



CHAKRAVARTHI RAGHAVAN (1925-2021) A CELEBRATION

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One man alone can make a difference

Rubens Ricupero

Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (1995-2004)

Chakravarthi Raghavan was one of the few men who did make a difference in the world armed only with knowledge and the strength of his moral commitment.

“A typewriter in hand and an idea in mind” is an apt description of Raghavan: a man armed with the idea that development should be promoted through fairness, justice and balance in economic relations.

When I first arrived in Geneva in November 1987 as the new Brazilian Ambassador to the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) forum, I immediately found out that, printed on golden yellow paper, Raghavan’s daily *SUNS* (*South-North Development Monitor*) column constituted the only source of honest and unbiased assessment of events free of the hegemonic intellectual dictatorship of triumphant globalization’s *pensée unique*.

It is hard to imagine in our days how isolated developing countries’ negotiators found themselves at the start and during most of the duration of the GATT’s Uruguay Round of multilateral trade talks. None of the myriad NGOs that now devote their activities to various aspects of trade negotiations existed at the time, or if they had been in existence like Oxfam, they had not discovered trade’s central importance yet.

China was very distant from acceding to the GATT. Even the most important and active developing countries were far from mustering the intellectual resources that advanced nations’ negotiators received from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and numerous think-tanks.

Prestigious Nobel Prize winners such as Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman had not yet seen the light on their roads to Damascus. We were decades away from the moment when some in the Bretton Woods institutions would reluctantly and partially recognize what UNCTAD had been repeating from Raul Prebisch’s time in the early 1960s: that the multilateral trading system was imbalanced and unfair, that its rules and proceedings tended to perpetuate a situation detrimental to the trade interest of developing economies, and that trade rounds had been putting off for more than 30 years the “unfinished business” of development-friendly negotiations.

In other words, the asymmetry in economic and political power that already made a level playing field a hopeless proposition for developing countries had been further aggravated by the imbalance in the power modality that comes from information and knowledge.

Thus, the most pressing and fundamental function performed by Raghavan’s writings was simply to demystify, to deconstruct the counterfeit stuff, laying bare the economic sectoral interests hidden behind apparently objective data and research. This he did superbly, through his masterful command of contemporary economic and international history, bringing to readers’ attention the precedents in the discussions of similar problems or comparing the OECD’s arguments with independent researchers’ findings.

In an age when no major project or work can be financed by the World Bank without a prior environmental impact assessment, it is really astonishing that commercial negotiations that deeply overturned countries’ employment prospects had to be conducted with no evaluation of their likely social and economic consequences for the people concerned.

Raghavan tried to fill the information gap as completely as he could. At the release of the major reports of international organizations, voluminous studies of hundreds of pages that overworked negotiators had no chance of reading, he would have ready for dissemination clear, remarkably precise and concise summings-up of what was being circulated. From time to time, there would be special articles on the subjects under negotiation and interviews with independent experts. *SUNS* became a permanent platform for the expression of alternative views from the dominant and suffocating orthodoxy.

But what proved most crucial in his contribution was the exacting, meticulous chronicle-cum-analysis of daily negotiations during the Uruguay Round. For most of the duration of the Round, that is, until 1991, there had been no less than 15 different negotiating groups on the most diverse and complex subjects. It was almost impossible, except for developed countries' delegations, to follow each and all of these groups. That was the moment when Raghavan's *SUNS* saved the day for most of us. To this day, I do not know how he was able to perform such a miracle of accuracy and comprehensiveness in covering negotiations where he could not enter the room!

To the despair of official spokesmen intent on making sure that the press corps would quietly swallow the conventional truths, Raghavan was always present at the press conferences at the GATT or at the Palais des Nations (the UN offices in Geneva). It was not without trepidation that the audience would impatiently wait for the conclusion of the introductory remarks just to hear the first and biting question from the *SUNS* representative.

He set for himself the most demanding moral and ethical standards as a citizen not only of his native India, but as a truly universal citizen of the South and of the world. To be a journalist is by no means to be neutral in relation to moral values and to stay indifferent in the face of violations of justice, fairness and freedom.

Despite the disproportionate imbalance in human and material resources, Raghavan did ultimately prevail. Not in the sense that he succeeded in changing the dynamics of negotiations, a goal that has always been much beyond his reach or the reach of any disarmed prophet. Negotiations of any kind are in all cases a game of power, of power defined in terms of interests.

A journalist's victory should be defined in terms of being right in finding out the facts, in telling things as they are and extracting the correct conclusions from the facts. In other words, journalists are the historians of the present time, of contemporary life. Their vindication should come in the form of history confirming their perceptions and informed predictions.

Raghavan's reward lies in the gratitude, admiration and esteem of those, among whom I count myself, who owe him the gift of recovering "the knowledge we had lost in information and the wisdom we had lost in knowledge".

Revised and adapted by Rubens Ricupero from the foreword written for C. Raghavan's 2013 collection of writings titled The Third World in the Third Millennium CE Vol. 1.

Reflections on a friend

Michael Zammit Cutajar

Michael Zammit Cutajar worked in and around the United Nations on international cooperation for development and environment, notably in the negotiations on climate change from 1991 to 2015.

I knew my friend Raghavan since 1978. We were brought together in Nyon by Marc Nerfin, an activist thinker who was mobilizing a network of people in support of "another development", "development alternatives" – "sustainable development", we would call it today. Marc left us six years ago. The day that Raghavan passed on – 26 September – was Marc's birthday. It was also the day of the funeral of Raghavan's wife, Kalyani, two years ago. A coincidence for sure, but one that offers food for thought – a happy thought of these three souls communicating with each other.

We all know about Raghavan the journalist, who became a leading voice of the Global South, an expert commentator on international trade issues. For my part, I offer here some reflections on the foundations of Raghavan's life and character, drawing on bits of his personal history that I have gleaned from conversation with Raghavan's daughter, Artie.

The first note is serendipitous. Decades ago, in what was then Madras, in India, a group of boys returning home from playing cricket were caught trespassing on the property of a Jesuit community. The Jesuits fed them and

gave them a mission: go feed the hungry poor in the slums of the city. Raghavan was in this group of boys and accepted this mission. It was a mission that went against the social codes of his family. But he stuck to it. This was an early step towards his independence of thought and his commitment to economic and social solidarity.

Second, Raghavan was an excellent high school student. He graduated from school too early to enter university. So, he passed the waiting time reading his father's library of law books. That gave early proof of his immense capacity to absorb information, as a basis for communicating it. It is interesting though that, despite this investment of his time, Raghavan did not follow his father in his legal practice. Was this a further declaration of independence, I wonder? He sought to study physics at Madras University, came up against economic and social obstacles and, by a roundabout route, found himself in journalism.

I mention in passing an early manifestation of his journalistic talent. As a teenage Boy Scout, in that branch of the Scout movement supporting independence for India, it was he who interviewed Gandhi when the Mahatma visited his Scouts camp.

This leads me to my next point: Raghavan's capacity for leadership, as manifested in his journalistic career. As Parliamentary Correspondent of the Press Trust of India (PTI), he founded the Indian Union of Journalists in the 1950s and was its Secretary-General. And he was Editor-in-Chief of PTI in the 1970s.

Yet Raghavan's positions of leadership did not result from subservience to authority. Rather, they offered opportunities to confront authority when it went wrong. And when he felt that it did go wrong, under Indira Gandhi's "Emergency" regime in the mid-70s, he said so. He resigned from PTI in protest, fell out of official favour and eventually took refuge among us in Geneva.

For my last reflection, I go back to an earlier episode – to Raghavan in love!

He met Kalyani on her return from studies in the US in 1955. They married in 1956. It was a marriage decided by the couple, not a traditional arranged marriage. And they wanted a civil marriage without fuss. But there was a hitch: the law did not provide for civil marriage between two Hindus. So Raghavan lobbied the parliamentarians whose work he was covering and got the law changed! This reminds us not only of his combative and persuasive skills but also that, behind his public face as a man of conviction, Raghavan was a devoted husband and father.

To conclude, I paraphrase Paul's second letter to Timothy (2 Timothy 4.7): He has fought the good fight; he has finished the race; he has kept the faith.

To put this in sentimental terms, Raghavan's heart was in the right place: for his country and its people, for the world of which it is part, and – above all – for his wife and his daughter.

It has been an honour for me to have known him.

Chakravarthi Raghavan: An appreciation

Robert Evans

Reuters Bureau Chief, Geneva (1991-99) and Reuters Geneva Consultant Correspondent (1999-2016)

I first encountered Chakravarthi Raghavan late on a summer evening in 1991 at the United Nations European headquarters. I had just arrived in Geneva – with no previous experience of reporting on trade – and was puzzling over a document from the GATT (the body that was later replaced by the World Trade Organization (WTO)). There came a polite tap on the door of the Reuters office and a distinguished-looking elderly gentleman stepped in.

"I just wanted to say hello," he said, introducing himself. "I have known many Reuters people in my time." And, shaking my hand, he added with a grin: "Mainly, we always got on well." Then, without a hint of false modesty: "I have been here a while, so if ever you think I could help you, just come by my office."

I was certainly taken aback. A few days earlier, a GATT official briefing me on the murky world of trade diplomacy had voiced a warning. “Watch out for the grumpy old Indian. He’ll try to feed you with just one side of the picture.” Yet here was a friendly face and a warm smile. And an offer to share what I soon came to learn was a vast compendium of knowledge.

