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THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE

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THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE

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by Lahore artist Ahmed Ali.



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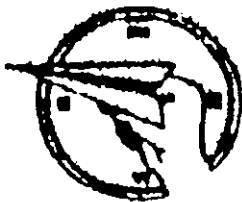
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On-line Nepal

The rechristened Himal's critical assessment of the Internet and netizens in South Asia sheds light on the "in thing" on information technology in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka (January 1998). But disappointingly, though Himal is published from Nepal, except for just a mention in Shahidul Alam's piece of Sanjeev Rajbhandari, the so-called "Mr Internet" of Nepal, nothing was said about the Internet and netizen happenings in Nepal. I hope this note will serve to make up for the shortcoming.

At present, in Nepal, there are three ISPs (Internet Service Providers), namely Moscom, World Link and CCSL, which are providing full-fledged competitive Internet services. And prospects are that the number of ISPs in Nepal will shoot up, with the ever-increasing demand for Net connections and with the government getting ready to become more flexible on its Internet policy. There's also the possibility of subsidising the satellite connection charge.

Moscom also runs a cybercafe in downtown Kathmandu by the name Cybermatha Cafe. Besides this, there are a number of other food and drink joints that provide "savour-and-surf" services. There is also an email news service called the "Daily News Advisory" for subscribers. And commercial enterprises providing email services charged by the byte are found in many towns of Nepal.

As for adoption of the Internet by (I)NGOs in development communication in Nepal, to cite an example, International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) has both Intranet and Internet to facilitate development communications within the organisation and with outside partners. ICIMOD's several electronic networking programmes like the "Mountain Forum" (in collaboration with The Mountain Institute, West Virginia, and the International Potato Centre, Lima), the "Asia Pacific Mountain Network" and the

"Electronic Network for Sustainable Mountain Development in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas", are some of the initiatives that advocate and communicate for sustainable mountain development at the global, regional as well as sub-regional/national levels.

About the criticism in some of the articles that the Net is accessible only to the elite and to donor-funded (I)NGOs of South Asia, I would like to invite the writers to visit the websites of the (I)NGOs. There is no denying that the majority of the South Asian masses still do not have access to basic means of communications like telephones (forget the Net). But that's exactly why some of the (I)NGOs have striven to take initiatives to make the majority of off-line South Asians represented, and their interests advocated via the Internet through contributions to newsgroups and discussion lists.

Kishor Pradhan
ICIMOD, Kathmandu

Adoption pangs

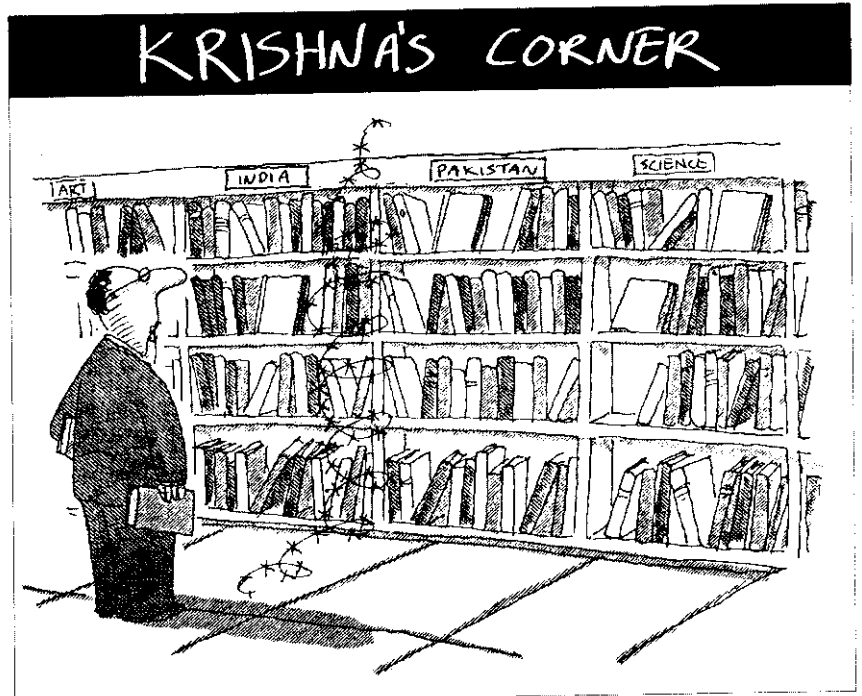
In the December 1997 issue of Himal, I read with great interest the article "Saint Teresa, Not Quite" by Vijay Prashad. This led me to hope Himal would take up an enquiry on

how children from Mother Teresa's orphanages are "given" (or "sold") to European families for adoption.

I work as an educator in a home in Switzerland for teenagers facing family difficulties. Among the youth we look after, sometimes we get young Indians who come here through the Missionaries of Charity orphanages. I have observed that some of these adoptions take place outside of legal norms of both India and Switzerland, but that is not my main concern. The issues I want to raise are the even more serious ones of failed or difficult adoptions.

Usually, when adoptions do not work out, families seek the help of social workers without understanding that many of the problems began before or from the very beginning of the adoption. What kind of counselling can one give young boys and girls who have been uprooted from their countries but have not struck roots in the host country?

I wonder what the adoption process in India is. Are the children and parents prepared for adoption? What are the motivations and expectations? Why does the yearning for their life before adoption continue? Are there "rites of passage" to help them? These are





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Ketaki Sheth
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John Collee
The London Observer



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important matters that have to be given greater prominence in the adoption process.

Economics should not be the deciding factor alone. An adopted child may have a better life in Switzerland than in the streets of Calcutta, but unless he has been better prepared for it, he may face a great identity crisis when he grows into a teenager. This is likely when a child is physically, and perhaps even psychologically, different from his adoptive parents.

A child can never grow up happily when he secretly nurses memories of his biological family. And imagine how disappointed he is likely to be when he goes back to India and realises his memories are highly idealised and much different from reality. What about his shock when he encounters the caste system or even more traumatic, when he is treated as an outcaste because he may happen to come from such a family?

The official age of a child is sometimes lowered at the time of adoption. That is done to help him start at an appropriate level in a European school. But this does not take into account what happens when the child turns 18 and he has to remain among classmates who are 14 or 15 years old. Sure, his identity papers declare him to be 14, but biologically he is 18 - in Europe an age when he legally becomes an adult. According to law, he has the right to take his own decisions, to get married, to work and to live independently, all without the need to get his parents' consent. And yet, officially, he would still be a teenager totally dependent on his parents. How can he build strong moral values and an identity when his official birth in his adoptive country is the result of a trick?

And the adoptive parents? Is there enough of a background check done on them to find out if they fit into the norms and laws of their own society? Can they offer love and protection to the children they plan to adopt? Do they have sufficient financial resources? I

wonder if the Missionaries of Charity investigate these matters at all.

All these reasons beg that more attention be given to the personal, organisational and societal motivations that encourage Indians to give up children for adoption and for Westerners to take them up. What part does Christianity play in it? Who gains what with adoption?

This not-at-all exhaustive list of problems are obviously not exclusive to the homes of Mother Teresa. The same could be said for children from Africa, other parts of Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe. It cannot be forgotten that charity organisations and parents who go for adoption take decisions concerning human beings who do not have the power to say "no" and are not listened to in any case.

All this is not to suggest that all adoptions are unsuccessful. Rather that it would be useful to learn from unsuccessful adoptions to prevent suffering for both the prospective adoptive parents and the adopted children.

*Michel-Acatl Monnier
Geneva*

Viva traveller

It's taken quite a while for your July/August 1997 issue to reach me, so even if it might seem a bit too late, I would like to respond to a letter in it by Stephen Bezruchka concerning the "tourist vs traveller" debate.

Bezruchka is entirely right, in a way. We backpacking travellers do have a tendency to think of ourselves as on-the-rough travellers, eschewing fancy meals, expensive beds, or uppity transport while away. We then go home and put up websites about our travels or invite friends over to see the Super-8 videos. How hypocritical!

Still, there's no ignoring the positive aspects of being a "traveller" rather than a tourist. By deliberately staying away from multinational hotels or chain

eateries, we travellers do help support (in however small a way) the regional economy and traditional businesses that orthodox "tourism" can't even approach.

