and practitioners, on the other.

In the theory and development practice of small enterprises in India, the name of Sandesara would invariably be written. Soon after independence, the vexed question of 'small versus large' enterprises came into the forefront of academic debates. A group of doyens in the subject area took forward the debate on related questions of size distribution of enterprises, choice of technique, and policy options. It was Sandesara’s writings that provided some direction to young scholars like me to study such a rich debate, and to contribute, though in a limited way to this extended debate. Over time, small scale industry (now called, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises) has grown into a larger constituency both in policy and practice, and has become a subject of broad based debates in theory, policy, and practice. Besides having a compre-
hensive understanding of such debates, it is necessary to have an appreciation of Sandesara's role and leadership in shaping such a vital sub discipline. It is all the more important, at a time when India is passing through a phase of economic slowdown, and all eyes are directed towards its possible impacts on the common man.

Sandesara started his early writings from the foundations laid down by the early economic policy makers of the country. He addressed both the aspects of employment promotion and balanced regional development. A.K. Sen's seminal work, 'Choice of Techniques', was a major debating point on employment; it complemented that of Maurice Dobb. In a developing country, the Dobb-Sen strategy relied on maximising investible surpluses, maintaining constant real wages and using the entire increase in labour productivity, due to technological change, to raise the rate of accumulation. In other words, workers were expected to demand no improvement in their standard of living despite having become more productive. These were some of the influences on Sandesara and his early writings. His further writings, which appeared in the Economic and Political Weekly, discussed elaborately on themes such as employment promotion, productivity trends, and regional development issues.

India has a pioneering role in the global discourse on small scale industries. This global debate has some major strands, which have evolved over time; much of it remain still to be documented properly. The "Survey of Research on Economic Series", at the Indian Council of Social Science and Research (ICSSR), came out with its fifth volume on Industry in 1995. This Survey carries a discussion on the comprehensive dimensions of small scale industries, put together by K.K. Subrahmanian and S.P. Kashyap. This chapter, along with the one on Industrial Economics, by J.C. Sandesara, provide deep insights into the then academic discourse and policy practice. Though it is rather dated, the Subrahmanian and Kashyap review provides a comprehensive view of the knowledge base, as also the policy debates in the subject area.

The early writings on industrialisation in India, with special focus on small scale industries, came essentially since the formulation of the Second Five Year Plan. These early debates were rich in content, and were particularly useful for the shaping of public policy in the country. Such literature may be divid-
ed into two groups: First, studies of an analytical nature, which also provide policy prescriptions. Secondly, a large number of publications in the form of model schemes, project sheets, and progress reports, that came mainly from several public bodies and government sponsored agencies. This latter category of literature also was really informative and supportive to the prime debates.

Sandesara’s major early contributions have come out in the form of three books. These are the results of his three research projects, ‘Size and Capital Intensity in Indian Industry’, and ‘Efficacy of Incentives for Small Industry’, published in 1969 and 1982, respectively. The third was a major project on the ‘Indian Industrialization experience since Independence’. Relying on these notes and using other resources, he wrote a book entitled ‘Industrial Policy & Planning, 1947-1961: Tendencies, Interpretation and Issues’ (Sage, 1993). All through his career, until his last days, Sandesara remained active, agile and alert on the latest developments relating to industrial policy and practice in the country. Of late, I remember him writing an addenda to my Obituary on the noted American Economist, George Rosen in 2018.

Our relationship, all through, was rather informal. That, obviously, has surprised his students and faculty colleagues at the University of Bombay. I was neither his student at the Department, nor a researcher at the Kalina Campus. To begin with, I wrote him a letter as a novice in the subject area looking for a researchable problem. It was a spring in my step. I still keep with me his very detailed letter on an inland folder. Indeed this is a habitual practice with Sandesara, as his friends, colleagues, and students often refer to.

To the Institute of Small Enterprises and Development, he contributed severally in terms of ideas and support, from its very early days. He was Chairman of its Advisory Team for several years. He had great regard for ISED and its work, as a unique institutional initiative of its kind in the country.

