

# India: Tapan K Bose

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**Born: 8.6.1946**

**Died: 30.01.2025**

**Tapan Kumar Bose, renowned documentary film-maker, human rights and peace activist known across South Asia, is no more. Tapan breathed his last at his home in New Delhi in the morning of Martyr's Day (Shahadat Diwas), 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025.**

For most of his life, Tapan was well known for his courageous stand against injustice, violence and inequality. Having started his activism during the political Emergency period in late 1970s, and later filming the victims of Bhagalpur blindings, fighting the human rights violations in Punjab, and Jammu & Kashmir, Tapan was also well known for his films and activism around the Bhopal disaster and the advocacy for the victims. Tapan became an important member of the people's groups that tried to stop the 1984 riots in Delhi and was part of the support group for the Sikh community in the city and in Punjab.

Tapan was part of a collective of activists, scientists, journalists and artists, who tried to strengthen the rationalist spirit of the Indian constitution and fight oppression - historic and contemporary. He was instrumental in the formation of many institutions across the South Asian region and the world - institutions that have become significant contributors to people's struggles and resistance voices. South Asia Forum for Human Rights, The Other Media, CINEMART, Pakistan India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy, Sanchal Foundation, Kashmir Initiative, North East Peoples' Initiative, Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (ROHRIngya), Bhopal Group for Information & Action, South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre, the number of formal and informal collectives initiated and mentored by Tapan are many. Tapan based himself from Kathmandu at a time when the region was gripped with one its worst political crises, and brought together impacted communities from across India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, Afghanistan, etc.

In the wake of the Babri demolition and the anti-Muslim violence across the country, Tapan along with friends instituted the People's Tribunal on Ayodhya and led an entire tribunal process that led to one of the most formidable reports on the issue, exposing the lies spread by the Hindutva machinery regarding history and the development of events around Babri demolition. Similarly, after the Godhra carnage and vicious anti-Muslim pogrom that was initiated in Gujarat in 2002, Tapan was in the ground, with the communities fighting for survival, dignity, human rights and peace.

Tapan Bose was a very dear friend of communities who were oppressed by jingoistic nationalism and militarisation. His friendships across Balochistan, Burma, Kashmir, Naga areas and Tamil movement in Sri Lanka are well known. From the earlier part of his life when he made documentary films as a medium to counter undemocratic forces, he shifted to being an activist and a mentor to younger generations in resistance. His knowledge of South Asia made him a recognised author with many academic publishers across the world and many younger film-makers. He committed himself to being available for communities and people who opposed the capitalist plunder of the earth and colonisation of resources and people. He extended his support to the trade union movement and was

a close advisor to the fisheries peoples, forest workers movements.

Tapan guided and mentored the human rights research on Punjab disappearances, the Indo-Naga peace process and the Kashmir peace initiatives. At one point, the All Party Hurriyat Conference, in recognition of his stands, made him the Chief Election Commissioner for the independent Kashmir Referendum and Elections. A firm believer and advocate for the rights of refugees, Tapan tried to protect and support the Rohingya refugees in India till his last breath.

Tapan was an ardent follower of cultural resistance and believed in the counter cultures of communities against the hegemonic capitalist world order. Among his last wishes was a larger programme that brought together the writings and poetry of Rabindranath Tagore and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, the two South Asian cultural legends who went beyond nationalism and parochialism. ♦ Tapan firmly believed in the idea of India, but he also strongly believed that his motherland could not occupy and militarily oppress other communities. Tapan quoted Gandhi and advocated for the self determination rights of the people of Naga areas and Kashmir and never hesitated to openly challenge jingoism of the Hindutva right wing.

Tapan's important films include:

- \* Jharkhand (1993)
- \* From Behind the Barricade (Punjab) (1993)
- \* The Vulnerable Road User (1991)
- \* Bhopal: Beyond Genocide (1986)
- \* An Indian Story on Bhagalpur bindings(1981)
- \* The Expendable People (Chhattisgarh) (2016)

Tapan Bose is no more. But his legacy as a film-maker, a peace architect and a valiant human rights defender is here to stay. A passionate cook and singer, his love of music and poetry is worth cherishing. As his family and friends across the world mourn his demise, we must remember to celebrate his beautiful life, as a person, a comrade, an ideologue and a very impactful activist!

Tapan is survived by his Wife: Rita Manchanda

Daughter: Devjani Saini

Grandchildren: Rudra Saini, Somansh Saini

Sisters: Gauri and Danu

and many many more friends and disciples across South Asia and the world...

Rest in peace and power Tapan Bose.

[Cremation was held at Lodi Road Crematorium at 3.30 pm on Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025]

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