Are our visits hurtful or helpful to local economies, habitats and peoples? They can be either, and they're often both. But I still think that there is a difference between "traveller" and "tourist". And while we're all economically better off than most of the people we visit, we, the open-minded, rucksacking travellers are enriched more than "tourists" ever could hope to be.

*Jim Fortney
Editor, Big World Magazine
Lancaster, Pennsylvania*

Three kings

The last British viceroy referred to the subcontinental royals as a "bunch of nit-wits". Were he alive today and had he picked up the December 1997 issue of *Himal*, he might admit they had evolved - into stand-up comedians.

If the king of Nepal (as an *avatar* of Vishnu) can grace a high-caste Hindu gathering in Haridwar (pg 12), does that mean we can expect him to attend (since the Buddha is an *avatar* of Vishnu) the downmarket Dalit rallies of neo-Buddhists too?

And does the king of Bhutan, so concerned to preserve the Buddhist virtue of compassion, fish for trout lest the cult of Machhendranath in Nepal catch on (pg 38)?

As for ex-Maharaja Karan Singh's Kathopanishadic exhortation for

humanity to regenerate itself (pg 62), how are we common Indians expected to understand that when the best-selling (pg 8) *Manusmriti* recommends that hot oil be poured into our ears for making the effort to learn Sanskrit?

*Bill Aitken
New Delhi*



SOUTHEAST ASIA

WOUNDED TIGERS

BROKERS ARE JUMPING off hotel balconies in Hong Kong. In Thailand, the government has put out a mental health alert. Suicide hotline switchboards are jammed in Korea. Currencies have become worthless (the value of the Indonesian rupiah against the dollar plunged 80 percent in four months) and stock markets are reeling. Amidst the carcasses of East Asian tigers, there is a frantic search for someone to blame.

Op-ed pages are suddenly spiked with we-told-you-so pundits. And the biggest of these self-righteous sources of unsolicited advice is the International Monetary Fund whose high priests till as late as June last year were praising Thailand for getting things right. When, under speculator pressure, the Thai baht tumbled in July and the contagion spread to neighbours, the same guys shook their heads and cluck-clucked. From Seoul to Jakarta, on the hour every hour, we watched on CNN Caucasians in heroic ties and suits offering multi-billion-dollar bailouts to sheepish central bank chairmen.

There was no attempt anymore to suppress the victory dance of Western triumphalism - first Communism, and now those upstart tigers that were threatening us with all their talk of the Pacific Century. The IMF is part of what is known as the "Washington Consensus" and it would sur-

The IMF has only one pill – it prescribes aspirins for both headaches and hernia.

prise anyone if it did not put the interests of its OECD masters above everything else. The Fund has only one pill - it prescribes aspirins for both headaches and hernia. The conditionalities the Fund has demanded and got from Indonesia, Thailand and Korea could actually make it harder

for them to rebound. Their agony will in all likelihood be prolonged.

What the Fund told the South Koreans to do in return for 60 billion dollars is exactly what it told the Mexicans four years ago, even though the situation in the two countries couldn't be more different. The Rx is the same: balance your budget, raise interest rates, restore price stability, raise taxes, deregulate and limit money supply. Koreans are thrifty, diligent and efficient, and they are being treated as if they are Latin American laggards.

	STOCK MARKET	CURRENCY TO U.S. DOLLAR
South Korea	-49.0%	-65.9%
Indonesia	-48.6	-106.0
Thailand	-41.0	-56.0
Philippines	-32.7	-48.0
Hong Kong	-29.8	-0.1
Japan	-23.0	-14.0
United States	-1.8	n.a.
Germany	3.6	-1.3
Britain	4.9	1.0
Mexico	6.5	-2.1

The Asian "miracle" was not a miracle, it was a result of many decades of hard work, strong and often visionary leadership and development priorities that emphasised investments in human resources. It was also the result of a strong government role in pushing export-led growth. Washington is out to prove that

this model, practised in Japan, Korea and Taiwan, is inferior to its own dog-eat-dog market system. Washington poured oil on the East Asian fire by preventing Japan from acting early to stop the Asian slide - for geopolitical reasons it wanted a multilateral IMF-led approach.

The East Asian meltdown was caused by economic reforms not being accompanied by prudent norms and financial supervision. Another factor was that a disproportionate share of financial capital inflows were in the form of short-term foreign exchange spot transactions.

Just as the Asian miracle was hyped - most vociferously by Western votaries of unbridled market - talk of its crisis is also overblown. This is a crisis of currency convertibility and should not detract from East Asia's development achievements. In 1962, Thailand was at the same level of economic development as some South Asian countries with 57 percent of its population living below the poverty line. Today, that figure is down to five percent. In Indonesia, the world's fourth most-populous nation, the poverty reduction has been even more dramatic.

So, let us not dismiss Southeast and East Asia. There is a lot that they did which we South Asians should emulate:

- *An early commitment to basic health and education.*
- *Investment in agriculture and rural activity which raised purchasing power and deterred uncontrolled urbanisation.*
- *Opening up the markets, open trade and unshackling the economy with safety nets intact.*
- *Making the private sector the hub of development.*

The tigers did go astray, notably by not controlling cronyism and incestuous government-business collusion, and because of authoritarianism, lack of transparency and lax bank regulations. The crunch, however, came with their economies being left wide open to short-term currency speculators.

South Asia will be affected: wait till our migrant workers start being deported from Malaysia, Thailand and Korea. But for now, what saved us this time was our relatively unglobalised economy. Poverty builds its own resilience. If you don't rise, you don't fall.

BHUTAN

TRIPLE TROUBLE

THERE WAS A time, until the mid-1980s, when Bhutan was thought by many to be an exemplar of a multi-ethnic nation at peace with itself. The country's three communities - the ruling Ngalong of the northwest, the large hut 'backward' Sarchop of the east, and the (lately named) Lhotshampa Nepali-speakers of the south - seemed to be making a go at an amicable existence under the benign rule of a Ngalong king.

That perceived idyll was shattered by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk's precipitate action of depopulating the southern hills of a good portion of his Lhotshampa subjects at the turn of the decade. Shangri La was first sullied then, and now, the international watchdog agency Amnesty International has blown the cover over another developing dark secret, the Thimphu establishment's treatment of Sarchop dissidents.

The acumen of a coterie of sophisticated English-speaking bureaucrats coupled with indulgence on the part of the Indian government and a select group of international donors has kept Bhutan from feeling the pressure of international censure. The fact remains, however, that on a worldwide scale Bhutan holds the dark record of being the country that has evicted the largest proportion of its citizens (about a seventh), throwing them into the limbo of statelessness over these past eight years.

And last October came news from the east of Bhutan of sit-ins, demonstrations and 'posterings'. Taking its time to confirm the reports, on 21 January, Amnesty released a report from London titled "Crack-down on 'anti-nationals' in the east". It confirmed that Thimphu had reacted to the protest in the east by arresting a large number of people, mostly Sarchops: "Bhutanese authorities have in recent months arbitrarily arrested, tortured and ill-treated scores of pro-democracy activists in the east of the country. Those arrested include dozens of Buddhist monks, religious teachers and young children."

While the Lhotshampa issue has been taken primarily as a refugee matter, grave by itself, the action against the Sarchop has highlighted more directly the question of human rights. The activism in the east seems to have subsided with the state's harsh reaction and the continued incarceration of about 150 persons. But this only means that the matter will fester. While earlier there was only Rongthong Kunley Dorje, the Sarchop leader who is at present in a Delhi prison fighting extradition to Bhutan, King Jigme is now well on the way to spawning more leaders opposed to him. Many of the Sarchops presently in His Majesty's jails are monks.

In conversation, members of Thimphu's Ngalong elites tend to reject suggestions that there is any difference between their own community and the Sarchops. Rather, they prefer to draw a differentiation between the southern Nepali-speakers and the northerners, made up of Sarchops and Ngalongs, who are said to be "the same". Beyond even the question of why there should be two names for the population groups if they are so similar, the fact is that there is a



Now the Sarchop?

distinct cultural division between these two streams, one following the Kargyu path of Himalayan Buddhism in the west and the other the Nyingma path.