Mr. Raghavan’s gesture was typical of his generosity towards his colleagues, including the younger and greener ones, as long as he felt they were serious. Other veterans in the profession might have gloried in their pre-eminence, keeping aloof from the crowd of more-or-less inexperienced newshounds at the Palais des Nations. But that was not his way.

In long nights of waiting outside conference rooms – mainly in Geneva, but over the years also in Marrakesh and Singapore, Seattle and Doha – he was an invaluable source for the thinking of delegations who were reluctant to talk to reporters from the “Western press.” And WTO officials recognized that too.

In the final knife-edge hours of the Doha conference in 2001, one emerged from a meeting room and asked waiting reporters anxiously: “What’s the word from Mr. Raghavan?” But the man himself was less concerned. “If this does not fail, as it should, it will be a stitch-up,” he said. And he predicted that the Doha Round would fail, as it did.

However, despite his somewhat professorial manner, in my experience he never sought to preach or convert colleagues to his strongly-held views – formed of course during decades of reporting on development issues in Delhi, in New York and in Geneva – on the dangers presented by globalization to developing countries.

He made no bones about what he thought on these issues, but he willingly accepted that others could think differently, although I suspect that deep down, he believed that he was normally right. For many of us, he was a fount of knowledge. (Who else could recall para 5, sub para ii of an UNCTAD document from 1986 or an obscure GATT ruling from 1978?)

As time went by, I realized that we would not often see eye to eye – we were from very different backgrounds and life experiences – but I very soon appreciated that it was not necessary to be on the same ideological and cultural wavelength for him to be a good friend. “You must get away from that colonial thinking,” he once said to me, his eyes twinkling.

He was passionate about press freedoms, clearly from his first years in the profession. In 1951, he helped found the Indian Federation of Working Journalists, serving as its secretary-general from 1955-56. In New York for PTI in the late 1960s, he presided over the UN Correspondents Association there for three years.

It was a time when reporters from developing countries had problems in getting accreditation, both in New York and in Geneva. Mr. Raghavan’s untiring efforts – using the contacts he made from UN Secretary-General U Thant downwards – led to changes that actually brought the organization into line with its own charter on the status of journalists.

He returned home from New York to become PTI Editor-in-Chief from 1971-76, but he resigned on principle when Mrs. Gandhi, with whose policies he was generally in sympathy, imposed censorship during the 1975-77 political emergency. A year later, he moved to Geneva, where he settled and never left.

Over the following years, as correspondent for Inter Press Service and later for *SUNS*, he was a leading force in achieving full recognition of ACANU, the Geneva United Nations Correspondents Association, and was elected to the Committee of APES, the Association of Foreign Correspondents in Switzerland.

In that role, with other colleagues, his knowledge of the UN system and its underlying agreements and their legal texts was instrumental in achieving for the two associations improved conditions for their members, in sometimes difficult negotiations both with UN officials and with the Swiss government in Berne.

In 2008, when he went into partial, very partial retirement, APES formally recognized his vital contribution to this victory by bestowing on him the title of Member of Honour for life.

And the “grumpy old Indian” I had been warned about in 1991? I never found him. It certainly wasn’t Mr. Raghavan.

A believer in South-South cooperation

Dr. Manmohan Singh
Former Prime Minister of India

Mr. Chakravarthi Raghavan was a great believer in South-South cooperation and an analyst of global events and developments from a Third World perspective. I learnt a lot from him during my time at the South Centre in Geneva.

Pioneer in reporting on GATT/WTO

Chee Yoke Ling
Executive Director of the Third World Network

Chakravarthi Raghavan passed on peacefully on 26 September 2021 in Geneva at the age of 96. What a life he lived – one that would have been several lives in terms of his accomplishments and the span of history which shaped him and which he shaped in critical ways.

Raghavan was the pioneer in reporting on the battles of the developing countries when he monitored, tracked and analyzed the GATT rounds, and ultimately the Uruguay Round when those life-changing negotiations took place out of public sight, indeed out of the scrutiny of elected representatives. When the global trade regime with the WTO as its institutional home was barely complete in its construction, and developed countries relentlessly pushed for more liberalization of the economies of the South, Raghavan continuously shone public light on these efforts to keep extracting from the South. His phenomenal institutional memory and sharp analysis guided trade diplomats and economic justice advocates and campaigners from civil society.

Raghavan never pulled his punches, and many held him in awe and trepidation as well. But over time, those who spent time with him learnt to appreciate him in many ways. I believe he too learnt from all of us who entered his life. Sitting in his living room, I heard wonderful stories, with his wife Kalyani adding her perspectives and delightful details. During those occasions in their Geneva home, I basked in their devotion to each other, and saw the man, the husband and also the father, as he would also speak of their daughter Artie who lives and works in Paris.

We in the Third World Network mourn the passing of another giant of the South and defender of economic and social justice, and we pledge to carry forth his legacy. May Raghavan’s soul rest in eternal peace in the knowledge that across the world, we will never give up in the journey for justice and equity that marked his entire life. Raghavan worked and fought hard for the South and for a just world. We will continue what he so passionately believed in and acted upon.

The great chronicler

Bhagirath Lal Das

Former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the GATT and Deputy Permanent Representative of India to UNCTAD, Geneva (1980-83) and Director of International Trade in UNCTAD (1985-90)

Chakravarthi Raghavan was a great chronicler in the tradition of the legendary ancient chroniclers of the Indian epics, Vyas (the composer of the Mahabharat) and Valmiki (the composer of the Ramayan). He recorded the events in international economic relations and other international development issues for some 40 years (1979 to 2020), 30 years of which were very intense, during which he would have been writing about a thousand words every working day. The volume of his output during his stay in Geneva can be safely assessed at about 10 million words. This was colossal by any standard. And the quality too was of a high order.

Also, Raghavan was not merely a journalist. He combined in him the roles of a journalist, an expert, an adviser and an activist. He took care that his different roles did not conflict with one another.

As a journalist, he was a stickler for accuracy, double-checking facts and statements. To ensure comprehensive coverage, he would assiduously collect information, often directly from the persons participating in the events or being present there. I remember his calls to me early in the morning every day during intense phases of negotiations in the GATT when I was India's Ambassador and Permanent Representative in Geneva. He would give similar calls to several other ambassadors and some key secretariat personnel with whom he had developed a close rapport.

I looked forward to his calls as I too benefitted in the process. I got from him reliable information on the positions of other countries/groups of countries. Thus, for me, these daily contacts during the intense phase of negotiations both in the GATT and UNCTAD in Geneva were engagements for mutual benefit. I guess several other ambassadors and negotiators would have felt the same way.

Through his keen mind and hard work, he had developed a good command of the subjects under negotiation and was fully familiar with the nuances of the positions of different groups of countries. Thus, when he engaged in discussion with somebody, it was with full knowledge of the issues. This helped in keeping a serious interlocutor interested in interactions with him. In fact, many in Geneva considered him more an expert and adviser, rather than merely a curious journalist.

It was a common sight finding him walking briskly in the corridors or sitting in busy lounges and the cafeteria of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, often surrounded by delegates and journalists, and keenly interacting with them.

His role as an expert and adviser got intensified when the WTO came into operation. The Third World Network organized a workshop in November 1996 in Penang (Malaysia) for the civil society organizations of Asia, Africa and Latin America with about 50 participants. Raghavan and I had the role of explaining the content and implications of the new agreements of the WTO, particularly the deficiencies and imbalances in them from the perspective of the developing countries and the ways to correct them. This was followed by seminars and workshops of developing-country officials and negotiators in Geneva and in other parts of the world. Raghavan was almost always a speaker at these events with the status of a senior expert.

The negotiators in Geneva and policy officials in developing countries closely followed his articles in *SUNS* as these gave them reliable information on the important events in the field of international trade and other areas of international economic relations. I was particularly thrilled to find myself being the subject of his writing at least twice, first in 1981 (in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, Bombay) at the finalization of the modalities for the trade preferences among the developing countries in the meeting of the High Level Group of the developing countries (which I had chaired), and next in 1982 (in *SUNS*, Geneva) when the GATT Council (of which I was the chairman that year) prepared the draft outcome for the GATT Ministerial Meeting of 1982.

Though his reports as a journalist were factual and objective, his personal leaning was imbued with idealism. He was all for reducing imbalances in the distribution of wealth and resources between the developed countries and the developing countries. Conflicts on such issues had started emerging in international forums rather aggressively from the mid-1980s onward. He was for the poor and the weak, unreservedly and strongly.

His conviction and approach were very much evident during his interactions in press conferences too. The press officers of various organizations were generally afraid of him during such events. He would ask searching questions, particularly when he suspected suppression of facts. He would sometimes consult his small shorthand notebook (he always carried one in his pocket/bag, a habit from his early days of journalism in India) and confront the responder with the statements made earlier on the subject.

His tough attitude and repartee were particularly pronounced when he sensed browbeating on the part of the responder. Once while attending a press conference called by a visiting French dignitary, he was requested to ask the question in French as his question in English was not fully understood. He responded: "It was enough for me to learn one imperial language in India; I would not have liked to learn another imperial language." (This was narrated to me by another journalist who had been present there.)

Though Raghavan expressed his dislike for learning an imperial language, his thirst for knowledge was insatiable. He learnt by wide reading and by intensive engagement over decades. He had thus collected a formidable body of knowledge and stock of information. He was a virtual encyclopaedia on the subjects he handled.

