

Brief CV of Vithal Rajan

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Date of Birth : 16 July 1936

Vithal Rajan (BA Hons McGill, PhD London School of Economics) emigrated to Canada from India in the mid 1960's, and worked for several years as Information Officer for Canadian Industries Ltd. (I.C.I.) in Montreal. A special task assigned to him was developing a program of 'social consciousness' for the company.

Following the intensification of the Vietnam War, he involved himself in the peace movement, and served as a 'mediator' in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in the early 1970's on behalf of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Commission for Justice & Peace. Later, he was a founder faculty member of the School of Peace Studies, Bradford University, U.K. Following the suspension of civil liberties in India by Mrs Indira Gandhi, he felt impelled to return to India, and based at Hyderabad, he worked as Senior Faculty, Administrative College of India, and later in an honorary capacity with several civil society organizations, especially with 'dalit' communities of very poor women.

He was founder volunteer chair of the Deccan Development Society, which promotes integrated rural development in the semi-arid poverty-stricken Deccan plateau, literacy and community health programs, and ecological agriculture. Several civil society organizations like his own helped establish the fact that poor women can save and manage very successfully large funds in their community interest. He was honorary chair of the ASP Dalit-Bahujan Cooperatives Federation of Andhra Pradesh, a federation of over a hundred thousand member families of the poorest of the poor. He is a founder honorary Trustee of the AME India Foundation which helps small dryland farmers of southern India achieve sustainable rural livelihoods. He is Emeritus Chair of SKS, the leading micro-finance agency of India, **and Emeritus Chair of the Confederation of Voluntary Associations**, a network of 800 agencies, which work through community empowerment for harmony between poor Hindu and Muslim communities. This association also plays a vital role in the Pakistan-India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy, a citizens' initiative to bring peace to the two great powers of South Asia. He was on the board of several other organizations, including the Environment Protection Training & Research Institute of the government of India. He was an honorary member, Poverty Eradication Mission, of the Andhra Pradesh government. Special projects he has initiated include ecological management of agricultural crops, such as cotton, without resort to dangerous pesticides; the introduction of solar energy, and LED lamps for the benefit of poor communities.

He has instituted special scholarships for graduate students at the Ramanujan Institute for Advanced Study in Mathematics at the University of Madras in memory of his late father, Shri Srinivas Rajan ICS [Madhya Pradesh] ; and for girls at Vidyodaya High School Madras, in honour of his mother, Ms Champakavalli Rajan, who was in the first batch of the school.

Over the last three decades, he has also worked on brief stints in Europe, as Chair of World Studies, International School of Geneva; as Director, Ethics and Education, World Wide Fund for Nature International, Switzerland; and as Executive Director, the Right Livelihood Awards, Sweden (better known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize'), and continues on its Jury.

He has written extensively on academic and development-related issues, and recently taken to writing fiction, short stories and plays, published by The Writers' Workshop, Kolkata; Random House India; and Rupa Publications. He is an active member of the Transcend Global Network for Peace and Development; the Jung Centre, Bangalore; and The Little Theatre, Hyderabad, India.

In 2006, he was made an Officer, of the Order of Canada, that country's highest national honour, for a lifetime of achievement and merit of a high degree, especially in service to Canada and to humanity at large. He was invited to be a founder Councillor, of the World Future Council, at its Inaugural Congress in Hamburg, in May 2007.

He lives in Hyderabad, India, with his wife, Dr. K. Lalita, a well-known feminist and writer. His daughter, Diia Rajan, a former intern with IDRC in Ottawa, is at present working on a gender and citizenship project in India focused on minority women who have experienced trauma in Gujarat, Mumbai and Hyderabad.

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DR. VITHAL RAJAN

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Vithal Rajan wearing the Insignia of an Officer of the Order of Canada at the Investiture Ceremony at Rideau Hall, Ottawa, on October 6, 2006



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