The challenge for King Jigme and his circle of advisers now is not how to stay on top of things as self-assertion and modernisation begin to rock a thus-far tightly run feudal ship of state, but to seek a quick remedial action in the political arena keeping the future of Bhutan in mind rather than personal ego, position and holdings. The support of India and the adulation of western VIPs so assiduously cultivated are not sound foundations on which to build a Bhutanese future. This tiny country of the eastern Himalaya must hold its head high, self-confident and sovereign. This will never happen without the participation of the three communities.

It happens even in the most autocratic of societies; howsoever small Thimphu's ruling establishment, there are doubtless scores of educated, thinking Bhutanese who fret for the future and feel that things should perhaps have been done differently and without the hubris that has overtaken the country's rulers this past decade. And as with all autocratic societies, such people tend to keep their ideas to themselves, giving the rulers a surfacial sense of support.

*King Jigme is now
well on the way to
spawning more leaders
in opposition.*

More than anything else, the intelligentsia of Thimphu must keep in mind that Bhutan's situation is quite different from, say, that of neighbouring Nepal, where the multiplicity of communities makes a battle royal among communities somewhat unlikely. Bhutan, on the other hand, has three sharply defined communities among whom there exists a widening rift. There is a clear and present danger of an unravelling.

A country with a tiny, self-centred elite is being asked to look into itself, make amends, and produce a formula for the evolution of the Bhutanese state from what it is to what it should be. Can the rulers of Bhutan, the king himself, the sister-queens and the royal in-laws, and the dasho nobility who have ordered and implemented anti-people actions over the last decades be expected to take the palliative all on their own?

BANGLADESH

DHAKA DÉJÀ VU

KHALEDA ZIA OF the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has declared that she will begin her movement to dislodge Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of the Awami League after the Eid festival in early February. And after that, it will be hombs and hartals till Hasina falls.

Taking a page out of the same movement which led to her resignation may not display great imagination but why interfere with success? Just as the sitting prime minister never stepped into the Sangsad (Parliament) after taking to the streets, Khaleda has already completed her first anniversary of hoycott, and in numerous speeches and announcements has said that she will return only after the "autocrat is overthrown".

Both Hasina and Khaleda, of course, believe their causes to be noble enough to deserve turning the Parliament impotent. Each has a cause that is big and visionary enough to bring the country to a standstill. Hasina did it with aplomb during the anti-BNP movement when Bangladesh essentially stopped for over two years.

Today, things have not reached that pass yet, hut, for Begum Khaleda, things are in the making. The Begum's supporters are saying that attending Parliament is useless because Opposition MPs are not allowed to speak and decisions of national import are taken outside the Parliament by a small band of Awami League loyalists, of both political and bureaucratic ilk.

The BNP's political pitch is geared against the recent Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Peace Treaty which the Begum and supporters of the rightist variety have denounced as *ultra vires* of the Constitution and a sellout to India of national sovereignty. Her supporters claim that opposing the treaty is a holy and national responsibility. In a recent interview with the BBC, Khaleda Zia confirmed that if she comes to power, the treaty will be scrapped.

For its part, the government says that it was on security grounds that the process of the CHT treaty negotiations over the fall of 1997 was kept a secret. But the fact was that there was no discussion in the Sangsad before the signing of the Treaty on 2 December 1997. And it is also a fact that the BNP has a strong hold over the Chittagong Division and is capable of causing massive problems for Sheikh Hasina by arousing the Bengali settlers against the treaty.

Whether it will amount to a dislodging or not, politics has already become too hitter to ensure a peaceful life in this century in Bangladesh.

INDIA

I, ME, MYSELF

DIANA HAYDEN OF India is the new Miss World. A veritable triumph of packaging, say some. A little dentistry, a little cosmetic surgery, rigorous workouts at a gym, a top-class fashion designer, a choreographer to teach how to sashay plus training in how to speak in clever little soundbites and there is the world at your feet. So, even in a town like Ludhiana, Punjab, every small locality holds a beauty contest awarding a cardboard crown and cheap sash to the winner who ultimately aspires to be in Hayden's expensive stilettos.

The case is the same with young men looking for the Mr India title and hoping to hop on to the supermodel league. If not through looks then the path to success for India's young lies through a Master's Degree in Business Administration, where the starting salaries alone are enough to catapult one into the big league.

If it is to be the Civil Services, then it is not the Administrative or the Foreign Service that attracts the best of talent, but the Revenue Services where they come into contact with top businessmen and industrialists and can earn an income on the side. If it has to be medicine, then the friendly old GP is a thing of the past. There has to be specialisation, a posh clinic and the ability to milk patients dry off cash. Just recently, in one state, young medicos were agitating against a stipulation for compulsory rural service.

The list of favoured professions can go on, but the ultimate goal for the young in each is the lure of lucre. Humanities are, understandably, completely out of fashion. And no one wants to teach anymore, and it is only those who fail everywhere else that join the academe and its meagre earnings. There are hundreds of vacancies for school teachers with no applicants. Similarly, no one wants to join the armed services, not because they are peaceniks, but because the salary is not excitement-generating. For the first time in 50 years, the services are having to advertise to attract recruits.

Success at every cost is the new mantra fuelled by burning ambition created by pushy parents and satellite television. Failure is something that the 16-25 age group has not been taught to handle, which is why it is responsible for 54 percent of all crimes committed in India today. Also, 40 percent of all suicides is by them.

And how could it be otherwise, amidst the rapidly changing social mores stemming from globalisation and the information revolution which only promote self-gratification and more

gratification. The complete confusion of values in the minds of the young and the unpreparedness of parents and teachers alike to act as guide mean that idealism is a subject that is not even in consideration.

The resulting generation is potentially dangerous, nothing less. While the outer appearance is savvy and street smart, this merely covers the sense of loss and extreme frustration. Increasing alcoholism and substance abuse is one manifestation. Another is the tendency to blindly follow cult leaders and fundamentalist movements.

This is also borne out by an eye-opening study by the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) in Bangalore, parts of which were published in a leading Indian newsmagazine. The

There is no one to show the way to the new generation.

Institute interviewed 600 sixteen to twenty-five-year-olds all over the country and reported that half of the respondents felt violence was justified when there was no other way to make the government listen; a third were willing to take up arms to be heard; two-thirds believed that things were getting worse for common folk, and that there were very few dependable ties among people anymore - every person was obliged to look out for him/herself.

An NIAS professor tried to be optimistic. The study showed that there was basic empathy with social causes, he said, and all that was needed was patience and trust, proper role models and some guidance. The youth of the country would come around.

The tragedy of India is that there is no one to show the way, for the previous generation itself is confused. It will be waiting past midnight to expect a role model to emerge from the political and social sphere. Or maybe someone will emerge from somewhere to surprise everyone. That would indeed be sweet surprise. △

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That's why you'll be the first to see the Army's night vision. It's not just a night vision, it's a night vision that lets you see through the darkness. You'll be the one who leads the way.

It's not just a night vision, it's a night vision that lets you see through the darkness. You'll be the one who leads the way.

INDIAN ARMY

Do you have it in you?

Yes, but do I want to?

The Quaid's mazar,
Karachi.



THE NEWS

The fractured image of Muhammad Ali Jinnah

Jinnah has been 'converted' by Pakistan till he can no longer be recognised. Faking Jinnah has meant a lesser Pakistan.

by *Khaled Ahmed*



AMR JINNAH: THE MAKING OF PAKISTAN

The Founder of Pakistan, Father of the Nation, the Great Leader, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah (1876-1948) is today the sentinel of Pakistan's Islamic ideology. His portraits are everywhere, from Parliament to the smallest police station, showing him in *sherwani* and his trademark cap, his features set in an expression of ideological censure. Jinnah's party, the Pakistan Muslim League, is in power and it has no doubt that he would have approved of the process of Islamisation and the imposition of *sharia*. The Quaid-e-Azam's entire career is today explained as given over to the struggle for the establishment of an Islamic state where only Muslims would be full citizens.

Jinnah has been harnessed to a version of Islamic ideology that was not his own. In order to maintain Jinnah in this ideological posture, the Pakistani state has had to modify many known details of the man's life. Such as his beliefs, his family relationships, his eating habits, his religiosity, his attitude towards Partition and towards India, and his views on minority rights.