Apart from writing daily in *SUNS*, Raghavan authored several books. Here I would like to mention three of them. When the major developed countries started pushing hard to further the interests of their manufacturers, traders, service providers, investors and intellectual property owners during the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, he put his words of caution in a book (1990), describing these efforts as championing *Recolonization*. Later (2000) he dwelt on the unbalanced features of the dispute settlement system in the WTO (I wrote the preface in this book) and on the problems of evolving rules on trade in services in the absence of reliable data (2002).

His contribution to the cause of development in the international setting was formally recognized by his being awarded the UNDP/Group of 77 TCDC/ECDC (Technical and Economic Cooperation among Developing Countries) Award in 1997.

An intellectual giant

B.K. Zutshi

India's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the GATT (1989-94)

I first met Mr. Raghavan sometime in the early 1980s in Geneva, during one of my visits to the city for textile negotiations under the GATT. My interaction with him became frequent during the concluding phase of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations. Ever since then we kept in touch until he passed away in late September 2021. While we mourn his death, we must also celebrate his life of uncommon dedication to causes dear to him.

Mr. Raghavan, a journalist by profession, was no ordinary professional. He was a public intellectual with a sharp mind, a prodigious memory and the gift of total recall. He had started his career as a journalist in India around the time of the country's independence in 1947 and rose to the position of Editor-in-Chief of the Press Trust of India, a prominent news service. He left India for Geneva after he fell foul of the powers that be during the Emergency imposed by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975. He had earlier been posted to the UN headquarters in New York.

In Geneva, he started a daily publication, *South-North Development Monitor (SUNS)*, a monitor for developing countries that covered all the UN agencies in Geneva like UNCTAD, WHO, ITO and the GATT etc. This publication

was of great assistance to developing countries during the Uruguay Round negotiations and in goings-on in other UN agencies. He had acquired a profound knowledge of multilateral trade and finance issues and laws. His scholarship in this area is reflected in the two-volume *The Third World in the Third Millennium CE* published by the Third World Network. This is a collection of contemporaneous articles written over a span of nearly three decades by Mr. Raghavan.

He was an intellectual giant with a formidable will. May his soul rest in peace.

Passionate commitment to the South

S. Narayanan

India's Ambassador to the GATT/WTO (1994-2001)

In the demise of Mr. Chakravarthi Raghavan, the developing countries have lost a friend, philosopher and guide who provided intellectual support to them for almost four decades in dealing with complex trade negotiations that directly impinged upon their development prospects. We all owe a lot to Mr. Raghavan.

I used to interact with Mr. Raghavan regularly after I joined as Indian Ambassador in Geneva in November 1994 on the eve of the WTO's being brought into existence on 1 January 1995. My previous experience in the area of trade had been limited to the textiles sector and, initially, it was a challenge for me to deal with a wide variety of trade issues like TRIPS, services, GATT provisions etc. Added to this was the fact that the WTO was a new organization in which many procedural issues like the rules of functioning of its appellate body etc had to be negotiated and finalized within a short span of time.

During this challenging initial period, I used to get a lot of information/details/previous negotiating history etc on various subjects from Mr. Raghavan. This enabled me to appreciate how different subjects had evolved. Of course, Mr. Raghavan was always forthright in giving his own assessment of the developing countries' interests in various trade issues.

Even after this initial period, I found that every interaction of mine with Mr. Raghavan was very illuminating, and these interactions helped me considerably in dealing with various issues that were being negotiated/discussed in the WTO. In particular, I would like to refer to the enormous amount of reading material he provided for my study of new subjects like investment, competition and environment, as well as very old GATT decisions/rulings.

Mr. Raghavan's knowledge of trade issues was phenomenal. One could sometimes differ with Mr. Raghavan on his opinions relating to a particular subject or assessment of a particular situation during negotiations, but I have never come across anybody who could challenge him on facts relating to international trade or trade negotiations.

Mr. Raghavan was a voracious reader and kept himself abreast of all developments in the area of international trade and development. He also used to follow the WTO negotiations/meetings very, very closely. It is amazing how he used to bring out *SUNS* every day with articles (including by himself) on wide-ranging trade issues. Many WTO missions in Geneva, especially the understaffed ones, depended enormously on *SUNS* articles for information and guidance on various trade topics. It is a matter of satisfaction that the tradition established by Mr. Raghavan of getting *SUNS* published every day has continued even after he handed over charge many years back.

Mr. Raghavan's commitment to the cause of the South is unparalleled. During all crucial negotiations, he was around to provide the required intellectual support to developing countries. During the Seattle WTO Ministerial Conference in 1999, investment was a highly controversial and emotive issue. The then Trade Minister of New Zealand chaired the group on investment. During the conference, one night around 2 a.m., a crucial meeting was on. At that time, it was snowing. Mr. Raghavan and Mr. Martin Khor were standing with their umbrellas outside in the open in order to help developing countries' delegations with any information/clarification they may need on the spot in putting forth their case. The sight of these two gentlemen standing in the snow with their umbrellas in the middle of the night is still fresh in my memory.

Mr. Raghavan's knowledge of trade issues was so profound, and his analysis so incisive, that he could foresee the shape of things that would follow the completion of the Uruguay Round negotiations. His book *Recolonization: GATT, the Uruguay Round and the Third World* was not appreciated when it was first published in 1990, even by some of his admirers. They thought his views were extreme and his fears unfounded. But today, when the WTO is facing an existential crisis, all of us realize how prescient Mr. Raghavan was.

The developing countries now face a big challenge with the departure of stalwarts like Mr. Raghavan, Mr. Martin Khor and others. The question is how the South can show its gratitude to these inspiring leaders who provided intellectual inputs to the developing countries and helped them to fight for their interests in international negotiations. It is not sufficient to pay tributes to them. The South should produce more and more leaders like Mr. Raghavan and Mr. Martin Khor. I am sure that there are many such persons who are sensitive to the inequities in the current international order, but they are not speaking out. It is important that they come out in the open and boldly put forth the case of the developing countries, just as Mr. Raghavan and Mr. Martin Khor did, without expectation of any personal reward.

Ode to our Raghavan guru

Hardeep Singh Puri and Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri

Hardeep Singh Puri is a former Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the UN in Geneva, and now Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs and Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, India. Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri is a former Director of the International Trade Division of UNCTAD and former Acting Deputy Secretary-General, UNCTAD.

We don't have adequate words to express what we feel about you.

Since 1981, when we first met you, we have admired you as a many-splendoured personality, whom we looked up to and idolized as young First Secretaries and Counsellors in the Indian Mission to the UN/GATT, WTO, as UNCTAD officials, and then later as ambassadors.

In an act of serendipity, you were the one who informed me (Lakshmi Puri) of an opening of Director, International Trade Division in UNCTAD and I therefore launched my UN career under your umbrella! Hardeep too learnt and benefitted from your wisdom over the years.

I personally have another very special connection with you – that you knew my father B.G. Murdeshwar and saw him at work during the writing of the Indian Constitution. We doubly revere you for that.

You were the quintessential Bheeshma Pitamah – the eminent elder, friend, philosopher, guide and critic par excellence to generations of national and international policymakers and negotiators in multilateral fora in Geneva and New York.

The Indians were particularly blessed to be held to account by you to your high standards of perfection! You challenged us all to swim against the current if need be, question conventional wisdom and blaze new trails in development thinking.

You were an inspirational journalist and scholar, iconoclast and rebel, commentator and policy shaper rolled into one. You had, embodied in you, the qualities of a guru, general, warrior, advocate and civil society icon on the geopolitical economy, trade and development, North-South and South-South issues of vital concern to developing countries.

You were not afraid to speak truth to power and call out injustice everywhere, especially against the poorest countries and peoples. You set a high bar for intellectual integrity and brilliance and your dedication and passion for creating a more just and equitable world has been unparalleled.

You had such a large circle of friends and admirers, not only ministers and ambassadors but heads of state and government, not only in India but the world over, who have celebrated your life and work.

You yourself led such a vibrant and full life and enriched the lives and thinking of all those who came in touch with you. With every passing year, you sought to light the torch of knowledge with your “glowing mind” and pass it on to others.

For Hardeep and me, Himayani and Tilottama, you and Kalyani and dear Artie have been our well-loved family and we have been blessed always to enjoy your affection, encouragement and benediction.

I cannot but quote in your honour a poem my father used to love and was inspired by. It reflects how you are a dreamer of dreams and always sought to be “a mover and shaker of the world for ever, it seems”.

Ode

By Arthur O’Shaughnessy

*We are the music makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.*

A passionate fighter for justice

Yilmaz Akyüz

Former Director, UNCTAD, and former Chief Economist, South Centre, Geneva

Coming to Geneva to work for UNCTAD in the early 1980s gave me the opportunity to meet Chakravarthi Raghavan and become friends with him over the subsequent years. He always impressed me as one of the most passionate fighters for justice and equality. Raghavan’s knowledge about the evolution and intricacies of the international trading system surpassed the expertise of most academics and international bureaucrats specialized in the field. He had strong misgivings about the benefits to the South of the so-called free-trading system and globalization, which were strongly advocated by the secretariats of the Bretton Woods institutions and World Trade Organization, and Western governments. He tirelessly pointed to the asymmetries and imbalances in international economic interactions between the North and the South, having first-hand experience of damage caused by imperialist exploitation in India. His passing is a great loss for all who care for the poor and disadvantaged.

