

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Asia > India > The Left (India) > **India: Praful Bidwai Is No More - "We have lost the 'best left-wing (...)**

India: Praful Bidwai Is No More - "We have lost the 'best left-wing journalist' in this part of South Asia"

Thursday 25 June 2015, by [GATADE Subhash](#) (Date first published: 25 June 2015).

Praful Bidwai is no more. He died in Amsterdam on Tuesday evening due to a cardiac arrest,

With his death we have lost the 'best left-wing journalist' in this part of South Asia whose articles appeared in many newspapers and magazines in the subcontinent and in the middle east and was frequently published by *The Guardian*, *Le Monde Diplomatique* as well.

Praful will be missed by thousands and thousands of his readers (this pen pusher included) who were 'groomed' by him in a career spanning more than four decades. For them he was one such voice who remained uncompromising in his strident criticism of communal fundamentalisms of various kinds and the crony capitalism which is having a field day these days. He was a leading voice for nuclear disarmament and peace as well and had written extensively on it.

It was a strange coincidence that we met last in the capital when a memorial meeting was organised by Communist Party of India to remember the legendary Comrade Govind Pansare who was assassinated few days back. He was to speak in the meeting. The meeting was yet to start and I could steal some time to talk to him. He told he is working on a book - which was near completion - on the left movement in the country and had interviewed many activists associated with the movement to listen to their understanding of challenges before the left. And in that connection he had long meeting with Com Pansare - once in Kolhapur and one possibly in Mumbai. He shared his fascination about the energies he still had at that age for 'the cause'.

Few days after the meeting, there was a call from him asking for a phone number of a dalit activist which incidentally I did not have. Yes, that was the last time I spoke to him.

Many details of his life have found mention in his obituary references, but none mentions days of his youth when he happened to be studying at IIT Mumbai and was one of the founders of a left group called 'Magowa' (Pursuit) which came up in early seventies. Dr Anant Phadke, a leading health activist and a left wing thinker associated with 'Shramik Mukti Dal' - who was also part of Magowa then- said Praful along with Sudhir Bedekar was the 'mentor' of the group and there was a time when they had eleven whole timers. Praful left his studies in between, and joined the struggle of Adivasis which was taking place at Shahada (Districe Dhule, Maharashtra) as a whole timer and worked with them for around two years. And Praful was not alone from the group who had taken the plunge. There was Kumar Shiralkar and many others.

If Naxalbari had mesmerised the Indian young radicals in those days on a larger scale, similarly struggle at Shahada (albeit in a small scale) had similarly mesmerised Marathi youth then. One still remembers visiting Amber Singh, a leader of the struggle hailing from the tribal community itself, when he was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Pune. He died few months later.

Perhaps because of health reasons Praful could not continue working with the tribals and had to

return to Pune. Here he took initiative in forming 'Workers Democratic Union' to work with the working masses in the city and adjoining areas. It continued for few years.

Later he left organised left politics and switched to journalism but continued to raise his voice for a just, equitable and inclusive society in India and peace and nuclear disarmament globally. Although he did not join any of the mainstream left parties after and had perhaps few criticisms to offer about their functioning but he always remained a friend of the left politics. I think that was the concern which prompted him to undertake the voluminous work "The Phoenix Moment: Challenges Confronting the Indian Left"(Harper Collins) which is being described as 'an epic study of the achievements and the crises facing the Indian left.' which I hope would be published soon.

Rest in Peace Praful.

Subhash Gatade

P.S.

* <http://kafila.org/2015/06/25/praful-bidwai-is-no-more/>