In India, Jinnah has been reviled as a malevolent, humourless, politically ambitious man who wrecked the dream of a united, secular India. Authors like H.M. Seervai have tried to put the record straight, but Jinnah-bashing continues in India, which has had an impact on how the larger world views the Quaid. Gandhi was Jinnah's contemporary rival but it was young Nehru who was responsible for demonising him. Shortly before his death, Mountbatten called Jinnah "bastard" in his interview with Dominique Lappiere and Larry Collins while they were researching *Freedom at Midnight*. Attenborough's film *Gandhi* has castigated Jinnah while deifying the Mahatma.

The Quaid's image has been manipulated within Pakistan just as he has been misrepresented outside the country. His country today struggles with its internal crises, made possibly worse because it has deviated so far from the path that Jinnah had charted. Indeed, the falsification of Jinnah hits at the very soul of Pakistan.

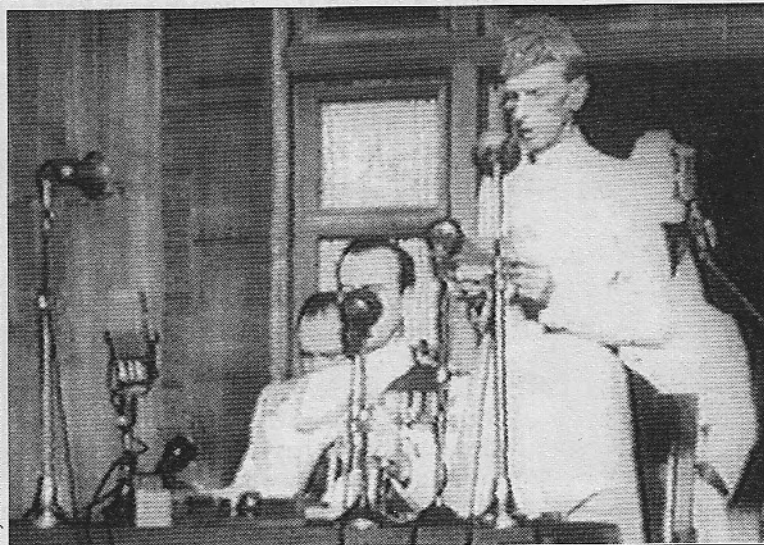
It has been easier for the state to tinker with Jinnah's historic portrait because his family is not around to challenge the version that has emerged. In fact, Pakistanis today know virtually nothing about his kin, his marriage, or his only child, a daughter still alive who has never been officially invited to visit Pakistan. It is now taken as the truth that the Quaid turned against his daughter when she

married a Christian, considering her an apostate. However, this stands without evidence. (see page 17).

As for Jinnah's attitude towards India, unlike what the average Pakistani has been led to believe, Jinnah never thought that India and Pakistan would be hostile neighbours. The fact that three institutions in India - including the Aligarh Muslim University - were named beneficiaries in Jinnah's will clearly goes against the state-sponsored version of his life. Jinnah could have changed his will any time after he made it in 1929, more so after 1947, but he did not. It is a different matter that none of the three institutions in the end received money from the Jinnah Trust which looks after the Quaid's estate, funds which were instead diverted to Pakistani institutions.

Perhaps the most drastic redrafting of Jinnah's worldview has been in how he saw the minorities, for Jinnah's vision of Indo-Pakistani relations itself was based on a bilateral regard for the minorities in each country. However, particularly within Pakistan, it was not a vision anyone cared much for. Jinnah's colleagues in the Muslim League

Transfer of power. Louis Mountbatten behind microphone.



MR. JINNAH: THE MAKING OF PAKISTAN/CAKE PRODUCTIONS

were not willing to treat non-Muslims equally, especially not the Hindus of East Pakistan who formed one-fourth of the population there.

The Quaid and the general

The re-moulding of Jinnah's persona began even before the birth of Pakistan. On 11 August 1947, addressing the Constituent Assembly in Karachi, Jinnah said:

You are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may

Jinnah being sworn in as Governor-General.

belong to any religion or caste or creed...that has nothing to do with the business of the state... We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no distinction between one caste or creed or another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one state.

The Muslim League bureaucracy, which did not agree with Jinnah's vision of a secular Pakistan, asked the press in Karachi not to print the statement. In later years, the statement was not even allowed to feature in official publications. Under General Zia-ul-Haq, historians were even commissioned to state that Jinnah was not completely in his senses when he addressed the Constituent Assembly.

Gen Zia also banned Stanley Wolpert's book *Jinnah of Pakistan* (1984) because it contained descriptions of Jinnah's dietary habits. Wolpert quoted M.C. Chagla's book *Roses in December: An Autobiography* (1974), in which it is mentioned that Jinnah drank alcohol and ate ham sandwiches. (Chagla, later chief justice at Bombay High Court, was Jinnah's private secretary and also the Muslim League secretary who left the League following differences with Jinnah over the Nehru Report of 1928. The Nehru Report envisaged a secular nationalist India and went against the Muslims because it denied them separate electorates which would have meant assured representation in the legislatures.)

On the whole, Wolpert's book is probably the most effective defence of Jinnah's secular credentials but it has remained banned in Pakistan. The author, who went on to write a debunking biography of Nehru titled *Nehru: A Tryst with Destiny* (1996), is also not as welcome in Pakistan as he might have been. It is said that Gen Zia, who had acquired numerous copies of Wolpert's book on Jinnah, was in the habit of presenting it to his guests with the offending page marked to show the 'difference' between himself as the Islamic messianic leader, and Jinnah, who had founded the country wrong.

The Quaid's daughter, Dina, living in New York, was secretly asked to deny that her father ever drank alcohol or ate ham. When she refused to oblige, she was threatened with 'disclosures' about her private life if she ever made it public that she had been approached.



MR. JINNAH: THE MAKING OF PAKISTAN

Islamic objectives

It is often said that Pakistan's Constitution was not framed till as late as 1956 because the West Pakistani elite was not willing to share power with the East Pakistani majority. Any constitutional dispensation would have tilted in favour of East Pakistan because its population was larger. The first Constitution of 1956, nevertheless, favoured West Pakistan by creating the myth of parity between East Pakistan and a West Pakistan formed into one Unit after abolishing the four provinces.

Another reason for postponing the constitutional exercise, however, was that Jinnah was not willing to allow a religion-based document. It was immediately after his death in 1948 that Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan formed a committee of the *ulema* to decide the Islamic guidelines for it. In 1949, when the recommendations were tabled in the Constituent Assembly as the Objectives Resolution, the East Pakistani Hindu members objected, but neither did the draft please the Islamists in the Muslim League. Constitutional historian G.W. Chaudhry and others actually complained that the Objectives Resolution was not Islamic enough.

It is to his credit that Liaquat Ali Khan did not allow the Objectives Resolution to become as abrasively Islamic as would have been preferred by his secretary-general Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, a close friend of Maulana Syed Abu Ala Maududi, the founder of Jamaat Islami. The reason was that Pakistan had signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, whose Article 18 provides that minorities should be allowed to practise their religion freely. Hence, the Objectives Resolution stated that "adequate provision would be made for the minorities freely to profess and practise their religion and develop their cultures".

With time, the Objectives Resolution be-

Syed S. Pirzada



THE NEWS

The roof of the world.



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Muhammad Iqbal

came the Preamble to the Constitution of Pakistan. In 1985, Gen Zia decided to make the Preamble an operative part of the Constitution, and his 8th Amendment included it as an Annex to the Constitution. But without pointing it out, he removed the term 'freely' from the text. The situation today is that

the Objectives Resolution, as an inoperative preamble to the Constitution, promises minorities that they can practise their religion freely, but the operative Annex inside takes away this freedom. After the death of Gen Zia in 1988, successive elected governments could have restored the original text in the Annex simply by declaring it a printing error, but they didn't.