Reporting to understand the world ... and change it!

Roberto Bissio

Uruguayan journalist, coordinator of the Social Watch network of civil society organizations

When I introduced myself to Chakravarthi Raghavan back in 1986, he was already reprimanding me before ending the handshake: “Why did you ask that question in the press conference?” he asked me with more severity in his expression than usual – which is to say, a lot.

“Because I wanted to know...”

“You NEVER ask a question if you don’t know the answer!”

We were in the press room of the San Rafael hotel in Punta del Este, where a ministerial meeting of the GATT was about to launch the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations that would pave the way for neoliberal globalization.

As a Uruguayan journalist not very experienced in international negotiations, I was happy that after a decade of dictatorship my country was gaining international recognition and hopeful that the damaging (for us) agricultural subsidies of the rich countries would be reduced, giving our exports a chance to compete in global markets.

Raghavan was already one of the most influential journalists from the Global South, recognized as a key actor of the New World Information and Communication Order, to which he contributed practically as editor of *SUNS*, a daily newsletter on global decision-making, published by the Third World Network. Always a challenger of the domination of international news by a handful of agencies of the North, he never accepted government-dominated media as a valid alternative.

How could such a model journalist be against asking questions? My astonishment probably put him in teaching mode: “If you don’t know, you find out, read, research and ask questions off the record. What you just did was to offer a platform for that guy to state the view of developed countries to the world media without the other side being heard ... you don’t know if he’s lying or bluffing and even if you knew, you wouldn’t be able to refute him.”

Raghavan’s advice on when to ask questions is the best summary for a journalist to stick to the social role of providing information with accuracy, without ignoring the fact that throwing light on an event will have an impact on the final outcome.

A specialist on the arcane trade negotiations within the GATT, Raghavan had the unusual patience to explain to me that the ministerial meeting was not about trade at all, but about “services”.

“Like hotels and restaurants?”

“More like finance, insurance, transport, investment, EVERYTHING! The Third World gives up its sovereignty in exchange for vague promises.”

“But they are not agreeing to anything, they will only negotiate.”

“Single undertaking!”

“Single undertaking” meant that “nothing is agreed until everything is agreed”. By putting services on the table, developing countries had shot themselves in the foot, giving the developed world bargaining chips to negotiate against reducing agriculture subsidies, import of textiles into rich countries and the lowering of “non-tariff barriers” that were used to disguise their protectionism as sanitary or environmental safety issues.

In a couple of days, while waiting for our turns at the teletypes to file our stories, I went through an introductory course on the gap between reality and discourse in trade negotiations, which are usually secret or blurred from public, and even parliamentary, scrutiny by obscure jargon.

In the following years, I saw Raghavan at work in Geneva or at ministerial meetings of the WTO around the world. As a journalist he was never allowed inside the negotiating rooms, but walking the corridors or sitting at the coffee shop, he could report on the meetings to his subscribers in detail, thanks to the confidence his sources had in his integrity and high standards.

He wrote daily for negotiators and policymakers who could act on the information he was circulating, but he also reached out to the larger public. His book on the Uruguay Round, *Recolonization*, was one of the rallying points of the mass movements that made “globalization” a bad word on the eve of the new millennium.

The monumental journalistic work of Chakravarthi Raghavan is the best available history of decades of secret dealings that shaped the present-day world. An invaluable resource to understand it and to make transformations possible.

The “Gem of Geneva”

Lori Wallach

Director, Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch

It is rare that one person’s work has a measurable global impact. Yet without a doubt, Chakravarthi Raghavan’s reporting and journalistic dispatches from Geneva about the GATT and WTO informed countless thousands of people and helped to shape the actions of government officials, civil society advocates, scholars and activists worldwide.

I personally learnt so much from Mr. Raghavan. As we say in Washington with respect to the person recognized as a true sage on an issue, it seemed to me that he had forgotten more about the GATT and WTO than anyone else knows or has any chance to learn in a lifetime of scholarship...

That is because well before there was a WTO, he was committed to relentlessly unearthing the real story about GATT negotiations, power dynamics and proposals, and had the intellectual skills and writing talent to translate intentionally arcane trade jargon into what it would mean for people’s lives. And especially what it would mean for people in the Global South and the policy space developing-country governments needed to improve their residents’ economic security, health and wellbeing.

Because of his writing, and the word of Mr. Raghavan’s colleagues at the Third World Network, people worldwide were exposed to a development analysis that expanded the critiques they had developed from their own national perspectives. He helped to get the warning out about what was really at stake with the secretive Uruguay Round GATT negotiations that hatched the WTO. His journalistic dispatches and books helped to shape countless people’s thinking about what was being sold as “trade” negotiations but in reality posed tremendous and unprecedented threats to an array of critical non-trade economic and environmental and societal goals, policies and practices.

When Mr. Raghavan’s daughter let his colleagues at the Third World Network know that his health was failing, I wrote a note to send him my love and thanks and celebrate his truly amazing work and long career fighting for truth and for justice for the Global South. My hope was that it would make him smile to think about how bits of Raghavan wisdom had been sprinkled around Washington D.C. for decades.

There is no doubt that a large and diverse universe of people benefitted from Mr. R’s knowledge of trade matters current and historical, both for the facts and for the context and perspective he always brought to an encyclopaedic array of GATT and WTO matters. And on the United Nations and its various agencies. In recent days I have also learnt that Mr. R had another whole stellar career as a leading journalist in India before he turned his focus to the international bodies.

Mr. Raghavan seemed to blush when I called him the “Gem of Geneva” when visiting him at his apartment after he ‘retired.’ (Retired, but thankfully still sending insightful dispatches.) My nickname for Mr. R is true and well earned. Indeed, when I last visited him, I was stuck on a problem relating to a specific WTO agreement and related domestic policy issues. After some tea and catching up, I explained the issue and noted I was stumped about why the problem was happening and what to do about it. The problem was baked in, he noted. Not a bug, but a feature. He laid out which countries had pushed for the relevant provisions and the decade of pro-WTO history of why they thought it was a good idea. Who else would have known that critical insight?

Awareness of his vast knowledge and expertise is probably why I recall being scared of Mr. Raghavan when Martin Khor first introduced us 25+ years ago. His *Recolonization* book on GATT and the Uruguay Round had been transformational for me. I also had been reading his *SUNS, Third World Economics* and other dispatches since

perhaps 1990. And, I knew Public Citizen's founder Ralph Nader read them. So I was ready to be intimidated. It was a relief to find a kind and gracious person attached to that enormous brain power! Although when he disagreed, Mr. R was gently relentless in his determination to convince a person to rethink her views...

I suspect many people around the world likely share my jumble of sentiments about Chakravarthi Raghavan's passing: Of course, we mourn, feel loss and send our heartfelt condolences to his beloved daughter. We celebrate a rich and long life of meaningful service dedicated to furthering his deeply-held values. And, we feel fortunate to have known him.

A hero of the Global South

Riaz Tayob

Legal adviser, South African chapter of the Southern and East African Trade Institute (SEATINI)

Mr. Chakravarthi Raghavan was a hero of the South. He documented the process of "recolonization", which was the title of his 1990 book. He was subject to criticism from both the mainstream and the progressives for the title, as they deemed it inappropriate. Raghavan stuck to his position, which was no surprise.

In a world where globalization has been normalized as a necessary condition for being part of the international community, Raghavan stuck to history. For him, the history of development was contested, and he relied on history as the only laboratory for the social sciences.

He wandered far and wide in his search for developmental models, and first popularized Friedrich List's "kicking away the ladder", which gave so much traction for developing countries which had to adjust to the new dispensation of the World Trade Organization and the new demands placed on them.

But as a bearer of truth, Raghavan was not always welcomed. And yet, even in the development monoculture in Geneva, he stuck firmly to his principles articulating the acceptably impossible, insisting on the rights of developing countries to mirror history.

Sometimes Raghavan was also ahead of the Third World progressive countries. His monograph *The World Trade Organization and Its Dispute Settlement System: Tilting the balance against the South* (published by the Third World Network) stands out as one of his major works. The irony is that much of his critique of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism was not taken up by the South, but is now part of the US's position against the WTO "court".

As a teacher, Raghavan was second to none. In his Socratic moods he would take your thoughts and play with them, and easily lead you to a correction of your positions.

There is much to be said about the history and genesis of international organizations, and Raghavan saw the WTO from pre-inception to its fully functional avatar today. He was always quick to point out the historical trade-offs and the reasons for the deals that were struck. Far from detracting from the progressive role many developing countries played, Raghavan highlighted the important and oft-difficult choices that were foisted on developing countries and the strenuous steps they had to take to stay in the game without compromising too much. These were narratives that challenged the often one-sided mainstream reportage, that even in the 1990s carried on as if four-fifths of humanity were invisible, unreasonable or not advanced enough to take with good grace what the North was dishing out.

Raghavan was the voice of the development-oriented Third World countries. Not in any representative way, albeit many shared his views, but on the basis of informed opinion and knowing the history of the North. Whether it was pricing of options under the General Agreement on Trade in Services or the history and use of compulsory licences, Raghavan was well-informed, and not wary of embracing new ideas and concepts or refashioning old ones.

