

Indian Left - Praful Bidwai: Never afraid to write what he believed in

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Praful Bidwai passed away in Amsterdam on June 23. He was in the Dutch capital for the annual Transnational Institute Fellows' Meeting. Bidwai was an outstanding journalist who worked with some of the most reputed papers of his time, but also established a reputation for himself as an independent writer. He was deeply interested in, passionate about, the politics of development. He wrote extensively on nuclear disarmament and climate change and co-authored several books on the subject.

Praful came from a science background, but he was interested in everything. Human rights, communal issues, ecology, but it was nuclear power and its uses that particularly caught his attention.

Praful was an activist for nuclear disarmament for many years. He founded the Coalition of Nuclear Disarmament and Peace in 2000, the year after the release of our book on the question of India's nuclearisation.

Never afraid to voice what he believed in, Praful once penned an article in the *Times of India*, criticising the Department of Atomic Energy's Nuclear Energy Programme.

It was a fiery exposé in which he revealed monetary as well as strategic issues within the programme. This article led to the then Chairman of the DAE attacking Praful for being anti-patriotic. But that was Praful. He was courageous, consistent, and articulate.

Praful was a strong voice of the Left in India, in fact, he had authored a book on the Indian Left which will be published soon. He was incredibly anti-communal and championed civil liberty and secularism. I was lucky enough to collaborate with him on a number of projects, and in 2000, Praful and I were co-awarded the International Peace Bureau's Sean MacBride Peace Prize.

Praful was a great lover of Indian classical music. He had trained as a vocalist, and thoroughly enjoyed music. A bachelor, Praful once wrote an article clearly explaining why he was against the institution of marriage. But this lack of a "real" family meant that his friends were his family. He had an extraordinarily wide range of friends, and the bonds that he shared with those closest to him were nothing short of familial. His loss is felt very deeply by all of us fortunate enough to have known him.

Achin Vanaik

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