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## **In memoriam: Raja Tridiv Roy**

*Syed Munir Wasti\**

The case of Raja Tridiv Roy who died on 17 September 2012 is a classic manifestation of the incurable habit of Pakistanis to ignore the achievements of their national heroes. Raja Tridiv Roy was one of that rare breed who loved Pakistan wholeheartedly and did his utmost to resist the machinations of its enemies to harm it. For a person of royal lineage and impressive background who gave up so much for so little, Raja Tridiv Roy appears in a class of his own. Urging the 13 tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts [CHT] to be loyal to Pakistan in the 1971 war, refusing to defect to the new government of pro-Indian puppets in Bangladesh – this in spite of the emotional blackmail of Sh. Mujibur Rahman who sent Raja Tridiv Roy's aged mother to induce him to change sides, receiving a hero's welcome by Z.A. Bhutto at Islamabad airport are some of the remarkable achievements of an extraordinary life. Apart from all this is his on-the-ground support to the Pak army in East Pakistan dramatically recorded in *The Way it was* by Brigadier Z.A. Khan. During the 1971 crisis, Raja Tridiv Roy became a one-man mission who tirelessly travelled to gather support for Pakistan in the countries of South East Asia.

On a personal level, his losses – in terms of separation from family and the tribal people who adored him – and all his ancestral palaces, land and islands – were inestimable. The self-effacing Raja never referred to them treating all his losses as the price a principled person pays for loyalty to the Pakistan he loved.

Never returning to the beautiful country he had ruled, he makes a parallel with the learned Dr Hamidullah who never ever returned to his native Hyderabad [Deccan]. (Yes, 'this was a man!' in the Shakespearean sense.)

His great sacrifices are only paralleled by their gross neglect by successive governments in Pakistan whose functionaries could not match

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him in patriotism, ability or vision. So he was shunted off to distant South America for 14 years. After his return, he was appointed to the federal cabinet as ‘minister-without-portfolio’ for life along with Mr. Mahmood Ali, also from East Pakistan.

Raja Tridiv Roy lived in Islamabad mostly alone, sometimes visiting the Buddhist city of Taxila and sometimes visiting countries with Buddhist relics. He interpreted Buddhism correctly as a protest against the stranglehold of Hinduism especially in matters of caste. There are his two collections of short stories, *The Windswept Wahini* [1972] and *They Simply Belong* [1974]. He did write a number of other short stories, journalistic pieces and reports – all of which deserve to be collected and published. His delightful autobiography *The Departed Melody* [2005] is a beautiful and evocative picture of a way of life gone past with the personal element featuring as well. This was followed up by *South American Diaries* [2008], an account of his diplomatic service in South America. These two books have been reviewed by the present writer in *Pakistan Perspectives* [Pakistan Study Centre, University of Karachi], Vol.9, No.1 (January–June 2004) and Vol.15, No.1 (January–June 2010) respectively.

I have had the extraordinary honour of meeting, corresponding, and exchanging ideas with Raja Tridiv Roy. He was in a class by himself. He was a handsome person who spoke beautiful English with utter fluency. His creative works [above] set him out from the common lot of privileged persons. He was deeply sensitive to human suffering. He was a most helpful person going out of his way to assist persons in whatever he could. In one letter [26 April 2006], he writes to me thus: ‘from earliest recollection Tipu Sultan and Sirajuddaula were the greatest of the greats for me.’ Once when I was teaching T.S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*, I found several symbolic references to the ‘wheel’ which is also a central symbol of Buddhism, representing the teachings of the Buddha. I requested Raja Tridiv Roy to send me his interpretation on this which he most kindly did. His note on the *dharmachakra* [the wheel] was most useful.

Once, while Raja Tridiv Roy was transiting through Karachi in 1998, I invited him to the University of Karachi and took him round the English and International Relations Departments and the General History Museum full of Buddhist artifacts. After reaching Islamabad, he wrote to me thus: ‘I enjoyed the visit to the University, and the pleasure of meeting so many intellectuals ...’

Yes, Raja Tridiv Roy’s ‘departed melody’ will linger on for long.