Raghavan's central concern was the systems of domination that kept Third World peoples and states in dependent conditions. Third Worldism was what animated his drive for self-determination – a cause he did not give up on, despite the numerous setbacks. If Third Worldism was his particularity in ontology, his universalism was that there were ways of organizing global society that would be to the benefit of all, instead of the Hobbesian approach where life was nasty, brutish and short. A key part of this approach was an understanding that there are multiple conceptions of the good life. And his was a struggle for a good life for all.

As the world reels from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, we recall many of the ideas that Raghavan put forward, like self-reliance, resilience and the need to build local capacities. These are coming back in vogue after the flurry of hype that foisted inappropriate globalization on the Third World. More's the pity that intellectual giants like Raghavan are not read enough, let alone quoted and cited and listened to. And it is sad that the South does not acknowledge its heroes like Raghavan.

However, in the end, those who know, know. Raghavan's intellectual generosity needs to be remembered. Remembered not just because it was Raghavan. But because it was animated by a concern for humanity at large. We do not yet live in a world where colonial privilege can be addressed openly and candidly. But Raghavan never let that stymie his approach. Current conditions, for him, were the product of history. And for him, economic history was central.

We all know that Raghavan did not suffer fools gladly. Those who knew him and worked with him will miss Raghavan keenly. The best of humanity are those who serve others, and Raghavan is part of the best. The movement for trade justice has lost a great teacher. But we know and pray that his next journey is filled with light and peace.

Remarkable explainer of trade rules

Jane Kelsey

Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand

Kua hinga te totara i te wao nui a Tane.

(A mighty totara tree in the forest of Tane Mahuta has fallen.)

For as long as I have worked on international trade, Chakravarthi Raghavan has been there. A world without him is unthinkable. It is a time for great sadness, but also a time to celebrate the remarkable contributions he made over so many decades and how he educated and nurtured later generations to continue his life's work.

I first met Raghavan in Brussels in 1990 during the ministerial conference in the Uruguay Round. That was the first time the critics had gathered, and he and Martin Khor, our other irreplaceable friend and guru, led us through the byzantine proposals for what became the WTO. The gestetnered copies of *SUNS* that began to arrive in the mail were the only source of information we had during that time. Later his book and writings of what happened in the Uruguay Round and afterwards have remained the main go-to source for understanding the often impenetrable. I still use his writings as the most reliable source reference as those with power seek to rewrite history to suit themselves. He always responded patiently to my queries, often explaining what to me should have been obvious!

My thoughts are with Artie and the family, and with the wider Third World Network family to whom he was also a father.

An immeasurably impactful life

Deborah James

Director of International Programs, Center for Economic and Policy Research

It is an honour to join in the celebration of the late Chakravarthi Raghavan's immeasurably impactful life.

In the Our World Is Not for Sale (OWINFS) network of civil society organizations (CSOs) of the Global North and South which are fighting to transform the global trading system embodied in the WTO, we feel his omnipresent guidance through the manifold articles, books and papers he authored throughout his storied life.

For CSOs around the world – as we assess the state of play in the WTO negotiations; articulate positions to advance the interests of developing countries, working people and our shared environment; and determine the strategy of how to defend those interests in the ongoing talks – Mr. Raghavan's insights, analysis and reporting never fail to offer key lessons that we use every day.

From the early days even before the founding of the WTO in 1995, many of our members worked with him, and learnt from his diligent advocacy about the perniciousness of the proposals to transform the GATT into the WTO. The world would be a very different place without his steadfastness and leadership.

For years, I read the *SUNS* articles on the WTO, even after Mr. Raghavan had become the Editor Emeritus. He would often include a few sentences of context in an article on current negotiations. That background of the history of manipulation, arm-twisting and false promises to developing countries in the WTO would often illuminate the current talks with such clarity that negotiators and CSOs were more able to steer clear of dangerous pathways.

Such was the case with his revealing of the false promises of so-called "e-commerce rules" when proponents of negotiations introduced proposals in the WTO in 2016. He likened the "sales pitch" of "e-commerce for development" to how rich countries sold developing countries on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) as "intellectual property for development" during the Uruguay Round. Mr. Raghavan identified that alerting developing countries to the dangers of the proposed digital trade rules was a top priority for preserving developing countries' policy space from encroachment by transnational corporations (TNCs) going forward.

In April 2019, OWINFS organized an array of events at the E-Commerce Week of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), another institution which Mr. Raghavan followed closely throughout his career. Despite being two decades past retirement age, Mr. Raghavan himself wrote articles about the events, including "[Development and E-com free flow of data rules are incompatible](#)"; and he worked with us to edit several articles from members on our events, such as "[South needs data digitalization policies, say CSO experts](#)" and "[South nations take firm stand on geo-economics of data](#)." These articles marked a turning point in the incorporation by UNCTAD's Division on Technology and Logistics of more South-based views on digital industrialization and data for the public good.

The last time I visited him, at his home in Geneva in September 2019, after his dear wife had passed, he still wanted to be updated on anything about the negotiations, and he was still incredibly sharp in sharing his knowledge from decades passed.

One of his last articles on the WTO, "[COVID-19 exposes fragile world order, thin veneer of civilization](#)," encapsulates our current paradigm, in which rich countries engage in \$18 trillion in monetary easing while only allocating \$650 billion in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) to developing countries after dithering for 18 months.

Mr. Raghavan stayed loyal to the cause until his last breath and sought to contribute as much as physically able – for decades past when he could have simply retired. He never gave in to the power or glitter of Geneva and all of the honours and perks that would have gone with a more conventional life.

I shall now modify my previous internal query to ask myself, in difficult moments, "What Would Martin Khor or Mr. Raghavan Do?" As his daughter Artie recently shared with a small group of us, "in difficult moments, when

there was a choice between the easy thing to do and the right thing, he always chose the right thing. He always chose speaking truth to power.”

May his lifelong commitment to these issues continue to inspire the rest of us to continue his legacy towards a global economic governance that could facilitate, rather than constrain, governments’ ability to ensure jobs, development, food security, financial stability, and other needs essential to human survival and thriving.

Empowering critics in the South

Issa Shivji

Professor Emeritus, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Chakravarthi Raghavan’s passing is a great loss to the Third World and the Global South. I never met him but always felt as if I had, so pervasive were his writings on the inequities of international trade in my mind. I knew Raghavan through his prolific writing in *Third World Resurgence*, of which I have been a voracious reader.

Raghavan’s book *Recolonization: GATT, the Uruguay Round and the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1990) was so educative for my generation. I circulated a PDF among friends – to be sure, a pirated copy, in honour of Raghavan who relentlessly argued against intellectual property rights! May he rest in power knowing that he left behind empowering knowledge.

A campaigner against the WTO’s dispute settlement regime

Jacques Berthelot

Agricultural economist

I have been deeply affected by the passing of Chakravarthi Raghavan, a close friend with whom I shared many debates on agricultural trade policies in the last 20 years. I had met him several times in Geneva and he was very helpful in reproducing several of my papers in the *SUNS* daily electronic bulletin. He devoted extraordinary intellectual and physical resources up to the end to denounce the biased rulings of the WTO against developing countries.

Let me, as an unusual tribute, highlight his little-known scientific contribution to explaining the paralysis of the Appellate Body (AB) of the WTO’s dispute settlement mechanism. Since 10 December 2019, the AB has had only one judge out of the required seven, three of whom are needed to hear each appeal. The United States has blocked their appointment since 2017. In his in-depth book of 2019, *The WTO and Its Existential Crisis*, Raghavan showed that the dispute settlement crisis predates Donald Trump’s presidency, and indeed it continues today as Joe Biden is still blocking the appointment of the six missing judges.

Raghavan pointed out that some of the US’s grievances against the dispute settlement system are justified, as the dispute panels and the AB have arrogated to themselves the right to “interpret” the WTO treaty provisions raised by the cases under consideration, whereas the treaties only give them the right to “clarify existing provisions” (Article 3.2 of the WTO Dispute Settlement Understanding), the right to make an “authoritative interpretation” being reserved for the WTO Ministerial Conference and the General Council. Raghavan had already clearly argued this legal necessity in [a 2000 paper](#).

Above all, he clearly demonstrated that the US, and the EU and other Western countries to a lesser extent, have increasingly intervened through the WTO secretariat to impose their interpretation of the treaty provisions in disputes in which they are parties, to the detriment of developing countries: “The secretariat, being required to ‘service’ panels and the AB, have briefed them, behind the backs of the parties to the dispute, by relying on internal notes ‘to provide the background to the ambiguous language’ used in agreements. Rulings have been handed down based on this, invariably against the major developing nations.” And he stressed that the US and

other developed countries “are in fact using the AB impasse to promote their own agendas, including plurilateral negotiations on new issues and their so-called ‘reform agenda’ to further tilt the WTO rules against developing countries and development”.

Raghavan would certainly forgive me when I question his interpretation of the AB reports in the cases of dairy in Canada, sugar in the EU and cotton in the US when he stated in 2019 that “Though they claim to have virtually eliminated all their trade-distorting domestic support programmes, their ostensibly non-distorting ‘Green Box’ support programmes have been adjudged as enabling subsidized exports”. This is not my understanding of the AB reports in these three cases. In the dairy case of December 2002, the AB “held the Panel’s findings under Articles 3.3, 8, 9.1(c), and 10.1 of that Agreement” (on agriculture) and clearly defined when dumping occurs: “Thus, on the basis of the standard of average total cost of production, there will be an export subsidy only if the below-cost portion of an export sale is ‘financed by virtue of governmental action’.” An expression which does not imply payments from the government but that governmental action has allowed milk producers themselves to “cross-subsidize” the share of milk exported at “below the average total cost of production”.

