

India: Praful Bidwai has passed away - A journalist and an activist

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The brilliant, courageous and accomplished Indian journalist, scholar and activist Praful Bidwai died unexpectedly in Amsterdam on June 23rd - a tragic loss for all those he inspired and informed.

Praful Bidwai, an erudite and acclaimed Indian journalist and commentator, died unexpectedly in Amsterdam last night at the age of 66. He was there for the annual Fellows' Meeting of the Transnational Institute, with which he has been associated since 1988.

Praful was a passionate, insightful and prolific writer. He worked at the *Times of India* for many years as its most cited journalist before embarking on a freelance career that made his by-line a household name across the sub-continent. His syndicated columns covered a wide range of issues from domestic to foreign policy, from the impacts of climate change to the geopolitics of war.

Praful was never afraid to challenge power or to tackle thorny issues. Among his most recent writings were condemnations of rising inequality in India, and a damning assessment of the communal politics and authoritarian tendencies exhibited by the Modi regime in its first year of government. His latest book is due out in October with Harper Collins India. It deals with the challenges facing the Indian Left.

"Praful was a committed, courageous and articulate voice on the left," his friend and long-term TNI Fellow Achin Vanaik said, "He had an extraordinary command over a vast range of subjects."

As well as being a journalist, Praful, was an activist and founder member of the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (India). His work on nuclear issues earned him the 2000 Sean McBride Peace Prize, which he shared with Achin Vanaik. In 1999, he and Achin co-authored, *South Asia on a Short Fuse: Nuclear Politics and the Future of Global Disarmament*. He served on the Board of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation in Sweden as well as the ETC (Action Group on Erosion, Technology & Concentration) Group in Canada.

In recent years, Praful issued a clarion call for India and all governments to give greater leadership and responsibility for addressing climate change. His last book, *The Politics of Climate Change and the Global Crisis: Mortgaging Our Future*, was co-published by TNI and Orient Blackswan in 2012. In it, he demonstrated how real solutions to climate change were within grasp if only political leaders would confront vested fossil-fuel interests and act decisively.

Praful was also a scholar. He read science and technology, philosophy and economics at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay before pursuing development studies, political science and research into the labour movement and environmental issues. He authored and was a contributor to many books on the issues he held dear. Besides serving as a TNI Fellow, he was also a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Studies and the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in New Delhi. He was trained in and a connoisseur of classical Indian music.

Fiona Dove, Director of TNI said: "We are shocked and still reeling from the death of Praful. He was a deeply loved friend, comrade and Fellow. A quintessential internationalist, an exemplary activist-scholar, he stood for peace, justice, and urgent solutions to our climate crisis. We will miss his thoughtful and insightful analysis, his well of deep knowledge, his passion, exuberance and sense of humour. We will be doing all we can to ensure that his legacy is honoured and to continue to take forward the issues he was so passionate about. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and fans in India and all over the world."

The Transnational Institute

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* <http://www.tni.org/article/praful-bidwai-has-passed-away>