Separate and unequal

In his book on Gen Zia, *Working with Zia: Pakistan's Power Politics 1977-1988* (1996), Gen Khalid Mahmood Arif writes that the text of the 8th Amendment was agreed at the General Headquarters through a consensus among the corps commanders. However, the actual job of changing the 1973 Constitution to make it Islamic enough for Gen Zia was probably done by historian and lawyer Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada – former secretary and devotee of Jinnah – and his assistants. (Pirzada was the person responsible for making public the ideological rift between Jinnah and his trusted lieutenant Liaquat Ali Khan. He also wrote extensively to show that in his last days Jinnah had lost trust in Liaquat.)

The 8th Amendment introduced separate electorates for Muslims and non-Muslims under Article 51 (4), thus nullifying Jinnah's 11 August 1947 address to the Constituent Assembly. Non-Muslims could no longer vote together with Muslims on the general seats; they would instead stand for elections and vote only for special seats set aside for them in the federal and provincial legislatures.

The amendment was made so ham-handedly that the phraseology of Article 51(4) relating to the National Assembly was not repeated in Article 106 relating to the provincial assemblies. When a Christian candidate went to



court to make the Election Commission accept his candidature for the general seats in the provincial assembly, the judges interpreted Article 106 tendentiously to reject the petition. (In 1997, the outgoing Chief Election Commissioner, Sardar Fakhre Alam, did recommend that joint electorates

be resumed because separate electorates were tantamount to denial of representation to non-Muslims in Pakistan.)

Pakistan's first Constitution in 1956, prepared by Chaudhry Muhammad Ali, who was to become Pakistan's first prime minister under it, had sought to impose separate electorates on both wings of Pakistan, but East Pakistan had rejected the idea. Thereupon, the matter was left to the discretion of the provinces. West Pakistan accepted the separate electorates under the Muslim League government but failed to form constituencies for non-Muslims because its geography was clearly seen to deny representation to the minorities. As Rafi Raza wrote in *Pakistan in Perspective 1947-1997* (1997), "Eventually, in April 1957, joint electorates were reintroduced throughout Pakistan because the task of delimiting separate electorates proved too complex."

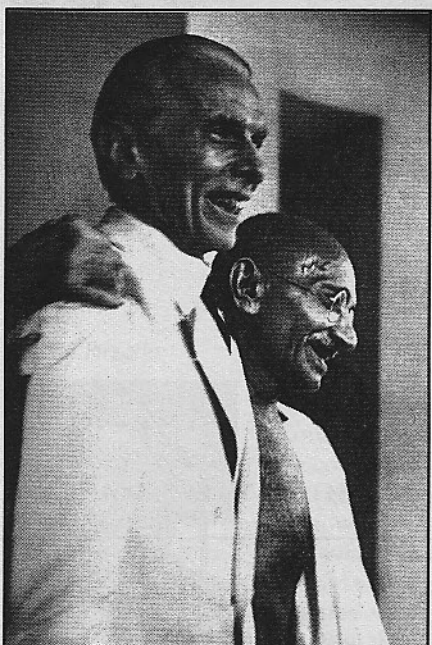
Since the adoption of the 8th Amendment in 1985, Pakistan has been forcing non-Muslims to vote for special seats under a system of constituencies which are geographically so spread out that voters are most often totally unacquainted with their leaders. The minorities have been agitating against separate electorates which have now been elevated by Islamabad to the realm of ideology.

Political package

Separate electorates has been given a religious colour, with non-Muslims not allowed to vote together with Muslims. However, Jinnah's campaign for separate electorates in United India was of a different nature and had nothing to do with religion. (And his two-nation proposal came much later, after he was repeatedly snubbed by the Congress.) In United India, it was the Muslim minority asking for separate electorates. In contemporary Pakistan, the minorities are not asking for separate electorates. They want joint electorates.

Separate electorates were initially recommended to the Government of India in 1908 by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, India's great liberal leader who was a source of inspiration to Jinnah. In 1916, Jinnah was able to get the

Gandhi's hand around the shoulder in Bombay.



LIBERTY OR DEATH

Muslim League and Congress together in a joint session in Lucknow to accept the principle of special seats for the Muslim minority on the basis of Gokhale's liberal vision.

At the joint session, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who had eclipsed Gokhale in popularity with the use of religious symbols and extremist nationalism, voted in favour of separate electorates for Muslims. The same year he had been successfully defended by Jinnah in a case of sedition against the raj. Jinnah, who had been called the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity by Gokhale, got along nicely with Tilak's religious rhetoric. Both were politicians who had an eye on the opportune moment.

In 1928, replying to the Nehru Report which had gone back on the Lucknow compact over separate electorates, Jinnah issued his Fourteen Points in which separate elec-

torates were claimed not as a religious demand but as a political package which could be modified.

In Punjab province, the cross-communal Unionist Party of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs ruled on the basis of separate electorates which gave Muslims a permanent majority. When Jinnah began negotiating with the Congress over his demand for separate electorates, the Unionists convened an All-India Muslim Conference in 1929 denouncing his abandonment of the cause. The Unionists were able to get the support of the Aga Khan and Allama Iqbal, the Muslim League leader from Punjab who is perhaps better known outside Pakistan as the poet Muhammad Iqbal.

While all this was going on, Gandhi took over the Khilafat Movement (organised against the British for dismembering the Turk-



Muhammadali Jeenabhai Poonja

It is generally assumed that Jinnah became more Islamic over the years that he spent in politics. This may not be entirely true.

SOME PEOPLE THINK that *jinnah* means "wing" in Arabic, but this is incorrect: "wing" in Arabic is *janah*. The misunderstanding probably comes from the fact that *jinnah* written in Urdu without the vowels indeed has the same spelling as *janah*.

The Quaid-e-Azam's family history has been the subject of much ignorance and - in the alternative - misinterpretation. To set the record straight, if the Quaid had kept all his names as he inherited them, he would have been Muhammadali Jeenabhai Poonja.

As early as 1894, Jinnah had begun to bolster his Muslim credentials by changing his name from Muhammad Ali Jeenabhai to Muhammad Ali Jinnah while studying for the bar in London. Jeenabhai was his father's name and it came from the word "*jeena*", meaning "one who survives", probably given to

Jinnah's father because he didn't die at birth like his earlier siblings. In Punjab, this name was common in the countryside but today, not even illiterate peasants name their children thus. But in Gujarat, the ancestral home of both Jinnah and Gandhi, the Gujarati language continues with the tradition.

The other change that took place was the conversion of the name "Muhammadali" as it appeared in Jinnah's school register. This form of writing a name is still common in Karachi with the people of Gujarati origin. If Jinnah had maintained his full name of Muhammadali Jeenabhai Poonja, that would have appeared outlandish to the Muslims of North and Northwest India. Jinnah dropped 'bhai' from Jinnabhai in 1894 through a legal act called "deed poll". He also converted to Athnaashri Shiism from Ismailism, and later repudiated all as-

sociation with Islamic sectarianism. (Jinnah's grandfather, Poonja, had converted to Islam and adopted Ismailism, the sect of the Aga Khan. In her memoir, Fatima Jinnah mentions old family names like Valji, Manbai, Nathoo, which are "akin to Hindu names". - Akbar S. Ahmed in *Pakistan and Islamic Identity: The Search for Saladin*, 1997.)

The Muslims of India of all sectarian hues accepted Jinnah as their leader, ironically because of his deep-seated aversion to religious politics. Today, when the President of Pakistan attends congregations of the Deobandi Tablighi Jamaat, he unconsciously reveals his sectarian leaning. ▽



Fatima Jinnah

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HELLO POTATO CHIPS

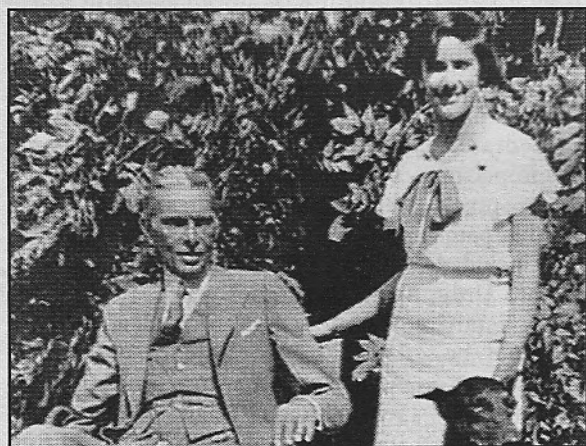
HELLO BASMATI RICE

HELLO BISCUITS

ish empire) which the Muslim League was reluctant to support. Gandhi thus became a leader of Muslims (that is, until he called off the Movement). Through support for the Movement, Gandhi eased Jinnah out of the Congress centre stage. During this period, besides being in political limbo, Jinnah was personally devastated because of his estrangement from his wife. Her death in 1929 caused him to migrate to England where he bought a house and settled down to legal practice, and was not to return to India till 1934.