The AB repeated these conclusions for the EU sugar case of April 2005 (paragraph 346.d), and its March 2005 report on cotton stressed that the US’s alleged decoupled production flexibility contract payments, market loss assistance payments and direct payments were not fully decoupled and “are not green box measures”.

If I take the liberty of questioning Chakravarthi on this issue, it is to be faithful to him and prolong his fight to denounce the huge agricultural dumping of developed countries through domestic subsidies benefitting exports. Without Green Box subsidies – which accounted for 86% of the €56.9 billion EU agricultural budget in 2019 – plus €4.7 billion notified in the Blue Box, practically no EU farmer could survive. As agricultural exports accounted for 32% of production in 2018, export subsidies were of €18.4 billion. This would largely undermine the capacity of developing countries to ensure their food sovereignty.

Significant contributions to Indian journalism

S. Sethuraman

Former Chief Editor, Press Trust of India

Chakravarthi Raghavan began his life in journalism in 1945 when he joined the then Reuters-owned Associated Press of India (API) in Bombay. He was assigned to New Delhi in 1948 to report on parliamentary proceedings when the Constitution of independent India was being readied for enactment by the provisional Parliament.

After the first national elections in 1952, Raghavan was among a select group of API journalists from outside Delhi who were assigned to cover the two houses of Parliament. Raghavan headed the team of the new PTI (formerly API) that covered the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament), with Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then Vice-President, in the chair of the house. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru took considerable interest in Parliament work and spoke often in both houses of Parliament on domestic and external issues and problems. (This writer too had joined API/PTI in 1945 and was able to join Raghavan in Delhi in 1957 and was his colleague for the next two decades.)

Raghavan became a leading reporter on Parliament for PTI and then a Special Correspondent covering the Home, Finance and Labour ministries of the Government of India. For the left-oriented Raghavan, these were precious years when he thrashed out his radical approaches with the like-minded in the journalistic community. With his background in law studies and being the son of a lawyer, one of the things Raghavan’s mind was initially set on was to establish the rights of working journalists. There were outcomes in the area of working journalists’ rights and also the bringing together of regional or state-level associations into a national federation. Accordingly, the Indian Federation of Working Journalists was launched in Delhi in October 1950 as a registered trade union.

Raghavan fought for labour rights, social justice, press freedom, and a reshaping of the world economy with equity. As a colleague, I had an excellent time when Raghavan was Editor-in-Chief of PTI. He assigned me to cover Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s tour of the west in 1971 (Bangladesh war) and gave me many other high-powered

assignments. The challenge for Raghavan came soon after he took over as PTI's Editor-in-Chief in 1975, when the national Emergency was imposed and fundamental rights were suspended. Since he could not bow to the dictates of the Emergency regime, he opted to go to Geneva and take up Third World causes. Raghavan thus ended his remarkable three-decade-long association with PTI in the early decades of India's freedom.

When Raghavan moved to Geneva he was already a UN specialist, having worked in New York and reported from the UN headquarters for PTI in 1962-69. This writer had interesting moments with Raghavan when we were together reporting on UNCTAD sessions in Manila (1979) and Belgrade (1983), the latter ending in a total North-South break, raising more issues for Raghavan's work in Geneva. I was interested in Raghavan's writings as we shared a common interest in bringing about a more equitable world economic order. The emergence of the Group of 77 developing countries dealing with major economic issues at the UN, which Raghavan had been tracking as the PTI New York correspondent, provided some stimulus.

Raghavan's prolific writings, when based in Geneva, on developmental issues and a series of publications based on intense research over a 40-year period made him a cult figure in dedicated journalism.

Support for investigative journalism in India

K.S. Jayaraman

Former Science Editor, Press Trust of India

But for Mr. Chakravarthi Raghavan's support I would never have become a science reporter with the Press Trust of India (PTI) in 1973. This was at a time when newspapers rejected my application on the ground that there was no need for a full-time reporter for science. Raghavan also faced some opposition from the PTI employees union for my appointment as a special correspondent but he fully backed me.

I remember him for the help and encouragement I received from him whenever my investigative stories raised controversies, sometimes putting PTI in trouble. For instance, when our 1974 story that US-funded research on mosquitoes had biological warfare implications – commended by the Public Accounts Committee – raised objection from the health ministry, Raghavan defended me, saying he, as chief editor, “did careful re-checking with every top source I could command then, including our intelligence agencies, before I got the story issued.” Raghavan believed that this “anti-Americanism” mentioned in the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) by then Health Minister Karan Singh “was an element” in his removal from PTI when Samachar came up during the 20 months of the Emergency in India during 1975-77.

The 1970s crusader against biowarfare

P.K. Rajagopalan

Fellow of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and former Director, Vector Control Research Centre, Indian Council of Medical Research

It was sometime in 1973 that I had the opportunity to meet Chakravarthi Raghavan (CR), who was then the Chief Editor of the Press Trust of India (PTI). I was working as a senior scientist at the World Health Organization (WHO)/ Indian Council of Medical Research's Genetic Control of Mosquitoes Unit (GCMU).

I was officially asked to be in touch with K.S. Jayaraman (KSJ), then the Chief Science Correspondent of PTI. The background of the meeting can be traced to biowarfare accusations made by KSJ against WHO. His investigations led to an adjournment motion passed in the Indian Parliament, and detailed investigations by two (167th and 200th) Public Accounts Committees, which have been published.

During 1973-75, I had to meet CR on several occasions regarding these investigations. It was due to his untiring efforts that the matter was handled at the highest level in the Government. Starting with the Scientific Adviser to the Prime Minister, Ashok Parthasarathy, Mr. P.N. Haksar, the Personal Secretary to the Prime Minister, the Chief of Staff of the Indian Army, Gen. Bewoor, and the Research and Analysis Wing were all involved at one time or another, and ultimately the GCMU was closed down.

CR had to pay the price for his patriotism and ultimately had to move to Geneva. I received much advice from CR, which has fashioned my writing about the way scientific research is handled by governmental agencies in India, articles published after my retirement in 1990 and published in independent journals like *Frontline*.

CR had asked KSJ to write the complete story of the GCMU investigations and piece together several published and unpublished documents which were known in detail to only CR, KSJ and myself. But with the tragic passing away of CR and the ill-health and age of both KSJ and myself, this will now never see the light of the day.

An entire era of honest science investigations and anti-imperialistic campaigns has ended. Nandita Haksar, daughter of P.N. Haksar, had written about CR and the GCMU project in 2020. I had the greatest respect and admiration for CR as a patriotic journalist, and we will not have another like him, who risked his career and life in India to bring out the truth about foreign collaborations. May his soul rest in peace.

Challenger of neoliberalism

D. Ravi Kanth
Journalist based in Geneva

On a cold December morning in 1997, I landed up at Room C-504 in the Palais des Nations (the office of the United Nations) in Geneva. It was a small room that could barely accommodate two persons. But space did not matter as much as the opportunity to work with a well-known journalist, writer and analyst of global trade issues: Chakravarthi Raghavan.

Raghavan's innings in Geneva after 1978 in a way began after the Tokyo Round of GATT negotiations that was concluded in April 1979. The reportage on GATT issues in those days was largely the preserve of the dominant Western news agencies and newspapers. The concerns of the Global South mattered little in their coverage of GATT negotiations and developments. For example, the decision on the "Enabling Clause" (officially called the Decision on Differential and More Favourable Treatment, Reciprocity and Fuller Participation of Developing Countries) adopted under the Tokyo Round would not have figured in their reportage. That decision created a scaffolding for special and differential treatment for developing countries in the global trading system. It was Raghavan who reported about this decision and analyzed other decisions in depth for developing countries to be able to prepare their strategies. (Ironically, over 40 years after that decision on the Enabling Clause, attempts are currently underway to dismantle special and differential treatment.)

Raghavan's presence in Geneva from the late 1970s brought about a seismic shift in the coverage of issues pursued by the *daridranarayans* (a term coined by Gandhi to describe the wretched conditions in which poor people lived in India) in the global trading system. Thanks to Raghavan, the bread-and-butter issues of the developing countries slowly started coming to centrestage. Despite numerous institutional hurdles and asymmetrical information flows, Raghavan worked to fathom the motives of the GATT/WTO apparatus.

Little wonder that Raghavan was not among those preferred journalists who would carry the official line. It is well established that the GATT/WTO have worked to advance the interests of the US, the European Union and other countries of the North. The priorities of the trans-Atlantic elephants eclipsed the developing countries' demands. Attempts to question those priorities were seen as putting spokes in the relentless march of the liberal free trade agenda.

In his daily reportage, books and in public forum discussions, Raghavan challenged this monolithic new neoliberal order at the GATT/WTO that contributed to hyper-globalization.

Almost 20 years after Raghavan firmly established his presence in Geneva and became an international authority on trade issues, with solid support and assistance from the late Martin Khor of the Third World Network, I started my work with this venerable editor.

His encyclopaedic memory of events since the 1940s in India, Washington, New York and Geneva was useful and a source of institutional knowledge/information. Raghavan always talked about well-known leaders and heads of governments and organizations on a first-name basis, reflecting an intimate relationship with them. It was amazing to know about his close connection with so many public personalities on a "I told them" basis.

