

INDIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HEALTH (IASSH)

Tenth Prof. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture

By
Prof. Achin Chakraborty
on

“Normative Approaches to Measurement of Inequality in Health and Nutrition.”



The Tenth Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture was held at the **Biju Patnaik Auditorium** of **Sambalpur University** on **March 6, 2025**, as part of the 20th Annual Conference of the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH). The session was chaired by **Prof. S. Siva Raju** (Former President, IASSH) and co-chaired by **Prof. U. S. Mishra** (IIPS, Mumbai). The session commenced with a welcome address by **Prof. T. V. Sekher**, who reflected on the remarkable contributions of Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan to the field of health and population studies. He highlighted Dr. Vaidyanathan’s pioneering work in the socioeconomic determinants of health and demography, which continues to shape academic discourse and policy research. The distinguished speaker for this year’s memorial lecture was **Prof. Achin Chakraborty** (Former Director, Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata), who delivered an engaging talk on *“Normative Approaches to Measurement of Inequality in Health and Nutrition.”* Prof. Chakraborty is a well-known economist who has researched extensively on the economic dimensions of nutrition and health inequality in the Indian context.

In the Tenth Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture, Prof. Achin Chakraborty explored normative approaches to measuring health and nutrition inequality, emphasizing the complexities of defining and assessing disparities. Drawing on Amartya Sen’s work, he distinguished between statistical and normative measures, highlighting that equity, rather than absolute equality, is a more relevant concept in health assessments. He discussed the limitations of traditional indicators like the Gini coefficient, arguing that health and nutrition require a multidimensional approach beyond income-based measures. He addressed the socioeconomic determinants of health disparities, emphasizing that inequalities in health outcomes are often rooted in structural inequities beyond individual control. Additionally, he critiqued self-reported morbidity data, showing how education and healthcare access influence health perceptions. The lecture underscored the importance of incorporating ethical considerations

into health measurement to ensure more just and meaningful policy interventions, making a strong case for rethinking how inequality is assessed and addressed.

Overall, the Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture provided valuable insights into the normative approaches to measuring health and nutrition inequality, emphasising the need for equity-focused assessments and policy interventions. The session concluded with a formal vote of thanks by **Prof. R. Nagarajan** (IIPS, Mumbai), who expressed his sincere gratitude to the guest speaker, chairpersons, and participants for their engagement and contributions. The lecture was widely appreciated for its theoretical depth, policy relevance, and its implications for future research on health inequality measurement and intervention strategies.

IASSH has instituted a memorial lecture in honour of **Prof. K.E. Vaidyanathan** since 2014. He was the President of the Indian Association for Social Sciences and Health (IASSH) from 2007 to 2011 and was mainly responsible for the expansion of the Association to its present form. Dr. Vaidyanathan was a distinguished demographer who served in various capacities in the United Nations and other organizations. He started his career as a faculty at the International Institute for Population Sciences in Mumbai. He later became the Head of the Department of Population Studies at the Institute of Rural Health and Family Planning in Gandhigram. He later joined the UN system and worked in various countries such as Egypt, Syria, Uganda, and Sudan, where he helped establish centers for population studies and research, advised planning commissions and conducted successful population surveys and censuses. In his later years, he also helped plan and implement the Living Standards Measurement Survey in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Dr. Vaidyanathan passed away in 2014 in Bangalore.



Participants at the Dr. K. E. Vaidyanathan Memorial Lecture.