

DR MK RAJAKUMAR'S LEGACY

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Finding Dr MK Rajakumar's published works was a little difficult but it was done.¹ Finding information about the man himself was much more difficult, that is, until late 2008. Some years ago, I asked senior members of the Academy who Rajakumar was. In hushed tone, some of them whispered "he had a colourful past", others mentioned his incarceration under Internal Security Act, but the reason for this was somewhat of a mystery. To the younger members in the Academy, Dr MK Rajakumar was always held in awe. Many were aware of the sacrifices he made for the cause of primary care/family medicine. He was a socialist at heart and General Practice gave him another avenue to serve the poor.

With his passing on 22nd November 2008, there was an explosion of information about him. The trail of information was a vivid illumination of his past, the tributes painted Rajakumar as a man with passion for life, with deep devotion to his family and friends, and his selfless service to his patients and society. This is a legacy that should make us ponder and possibly emulate.

On the day of his passing, an entry about him appeared in Wikipedia.² At least two newspapers reported his death.³⁻⁵ His admirer spoke highly of his commitment to the poor.⁶ He was unique among the family physicians from Asia that had helmed the international body on family medicine, the World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA). His contribution to the development of family medicine at the world level earned a well deserved mention by the current President of that movement.⁷ *Aliran Monthly* devoted an issue to his memory,⁸⁻¹⁵ with reminiscences from his friends who spoke of great friendship that cut across ethnic boundary.

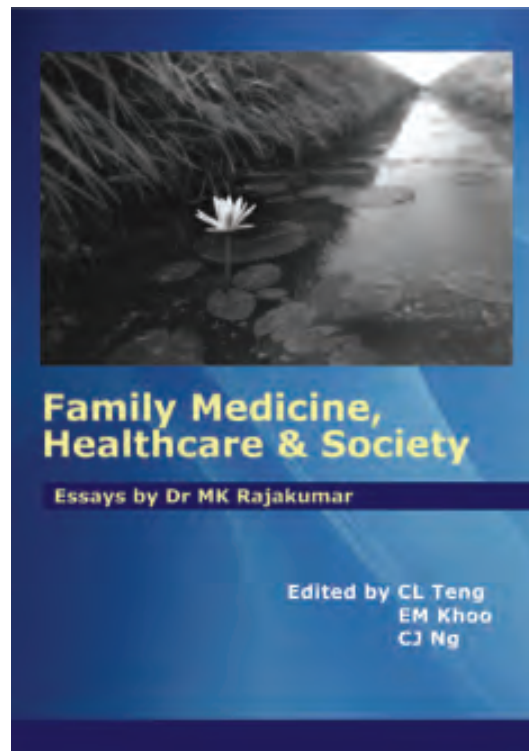
On 4th January 2009, a public memorial service to his memory held at the Dewan Tunku Canselor of the University of Malaya drew attendance from a wide segment of the society, including leaders from both sides of the political divide. There were touching tributes from his family, friends and socialist comrades. The souvenir book produced for this occasion was aptly named *Fajar* (Dawn)¹⁶ – taken from the name of the student magazine he co-produced with his socialist friends while studying at the University of Malaya (Singapore) in 1954. An article in this magazine elicited the wrath of the then colonial government culminating in the famous Fajar trial. You can read a re-interpretation of this trial by Sulaiman Abdullah.¹⁷

Dr MK Rajakumar, despite his tremendous contributions, was a modest man indeed; as his good friend Jomo Kwame Sundaram rightly said, he was "an unsung hero".¹⁸

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The full text of *Family Medicine, Health & Society* is now available at
<http://www.ejournal.afpm.org.my/Rajakumar/index.html>

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