On my first day of work, Raghavan said I must learn WordPerfect, the by-then-outdated word processing application, if I had to work with him. After having worked on Microsoft Word, a sudden shift to WordPerfect seemed difficult. He tasked me with arranging the daily issue of *SUNS* by 4 p.m. every day using WordPerfect. Having never worked on preparing/bringing out an issue, it was like jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

Also, a hierarchical working relationship with Raghavan weighed me down. Slowly, things came to breaking point. It was sometime in June 1998 that I left *SUNS* although that made it extremely difficult for me personally.

In 2015, Raghavan called me to his place to discuss if I could work with him again. I accepted his offer and have been writing almost on a daily basis for *SUNS* during the past six years. He praised my work and, after I covered the WTO's Buenos Aires ministerial meeting in December 2017, wrote: "Ravi, you must be terribly tired. You have done a remarkable job. Take rest and sleep, before you return."

Despite his deteriorating health and the passing away in 2019 of Kalyani, his life partner, Raghavan continued with his daily dose of work until he could no longer do so as his health gradually declined over the past year.

His tenacious and committed work on trade issues will be difficult to emulate. Raghavan remains etched in my memory. May his soul rest in peace.

Sage to the Third World

T. Rajamoorthy

Editor of Third World Resurgence, Third World Network

Mr. Chakravarthi Raghavan was in many respects an exceptional man, one who devoted his entire life to the cause of the developing countries.

As a youth, he was a participant in the mass struggle for Indian independence. The cause of the developing countries then animated him and became his preoccupation. As he witnessed the newly independent Third World countries enter the international arena, it was clear to him that they were not going to get a fair deal from the rich developed countries.

The strength of the developing countries lay in their numbers; what they lacked was a unity of vision. Through his journalistic endeavours and writings, Raghavan hoped to highlight the key issues on which the developing countries could unite to protect their interests, articulate their concerns and advance their cause in the face of the attempts by the rich countries to marginalize them.

For this unstinting service to the cause of the Third World, Raghavan will be long remembered by these countries that are now bereft of his sage counsel.

For many of us in the Third World Network who worked with him for decades, his departure will be deeply felt. He was a witness to the crucial developments in the Third World in the post-World War II years and in some cases

even helped to shape them. There is no one else living with that wealth of historical experience. His death leaves a void that cannot be filled.

“What would Mr. Raghavan do?”

Sanya Reid Smith

Legal adviser and senior researcher, Third World Network

Generations of staff of the Third World Network were fortunate to have benefitted from Mr. Chakravarthi Raghavan’s immense experience, institutional memory and living example of courage to take positions that may be unpopular with the powerful.

Mr. Raghavan was a one-person walking library who never hesitated to share his knowledge with those who needed to learn from him. We are endlessly grateful to his family for the time they gave up with him that enabled Mr. Raghavan to help so many countries with his writings over the decades. For years, Mr. Raghavan was a steady guiding light for trade activists from the North and the South. We are privileged to still have his books and articles to assist us, and when we struggle in the future to know what to do, we can ask ourselves: “What would Mr. Raghavan do?”

Dedicated to cause of developing countries

Vicente Paolo Yu

Senior Legal Adviser, Third World Network, and former Deputy Executive Director, South Centre, Geneva

I first met Chakravarthi Raghavan in 2001 in Geneva. He was speaking to a group of NGO activists at a meeting that had been organized by the Third World Network’s late Martin Khor to plan out strategies for NGO advocacy on economic and trade justice. This was at a time when the World Trade Organization was deep in preparations for its Ministerial Conference that would be held later that year in Doha. Raghavan’s erudite and clear exposition on the interlinkages between the political dynamics, economic interests and negotiating inequalities that characterized the WTO negotiations spoke truth to power, borne out of his decades-long observation of international trade negotiations and his personal engagement with many of the key actors.

Shining brightly throughout his presentation then, in his writings and in subsequent encounters I had with Raghavan, was a deep dedication and commitment to and concern for the developing countries. And a willingness to expose and challenge the injustices that arise because of the inequality that exists between developed and developing countries.

The lessons that Raghavan imparted and the insights that he put forward through his writings have been and should always be key parts of the syllabus for those who are interested in learning the truth about the inequalities that underlie global economic and trade relations.

Tireless defender of the South

Kanaga Raja

Editor of the South-North Development Monitor (SUNS)

I first heard about Mr. Chakravarthi Raghavan way back in the 1990s when I was working for the Third World Network at its head office in Penang, Malaysia, where I was tasked, among other things, with editing *Third World Economics*, one of TWN’s publications.

TWE, as it was called, carried articles written by Mr. Raghavan from Geneva on various issues, mostly dealing with trade, economics and development, including coverage of meetings that took place at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), other UN specialized agencies as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

His articles were not just detailed but also provided deep insights into what was actually going on behind the scenes in these various meetings, and the more I read these articles, the more I wondered who this person was and how I could meet him.

As luck would have it, or maybe it was indeed predestined, I got my chance in the summer of 1996 when Mr. Raghavan was scheduled to cover a conference in Jakarta and needed someone in Geneva to produce the *South-North Development Monitor* or *SUNS*, of which he was Chief Editor at the time.

So, I was asked to come to Geneva around two weeks in advance so that I could familiarize myself with *SUNS* before Mr. Raghavan left for Jakarta. When we met up at his office at the UN complex, one of the first things he asked me was whether I knew anything about computers and word processing programs. Fortunately, I had had some extensive experience working with computers since the early 1980s. He then produced a binder about a quarter-inch thick and asked me to read it up. It contained detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to download files from a news server operated by the Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency, whose articles were also carried in *SUNS*, etc.

I did read up the entire contents of the binder that Mr. Raghavan himself had written up so meticulously. Over the next few days, he would periodically check on me to see if I was doing everything properly in producing *SUNS* and not messing up in any way. We seemed to hit it off during this period when he realized that I was able to independently prepare and produce *SUNS*, and that he could leave his “baby” safely in my hands while he was away.

Ever since that conference in Jakarta, every time he needed to cover a meeting outside of Geneva, he would request that I come to Geneva and take care of *SUNS* while he was away. Eventually, I came over to Geneva in 2001 on a permanent basis to help Mr. Raghavan with *SUNS* and was at his side for some two decades.

Mr. Raghavan’s accomplishments are too numerous to mention here. During a long and illustrious career spanning more than six decades, he had rubbed shoulders with many prominent figures in recent history: Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Lyndon B. Johnson and other world leaders, as well as several UN Secretaries-General including U Thant, just to name a few. He was also at the conception of the Group of 77 and UNCTAD while he was in New York in the 1960s.

Mr. Raghavan was Editor Emeritus of *SUNS* from 2005, following his retirement from the post of Chief Editor. He was earlier a longstanding reporter for IPS in Geneva.

Under his chief editorship, *SUNS*, now in its 41st year of publication, developed a solid reputation for detailed and accurate reporting, as well as insightful analyses of various issues of key importance to developing countries.

Indeed, Mr. Raghavan’s assessment and analysis of the key messages highlighted in some flagship UN reports and publications would cause some UN officials responsible for these reports to sit up and ask, “Did we actually mean to say that...?” Such was the power of his writing.

Moreover, the reports of various meetings, in particular those at the WTO, that were published in *SUNS* were so detailed and accurate that some diplomats in the missions who received *SUNS* would tell us privately that rather than submitting their own reports of a meeting to their capitals, they would instead just forward the *SUNS* issue carrying a report of that meeting.

Mr. Raghavan, as the Third World Network put it, was “a pioneer in his reporting on the GATT and the Uruguay Round when those life-changing negotiations took place out of public sight, including the scrutiny of elected representatives.” He was also the author of several books, including his seminal work *Recolonization: GATT, the Uruguay Round and the Third World*, which narrated in great detail the struggles and challenges faced by the

Third World against the onslaught of globalization. Mr. Raghavan was indeed a giant and tireless defender of the South right until the very end.

Throughout his illustrious career, he also served as a guide and an inspiration to many other journalists especially from the South, as well as a generation of civil society activists from both the South and the North.

On a personal note, he was my mentor and guide for over two decades, on both the professional and personal fronts. Martin Khor, another giant from the South, who sadly passed away early last year, once said to me in private: “Do you know why Mr. Raghavan always asks for you [to come to Geneva]? It’s because you are like the son he never had.”

Mr. Raghavan will be sorely missed.

The man who warned us about recolonization

Vijay Prashad

Historian, editor, journalist and Director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research

This article first appeared in [NewsClick](#).



Chakravarthi Raghavan (right), then with the Press Trust of India and President of the United Nations Correspondents Association, speaking with UN Secretary-General U Thant at UN headquarters in 1967. *UN Photo/Yutaka Nagata*

The first time I had dinner with Chakravarthi Raghavan was, with his wife Kalyani, in his apartment in Geneva about 20 years ago. He placed me in a chair near him and told me story after story about his time as the Editor-in-Chief of the news agency Press Trust of India (PTI). Those were important years – 1971-76 – during which press freedom came under strain, particularly after Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared an Emergency in 1975. Raghavan had worked for PTI since the formation of India in 1947. He cut his teeth covering politics in the country

before going to New York for a decade from 1962 to 1971 as PTI's Special Correspondent. I was happy to sit next to this legend, listening to his stories, learning about journalism.

Raghavan despised authority, particularly unchecked political power. The culture of obsequiousness that had developed around Indira Gandhi and her inner circle bothered him. PTI, being a non-governmental agency, nonetheless had an air of officialness about it, a reverence that allowed Raghavan to test the limits of political power.

