

India: J Sri Raman passes away

Friday 11 November 2011, by [CNDP \(India\)](#) (Date first published: 8 November 2011).

J Sri Raman breathed his last on November 7, 2011. We reproduce below the statement issued by the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) that J Sri Raman helped found.

The CNDP deeply condoles the untimely death of J. Sri Raman (in Kochi on 7th November), a distinguished founder member who remained a frontranking campaigner until the very end. An eminent journalist and highly felicitous writer, he will be remembered above all as a pre-eminent peace activist in the Sub-Continent who viewed communal harmony at home as key to India-Pakistan friendship as well as the elimination of the region's nuclear weapons. Little wonder then that Sri Raman should have waged the many battles for peace simultaneously on several fronts.

Sri Raman, who died at 68, was the moving spirit behind many campaigns against nuclear weapons and communalism at the grassroots. The earliest of them, the Journalists Against Nuclear Weapons (JANW) in Chennai, was an audacious effort to protest against the May 1998 Pokharan-II nuclear explosions, given the predominant portrayal of the tests in the mainstream media as proclamation of India's status as a nuclear superpower. The "Media Bomb," A collection of essays by the journalists in Chennai was educative as much as effective, in exposing the jingoism and ultra-nationalism underlying the official and mainstream media stance.

The second, the Movement Against Nuclear Weapons (MANW), the umbrella body of anti-nuclear organizations was already in the making by the time of the anniversary of Pokharan-II. The massive public rally on the occasion had brought under a common platform like-minded groups among scientists, chiefly those in the atomic energy establishment, doctors and trade unions in the telecom and banking sectors. But no less significant was Sri Raman's determination to engage the very ordinary people on issues of communal harmony and peace – through public meetings on street corners, bus termini and more remote areas. These speak to Sri Raman's deep conviction on the importance of raising awareness among the working classes on issues of an ideological nature as on questions of life and livelihood. Since its inception, Sri Raman was convenor of MANW and also of the JANW.

Sri Raman was also an active member of Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP) since its inception in the year 2000.

The 2002 state-sponsored pogrom against the Muslim minorities in Gujarat left little option but to mobilize the people against the forces of majoritarian communalism. Sri Raman was of course at the forefront of the campaign to combat communalism under the banner of Movement for People's Unity (MPU).

In the CNDP, the fourth forum where he was a pivotal figure, Sri Raman was among those who

refused to countenance any kind of equivocation on the question of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Similarly, he advocated the establishment of a United Nations convention for the abolition of nuclear weapons as an answer to the nuclear nationalism under the (CTBT) Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty regime. No less vocal was his support for the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free zone in South Asia.

Until recently, Sri Raman had – unlike many in the CNDP – had not taken a firm position on the question of nuclear energy, although he never spared criticism against official callousness on matters of safety, non-transparency and waste-disposal. His reasoning was along the following lines. That nuclear weapons were brutal weapons of mass destruction was a matter of common sense and beyond doubt. On the contrary, the potential for safe nuclear energy could not be ruled out for all times. This line of thought often led him to say fondly that the Indian peace movement was unique in the sense that the CNDP was the one campaign in the world that was anti-nuclear weapons, not anti-nuclear energy also. But his close associates say that that the calamity at Fukushima had forced Sri Raman to rethink his stance.

Born in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, Sri Raman graduated from Loyola College in Chennai. He was on the staff of *Patriot*, the *Hindustan Times* and later the *Indian Express* before becoming an independent journalist. He wrote extensively on world affairs. His work was published regularly by *Truth Out* and *The Daily Times* of Lahore. His book, “Flashpoint: How the U.S., India, and Pakistan Brought us to the Brink of Nuclear War” (Common Courage Press, 2003) won wide acclaim among the global peace campaigns. He had published a shief of poems as well. His travels as part of the anti-nuclear movement programme took him to the United States, China, Japan and Germany. In recent times, he referred to himself as an ‘India-Pakistan journalist’, and he would have loved to visit Pakistan. He was also a regular contributor of book reviews in *The Hindu* and articles in *The Tribune*.

The CNDP conveys its deepest condolences to Sri Raman’s wife Papri and daughters Taranga and Varna.