Beyond our professional and academic interactions, there was a close personal relationship and warmth. Sandesara wrote his reminiscences entitled, “My Days at the Department of Economics”, during the Covid-19 Lockdown days of May - June, 2020, it was sent for comments to some of his former colleagues and students, with a personal and confidential copy marked to me. It was
subsequently made into a final version by September 5, 2021. But, I doubt whether he could get the opportunity to publish it in a suitable manner. In fact, this would have been a valuable asset for the next generation of academia and policy makers.

While the unpublished draft of Sandesara's Reminiscence is before me, it sharpens my understanding of the history of the small industry movement in the country, and how it has taken roots across different platforms of education, research and policy. The article, in five sections, speaks of his student days (1953-1959), under stalwarts of the University of Mumbai like C.N. Vakil, M.C. Dantwala, D.T. Lakdawala, V.V. Krishnamurthy, and H.B. Desai. He also shares fond memories of P.R. Brahmananda, who was his contemporary. Sandesara did his PhD under D.T. Lakdawala. With a meager fellowship amount of about Rs 60 per month, he was finding it difficult to spend his days in Mumbai. And Lakdawala directed him to another window of the same Department, which made him part of the 'Bombay Survey', which provided him a little bit of additional financial support as well, he writes.

Sandesara’s tenure with the Bombay Survey (1955-59) produced three important titles that became the foundations of early research on small industry in India. During his long tenure at the Department (1963-1992), Sandesara was instrumental in grooming the Department of Economics into a leading center of research and studies in industrial economics. Apart from the Central Government and the UGC, came a train of sponsors, including Reserve Bank of India, Industrial Finance Corporation of India, Walchand Trust, Planning Commission, the World Bank and the Industrial Development Bank of India, as sponsors of the new initiative. All these led to a new institutional platform, ‘Center for Advanced Study in Industrial Economics and Public Finance’. Of late, the Department of Economics has metamorphosed into an autonomous entity: Mumbai School of Economics and Public Policy.

The 'Center for Advanced Study in Industrial Economics and Public Finance' demonstrated an excellent example of incubating a full-fledged research center from a traditional University system, where research is considered only as an extra interest of teachers. This experience at the University of Bombay has significantly influenced in triggering a culture of standalone research insti-
tutes. The academic boom of the late 1960s resulted in the development of a social science research system under the Indian Council of Social Science Research. The ICSSR was set up in 1969 under the chairmanship of D.R. Gadgil, again, a leading economist groomed at the University of Bombay. Sandesara considers such developments as as “externalities”. These externalities relate to three broad domains. The landmark initiatives in the forms of research institutes were the Sardar Patel Institute of Social and Economic Research (SPIESR) under the leadership of D.T. Lakdawala, Gujarat Institute of Development Research (GIDR) under Praveen Visaria, and the Center for Multi-Disciplinary Research and Development under V.R. Panchmukhi. The Bombay School of Economics also contributed public policy doyens like J.J. Anjaria, D.T. Lakdawala, D.L. Hungaker, Narendra Jadhav, H.L. Dantwala and Y.G. Anwarshigh. In the domain of administration, and especially in India’s financial sector, we find a large number of luminaries: C.N. Vakil, A.R. Desai, M.D. Godbole, S.A. Dave, R.H. Patel, A.C. Shah, V.D. Dixit, Hannan Ezekiel, and R.K. Hazari.

The history of the work of the Department of Economics, University of Bombay in the area of Industry and Labour is spread over the last 100 years. Indeed, it is, to a large extent intertwined with the legacy and contributions of several of India’s leading economists, of which the name of Sandesara stands out. Legacy is not leaving something for people; it is leaving something in people.

India’s track record of experiments and experiences on the SME front are outstanding and unique. This track record owes primarily to the wonderful drive and insights of its millions of entrepreneurs. The early thought leadership and planners in the country have immensely contributed to weaving the India story of SMEs into its present form. In this context, the contribution and role of Sandesara stands out.

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