His most famous story – investigated by PTI's science correspondent K.S. Jayaraman – was about the 1974 experiments conducted by the CIA in India with forms of biological warfare. The dogged reporting by Raghavan and Jayaraman led to Indira Gandhi closing down the project. Decades later, Raghavan remained proud of this story.

In August 1975, Raghavan was summoned by the Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting – Vidya Charan Shukla – for “consultations”. Shukla asked Raghavan to set up a government news agency; but Raghavan refused with a nasty joke about authoritarianism, which – he told me – was his downfall. Nonetheless, the government put out an ordinance in December 1975 to create such an agency, although it was squelched by the intervention of a few people in Gandhi's cabinet (including Jagjivan Ram).

As retaliation against Raghavan and PTI, the All-India Radio ended its contract with PTI and with United News of India, effectively depriving them of revenue. Raghavan, along with Kuldeep Nayar, Nikhil Chakravarty and others, had been very vocal against the Emergency. In December 1976, his refusal to agree to Shukla's proposal and his outspokenness led to his termination from PTI. The orders, he said, came from either Indira Gandhi or her son, Sanjay Gandhi. The PTI management told him that he could go to Bhubaneswar to report on social and cultural news. Raghavan knew that this was a way to silence him. He did not accept. The door to PTI closed for him.

Not long after, Raghavan left India for Geneva. While he was PTI's Special Correspondent at the United Nations, he had become the President of the UN Correspondents Association in 1967. This brought him into contact with a range of reporters and editors who worked in and around the United Nations.

In 1975, at the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session in August-September, the Dag Hammarskjold Foundation held a seminar on its report *What Now? Another Development*. Raghavan had reviewed the report for PTI. That review and his contacts in New York brought him to participate in a seminar of Third World journalists.

At that meeting, Raghavan met Marc Nerfin, a Swiss journalist who had written the Dag Hammarskjold report. The conversations at the seminar circled around the New International Economic Order (NIEO), which had passed the General Assembly in 1974. The NIEO had urged the international community to reshape the world order around the needs of people over profit, with an eye on the creation of institutions to further human wellbeing (notably in education and healthcare) and on the creation of regulatory bodies to constrain the profit motive. The participants at the seminar agreed to a strong declaration, which included this: “The New International Economic Order requires a new framework of world information and communications.”

Nerfin had been the President of the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (IFDA) and the Vice President of Inter Press Service (IPS). Inspired by the seminar's call for a “new framework”, Nerfin asked IFDA to publish the *Special United Nations Service (SUNS)* from March 1980. This was a daily news bulletin that would provide reliable news from the UN system and about the world.

Two key phrases marked the work of *SUNS* – “the Third World point of view” and “South-South cooperation”. Raghavan joined Nerfin in Geneva, initially as correspondent for IPS and with IFDA from 1978 to 1990. He would eventually take over *SUNS* when IFDA could no longer finance it. Not a day went by when *SUNS* was not to be found on the front table of the UN missions of the governments of the G77 states. It was the principal hub of information from a Third World point of view to enhance South-South cooperation, read by a range of people including diplomats and activists.

The publication of *SUNS* coincided with the release of the MacBride Report in 1980 from the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). From its founding in 1945, UNESCO had been tasked with the democratization of communications. Any attempt to advance these issues, Raghavan told me, was met by anti-communist virulence by the US government. In fact, when the draft of the MacBride Report came out in 1979, the US media organizations pilloried it for seeking to create a New World Information and Communication Order. Nothing in the report was outside the kinds of debates Raghavan and Nerfin had led in the lead-up to the launch of *SUNS*: communication is a fundamental right; imbalances in the news structure had to be addressed; communications had to be sensitive to both cultural identities and individual rights; national communications plans had to be integrated into development projects; the New World Information and Communication Order had to advance the objectives of the NIEO. “The MacBride Report should have led to deeper debates about the need for a more credible communications system,” Raghavan told me. Instead, it was set aside, and the information order favoured the interests of corporate wealth and the capitals of the North.

In 1980, Raghavan took the reins of *SUNS*, shortly afterwards renaming it the *South-North Development Monitor (SUNS)*. These bulletins were the only place where one could follow the debates around development and trade policy. Few newspapers had the capacity to train journalists to follow international trade debates, and fewer papers from the South could station journalists in Geneva (as well as Brussels, Rome, Paris and New York). *SUNS*, as a kind of wire service of the South, was able to do the job for them.

Raghavan was the person who seemed to be in every important trade meeting, and he showed us how to write about the complexity of North-South trade debates in a way that broke through the jargon and laid out the main issues on the table. He spent the next two decades following the shenanigans at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (created in 1948) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (created in 1964). He watched the national development agenda of the Bandung Spirit being undermined by the countries of the North, as they used their power to rewrite trade rules and prevent regulatory frameworks from being established. This reportage from Raghavan was crucial.

In the 1980s, Raghavan alerted us to a sly manoeuvre taking place in the trade negotiations. The Northern trade representatives had begun to argue against the established form of intellectual property rights, namely that patents could only be for the process of production and not the product itself (process-based patents). This meant that Southern states could reverse-engineer any pharmaceutical drug, for instance, and produce it without rent if they used a different process.

In the Uruguay Round of the GATT from September 1986, the Northern representatives argued for a new set of policies – Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), which would reverse the patent protection to cover the product and not the process. This would prevent reverse-engineering and would condemn states of the South – by and large – to being consumers of Northern products. When confronted by the arguments of these Northern trade representatives, Raghavan wrote that they are mistaking the word “rights” for the word “privileges”; these are intellectual property privileges because they are given to companies by states through an act of law.

It was thanks to Raghavan that across the Global South movements began to grow against the new kind of piracy grounded in such shifts in international law. Third World states, weakened by the debt crisis, simply did not have the material independence nor the courage to stand up against the pressure from the Global North.

In India, texts by the Delhi Science Forum and the National Working Group on Patent Rights, as well as texts from the Malaysia-based Third World Network (edited by Raghavan’s friend Martin Khor), enlightened us about what was happening. I remember reading and re-reading P. Sainath’s fantastic *A Layperson’s Reader on Intellectual Property Rights* (Bombay: Indian School of Social Sciences, 1991), and sitting with Amit Sengupta in the Delhi Science Forum office to jointly despair at the direction of these new rules.

When I first met Raghavan a few years later, I told him about how much his work meant to those of us in the trenches against the new kind of globalization, which he called – when he won the Group of 77/UNDP Award in 1997 – “the active neo-mercantilism of the powerful countries lurking behind the rhetoric of neoliberalism and

globalization.” The argument he had been making since 1986 would shape his landmark book, *Recolonization: GATT, the Uruguay Round and the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1990).

The foreword to *Recolonization* was written by Julius Nyerere, the former President of Tanzania and the Chair of the South Commission (1987-90). In a few pages, Nyerere wrote about the implications of globalization and neoliberalism, the reality that a new international economic order would be created, but one that would be the very opposite of the NIEO. Raghavan’s book, Nyerere wrote, would be “welcomed by genuine internationalists as an alert signal – warning of an attempt to perpetuate and extend the inequities of an international economic structure which is already leading to misery, hunger, ignorance, and death in the Third World.”

This book, he wrote, “can contribute to the struggle against the serious danger which threatens future world stability and peace.” The South Commission report – *The Challenge to the South* (London: Oxford University Press, 1990) – came out that same year. Raghavan had helped – behind the scenes – with the Commission, including writing a paper called “Recolonization,” which was the basis of his book.

That was in 1990. Nothing stopped for Raghavan. For the next three decades, he would fight to defend the rights of the peoples of the South to have a trade and development agenda that benefitted them and not those who sucked the world dry for their own profit.

His articles for *SUNS* and for *Third World Resurgence* would be published in dossiers made by anti-globalization activists and would be distributed to the smell of tear gas in Seattle or to the hum of air conditioners at the Doha conference centre. All of us read him because he summarized for us the essential points of the attack on the South in the arcane negotiations at a range of places, such as UNCTAD meetings and at meetings of the Intellectual Property Coalition.

In 1992, he wrote me a long letter, angry that the US administration of Bill Clinton had forced the shutting down of the UN Centre on Transnational Corporations, set up in 1975 as part of the NIEO process to keep an eye on these cross-border behemoths that had begun to override states and drive their policy agenda.

I would joke with Raghavan about my frequent trips to Geneva, which always resulted in several sessions drinking tea with Raghavan and Kalyani. I would say: “I come to visit you both and to eat at Café de Paris” (whose beef steaks would make Raghavan shudder!).

Whenever I came to report from the UN or to speak there, Raghavan would grill me about each encounter I had, every idea I learnt. He was hungry like that. When I was digging through the South Commission archives, now sadly destroyed, it was Raghavan who guided me along with Branislav Gosovic, Devaki Jain, S.P. Shukla, R. Krishnamurti and others (that work became part of my book *The Poorer Nations: A Possible History of the Global South*, which could not have been written without the work of people such as Raghavan).

It is not enough to say that a generation has slipped away. Raghavan’s stubbornness to adhere to the basic values of the UN Charter defined him. He was not going to allow the tide to carry him away. Even now, as he slipped into the darkness on 26 September 2021, he leaves us with that anchor in the hope that we carry forward his obstinacy for reason, for truth and for humanity.