Back in India, the Nehru Report compounded the hurt the conservative anti-Jinnah

Muslims had felt by Gandhi's calling off in 1924 of the Khilafat Movement. Thereafter, separate electorates emerged as the foremost political issue in Muslim politics. The principle established in United India was: if the minorities want them they should be allowed as affirmative action, but it should not be imposed on the minorities by the majority population. In Pakistan, the minorities are so few (about one percent of the national population) and scattered all over so thinly that they would prefer to vote together with the Muslims for they would then form a vote bank for Muslim leaders. The Pakistani State has



Dina with father and in 1996 picture, below left. Also, Ruttie Jinnah.

Father and daughter

RECENTLY, A LAHORE journalist was vehement in denying that Jinnah had anything to do with his daughter Dina Jinnah after she married a Parsi-turned-Christian, Neville Wadia. Following the expected lines of selective recall regarding the Quaid's personal life which marks today's Pakistan polity, the journalist's detailed thesis was based on the laws of apostasy and fornication developed vigorously during Gen Zia-ul Haq's regime and after he died in 1988.

According to the first law, a Muslim man can marry a non-Muslim woman after converting her (which is what Jinnah

did when he married Ruttie Petit), but a Muslim woman can never marry a non-Muslim man. Any Muslim who converts out of Islam is an apostate and liable to be killed. Pakistan does not have a law that awards death to an apostate, but there is tacit acceptance that vigilante action can be taken against the offender by a Muslim citizen. (A Muslim convert to Christianity was actually killed a few years ago in jail after the court refused him bail.)

But Dina Wadia's marriage attracts another law that is in force in Pakistan these days: that of stoning to death, or lashing, for fornication. Dina's marriage to Neville Wadia is deemed void be-

cause she was not permitted to convert, and if the wedlock was unlawful she lived in sin with her spouse. And that would at least make her liable to lashing.

Jinnah married Ruttie in 1918, Dina was born in 1919, and lived with her parents as a Muslim till 1929, when her mother died. Then she lived with Jinnah and his sister Fatima for some time in England where she went to school. Coming of age, she rebelled and married Neville.

Jinnah was put off by the marriage and didn't attend the wedding, but he never broke off with Dina, nor did he change his will, made in 1929, nominating Dina the major beneficiary of his property after Fatima Jinnah. Dina kept in touch with her father and met him whenever she could, was sympathetic to his pursuit of a separate homeland for the Muslims, and was present at his funeral in 1948. Dina continues to receive her share of the money from the Jinnah Trust in Karachi. △



MR. JINNAH: THE MAKING OF PAKISTAN



violated this principle by forcing the minorities to accept a system that effectively disempowers them. Jinnah would never have allowed it.

Apart from separate electorates, there are other laws that make non-Muslims in Pakistan second-class citizens. The law of evidence

in force under the sharia discriminates against them because their testimony is not equal to that of Muslims; the *Gustakh-e-Rasul* (Insult to the Prophet) law targets non-Muslims and has serious legal defects; conversion to Islam by non-Muslim women has been exploited by Muslims because Christian and Hindu mar-

Karakalpakstan

CHAUDHRY REHMAT ALI was a teacher employed by the Mazaris, a feudal family of Punjab, and was a one-man crusade for Muslim homelands. He had a dozen carved out of the map of India, with suggested names such as Osmanistan for Hyderabad, Bangistan for Bengal and Maplistan for Kerala, and so on. Rehmat Ali had gone to London to convince the colonial authorities of his scheme, where he met Khawaja Abdur Rahim, who suggested the name 'Pakistan' to him. Rahim was a student who was well into the 'stan' business. ('Stan' is Urdu for 'land'.)

'Pakistan' had occurred to Rahim while reading a book in a London bus, when he came upon what must have been a 1930 map of Central Asia under Stalin. A new autonomous area

created by the Soviet Union in the territory anciently associated with the Karakalpak tribe was called Karakalpakstan, but the spine of the book had separated the portion "pakstan". Since 'pak' means pure in Urdu, the name immediately struck Rahim as most appropriate. Rehmat Ali liked the proposal so much that he put it in his pamphlet as "Pakstan"; the 'i' was included later after transliteration into Urdu which rendered "stan" as "istan" in the same manner as 'school' becomes 'iskool'.

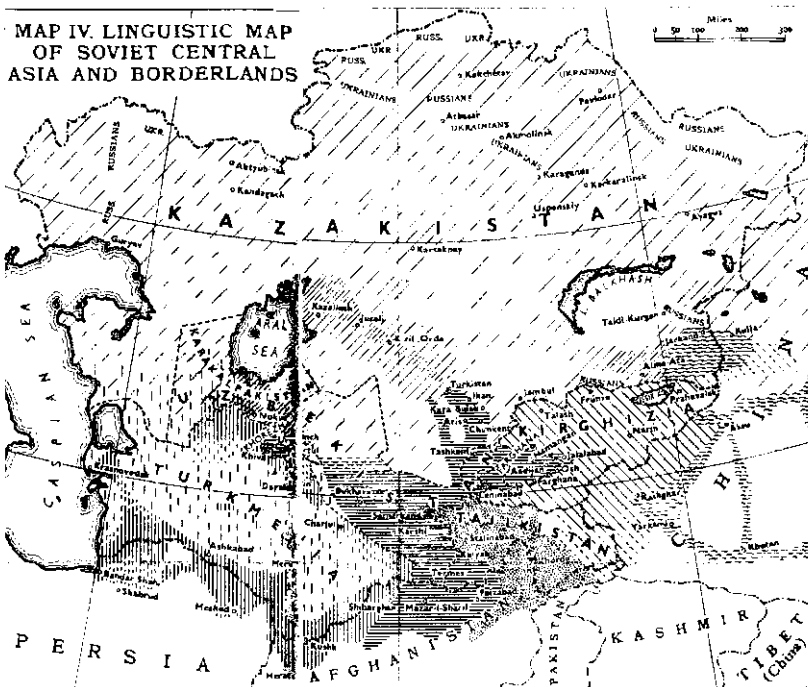
Rehmat Ali showed his borrowed formulation to Allama Iqbal, who was in London for the Round Table Conference. Iqbal thought it was a good name, but the other Muslims in the delegation dismissed it as a "student's dream". Bengali Muslim students in

London objected, claiming that Pakistan was really an acronym which omitted reference to Bengal. This was, of course, not true, for it was just a coincidence that 'p' stood for Punjab, 'a' for Afghania (the North-West Frontier Province), 'k' for Kashmir, 's' for Sindh, and 'stan' as the last syllable signifying Balochistan.

This writer came to know that 'Pakistan' was taken from Karakalpakstan through Azim Hussain, son of Unionist Party leader Sir Fazle Hussain. This was in the 1970s when Azim Hussain, who retired after a career in India's foreign service, was visiting Pakistan. It was on the authority of his cousin, Arshad Hussain, who had been Pakistan's foreign secretary, that Azim Hussain had imparted the information. The writer then located a version of the map of Central Asia in the 1963 edition of Olaf Caroe's *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalin* (see left).

After this new insight was presented in Lahore's weekly *Viewpoint*, Azim Hussain wrote back to repudiate his statement fearing he might be refused a visa to Pakistan. The 'discovery' of 'Pakistan' by Khawaja Abdur Rahim during a bus-ride in London was revealed to this writer by Muhammad Jehangir Khan, who was an eye-witness. The late Jehangir Khan was the father of Pakistan's former cricket captain, Majid Khan. Since Khawaja Abdur Rahim was a civil servant, Rehmat Ali was allowed to 'own' the discovery. The latter later turned on Jinnah for being conciliatory towards the Congress and called him "Quisling-e-Azam".

MAP IV. LINGUISTIC MAP OF SOVIET CENTRAL ASIA AND BORDERLANDS



riages stand automatically annulled after the wife converts to Islam. Under another law, non-Muslims are not allowed to compete freely with Muslims for seats in educational institutions and for government employment; under the *Zakat* (poor due) law, non-Muslims are not allowed treatment in institutions run by Islamic charity.

Nothing, it can be said, has damaged Pakistan's position on the Kashmir dispute in the 1990s more than the laws passed against the non-Muslims. The 1949 UN Security Council resolutions asking for a plebiscite in Kashmir were passed when Pakistan was still Jinnah's Pakistan. Today, it would be morally wrong to even propose that nearly two million Hindus and Buddhists of Jammu and Ladakh live under these draconian anti-minorities laws in Pakistan.

Lahore Resolution

Jinnah was driven to separatism by the Congress and its dynamic leader, Nehru, who personally disliked Jinnah. While in exile in London, Jinnah attended the two Round Table Conferences convened in 1930 and 1931 to decide the future Constitution of India. He heard the name 'Pakistan' in London among Muslim activists residing there, in particular Chaudhry Rehmat Ali, who had thought up a scheme for Muslim homelands in India (see box opposite).

The Muslim delegates of the Round Table Conference, however, ignored Chaudhry Rehmat Ali's theory, mainly because they were handpicked by the Unionist chief Sir Fazle Hussain, who had in 1930 become the first Indian member of the Viceroy's Council. The Unionists were against the Pakistan proposal because they wanted a united non-communal Punjab opposed to the politics of both the Congress and the Muslim League.

In 1940, when the Lahore Resolution was approved by the All-India Muslim League, the Punjab Unionist premier Sir Sikandar Hayat saw to it that Pakistan was not mentioned in it. The Resolution also mentioned separate 'states' to be created for the Muslims instead of one 'state' in order to ensure Punjab and Bengal their separate identities. After the 1937 elections, which was held on the basis of separate electorates under the Government of India Act 1935, and in which the Congress won overwhelming victories in all the provinces except Punjab and Bengal, Jinnah approached the Congress once again for an agreement on power-sharing with the Muslim League but was snubbed by Nehru, then the Congress president. Jinnah was perforce pushed into

[ANNEX
(Article 2A)
The Objectives Resolution

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Whereas sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Allah Almighty alone and the authority which He has delegated to the State of Pakistan, through its people for being exercised within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust;

This Constituent Assembly representing the people of Pakistan resolves to frame a constitution for the sovereign independent State of Pakistan;

Wherein the State shall exercise its powers and authority through the chosen representatives of the people;

Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice as enunciated by Islam shall be fully observed;

Wherein the Muslims shall be enabled to order their lives in the individual and collective spheres in accordance with the teachings and requirements of Islam as set out in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah;

Wherein adequate provision shall be made for the minorities to profess and practise their religions and develop their cultures;

Wherein the territories now included in or in accession with Pakistan and such other territories as may hereafter be included in or accede to Pakistan shall form a Federation wherein the units will be autonomous with such boundaries and limitations on their powers and authority as may be prescribed;

Inserted by the Revival of the Constitution of 1973 Order, 1985 (President's Order No. 4 of 1985), Article 2 and Schedule Item 53 (with effect from 2nd March, 1985)

freely

The offending provision.

embracing a scheme he had no stomach for as a liberal-secularist.

Pakistani Gettysburg

Today in Pakistan, no one can openly call himself a secularist. The term 'liberal' is also seen as a secular giveaway, condemned by religious parties. When Pakistan's new president, Muhammad Rafiq Tarar, called himself a "liberal Muslim", he was challenged by the clergy. Jinnah could not have survived in this environment. To maintain him in the national pantheon, the state is at pains to describe him as a non-secular, non-liberal leader who had promised the sharia as part of his political programme.

According to author Akbar S. Ahmad, Jinnah's two speeches at the Constituent Assembly constitute his Gettysburg Address. They are: the 11 August speech in which he declared Pakistan a secular state, and the 14 August speech in which, in answer to Mountbatten's reference to Akbar the Great, as the model for the new Muslim state, he pointed to the greater example of the Prophet of Islam,





Secular paragon,
Kemal Ataturk.

Muhammad. Additionally, while addressing the Karachi Bar Association on 25 January 1948 on the occasion of the holy Prophet's birthday, Jinnah said: "Some are misled by propaganda. Islamic principles are as applicable to life as they were 1,300 years ago. The Constitution of Pakistan will be made on the basis of the *sharia*."

These two references to Islam are used by social conservatives to claim Jinnah for themselves, but they make Jinnah a fundamentalist, as aggressively claimed by New Delhi editor-journalist M.J. Akbar in his book *India under Siege* (1986). Jinnah had learnt his politics in India the hard way. He had objected to Gandhi's use of religion, but he had also seen, without protest, Tilak doing it blatantly to establish himself as *lokmanya* (the title prefixed to his name which means "respected by the people"). Nothing worked on the masses more than nationalist extremism and divisive religious sloganeering. He was forced to use Islam in Punjab where the cross-communal Unionism was finally brought down by the mullahs.

But the concept of *sharia* was different in the minds of Jinnah and Allama Iqbal after they corresponded in 1937-8 to clarify what later came to be known as the vision of Pakistan. Both had endured abusive opposition from the pro-Congress Khilafat Committee headed by the Ali Brothers, Muhammad Ali and Shaukat Ali. (In *The World of Fatwas: Or the Shariah in Action*, New Delhi journalist Arun Shourie quotes Gandhi's diarist to show how the Ali Brothers were devoted to Gandhi after 1919, kissing his feet and expressing their opposition to the Muslim League. Akbar S. Ahmed notes the violent opposition faced by Jinnah from Shaukat Ali. Ashiq Hussain Batalvi, perhaps the best historian of the Pakistan Movement, speaks of virulent journalistic attacks made on Jinnah by Muhammad Ali.)

Allama Iqbal, steadfast in his opposition to the concept of *khilafat*, defended the 'liberal' model of Turkish Islam in his famous Lectures; the book Jinnah gave Dina to read was on Kemal Ataturk, the secular founder of modern Turkey who had abolished

the Caliphate (*Khilafat*) in 1924. In his sixth and final Lecture delivered at Aligarh in 1929, Allama Iqbal opposed the *hudood* (Quranic punishments) today in force in Pakistan. He said:

The prophetic method of teaching according to Shah Waliullah is that, generally speaking, the law revealed by a prophet takes especial notice of the habits, ways and peculiarities of the people to whom he is specially sent. The prophet who aims at all-embracing principles, however, can neither reveal different principles for different people, nor leave them to work out their own rules of conduct. His method is to train one particular people and to use them as a nucleus for the building up of a universal sharia. In doing so he accentuates the principles underlying the social norms of all mankind in the light of the specific habits of the people immediately before him. The sharia values resulting from the application (e.g. rules relating to the penalties for crimes) are in a sense specific to that people; and since their observance is not an end in itself they cannot be strictly enforced in the case of future generations. (from Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam by Muhammad Iqbal, 1977)

In December 1986, Justice Javid Iqbal, the son of Allama Iqbal, confronted Gen Zia at a seminar and, referring to the Iqbal-Jinnah correspondence, told him that Islamic punishments had not been envisaged by the two Muslim leaders for the Islamic state. While

Justice Iqbal denied that the two had planned a secular state, he declared that it was an ideal secular state they had in mind. (This writer possesses a signed statement made by Justice Iqbal on 25 January 1986 at a seminar titled "*Pakistan ka aham tareen masaala kiya hai*" - What is Pakistan's number one problem?) Gen Zia ignored the point, and the *hudood*, including the cutting of hands and stoning to death, remained in place. Justice Iqbal has retired and today is a member of the Muslim League in the Senate and supports the ruling party's opposition



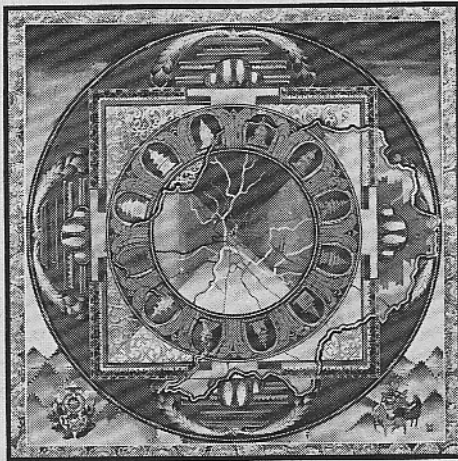
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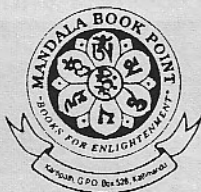


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to the secular state while continuing to adhere to the view of Allama Iqbal on the question of hudood.

The Tashakhus identity

Jinnah was the most incorruptible Muslim of his times, even though his integrity originated from his Western orientation. Today, Pakistanis continue to idealise him even as their Islamic politicians plunder the country. Pakistan has reached the acme of Islam but has become one of the most corrupt countries in the world. In a series of interviews during the Ramadhan just past, almost all the political leaders said that they keep the fast and after breaking it, say the special after-dinner prayers called *travih*. They also pray five times a day and say the special *namaz* called *tahajjud*, meant for the extremely pious. The interviews are poignant because almost all these leaders face charges of dodging taxes and gouging the banks for loans they never paid back.

Jinnah has had to be transformed because Pakistan has gradually set its face against his legacy. As author Akbar S. Ahmed says, "his behaviour reflected Anglo-Indian sociology", but he was also a Muslim. The tendency has been to emphasise the Quaid's Muslim identity by juxtaposing it with the 'Hindu-ness' of the Congress as the Pakistani historian saw it.

What Jinnah and Allama Iqbal had in mind was a modern Islamic state, the 'modern' referring to a secular state where all religions could coexist. Contest with India, and the need at all times to 'separate' Pakistan's identity from India's, caused the Muslim League politicians to firm up the Islamic attributes of Pakistan till their prescription broke away from Jinnah's vision. The new identity, which Gen Zia called "*tashakhus*", inducted into the task of law-making the very Islamic clergy which had condemned Jinnah for visualising a separate state.

Today, the break from Jinnah has plunged Pakistan into sectarian chaos. The Shia-Sunni conflict, lying buried in old books, has been exhumed by the extremist clergy and made into a new ideology, a natural journey of 'purification' which began after Jinnah's death. Conservative Urdu columnists, who have lent their powerful rhetoric to the transformation of Jinnah into a fundamentalist, are now warning about the possibility of secularism becoming a popular slogan.

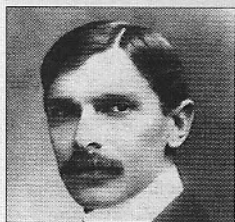
Pakistan's relations with Iran, always friendly in the past, are now

judged increasingly along sectarian lines. After India's Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral made friendly overtures, Iran is now held out as the major enemy of Pakistan for threatening its western frontiers through interference in Afghanistan. The Central Asian states, ruled by secular elites, are gradually revising their traditionally favourable attitude towards Pakistan and are seeing it as a threat to their own security.

Relations with India became hostile in 1947 because of what Pakistan saw as an invasion of Kashmir after Mountbatten had cleared the way through a fraudulent boundary award. But Jinnah, just before his death, envisaged normal relations with India despite the Indian leadership's conviction that Pakistan wouldn't survive and instead "relapse". It is difficult to see how Indo-Pak relations could have been normalised since the singular reason for Islamising Pakistan beyond Jinnah's vision was the fact that, "India had not reconciled itself to the existence of Pakistan". However, there is no doubt that had Pakistan remained secular, it would have consolidated itself and persuaded India to accept it on the basis of its viability.

Today, Pakistan has cut itself off from the world. Its indoctrinated leaders seem to challenge the global order, presenting Pakistan as an increasingly recalcitrant and unstable country where non-Muslim minorities are at risk. Jinnah's vision of a 'modern' state would have saved Pakistan from international isolation and made it easy for the world to deal with it. This isolation has complicated Pakistan's relations with India and Indians seem less interested to normalise ties with a country that will soon be punished by the world. Getting rid of Jinnah's legacy has been Pakistan's greatest tragedy, the consequences of which are being felt as the country hurtles down towards ideological chaos. ▽

K. Ahmed is Consulting Editor of the Friday Times weekly, Lahore.

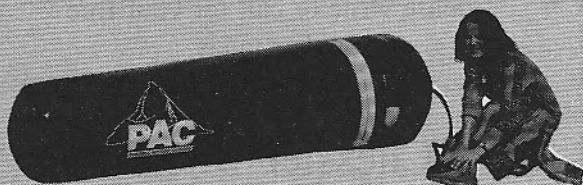


MR. JINNAH: THE MAKING OF PAKISTAN

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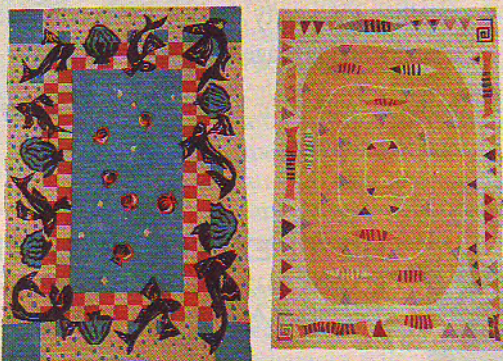
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"You are free to go to your temples, You are free to go to your mosques"

On the eve of Independence, on 11 August 1947, the Quaid-e-Azam addressed the First Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, embodying the fundamental principles which had impelled the creation of the country. Below, an excerpt from the address.

NOW, IF WE want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, and specially of the masses and the poor. If you will work in co-operation, forgetting the past, burying the hatchet, you are bound to succeed. If you change your past and work together in a spirit that everyone of you, no matter to what community he belongs, no matter what relations he had with you in the past, no matter what is his colour, caste or creed, is first, second and last a citizen of this State with equal rights, privileges and obligations, there will be no end to the progress you will make.

I cannot emphasise it too much. We should begin to work in that spirit and in course of time all these angularities of the majority and minority

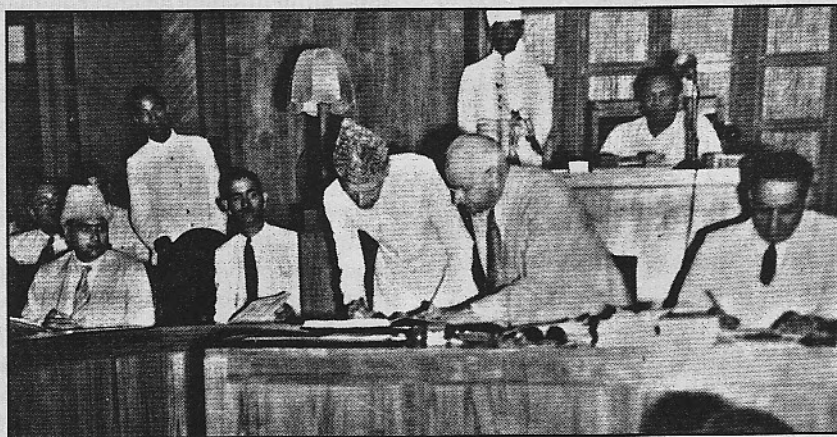
communities, the Hindu community and the Muslim community, because even as regards Muslims you have Pathans, Punjabis, Shias, Sunnis and so on and among the Hindus you have Brahmins, Vashnavas, Khattris, also Bengalis, Madrasis and so on, will vanish. Indeed if you ask me, this has been the biggest hindrance in the way of India to attain its freedom and independence, but for this we would have been free peoples long ago. No power can hold another nation, and specially a nation of 400 million souls in subjection; nobody could have continued its hold on you for any length of time but for this.

Therefore, we must learn a lesson from this. You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or

creed that has nothing to do with the business of the State.

As you know, history shows that in England conditions some time ago were much worse than those prevailing in India today. The Roman Catholics and the Protestants persecuted each other. Even now there are some States in existence where there are discriminations made, and bars imposed, against a particular class. Thank God we are not starting in those days. We are starting in the days when there is no discrimination, no distinction between one community and another, no discrimination between one caste or creed and another. We are starting with this fundamental principle that we are all citizens and equal citizens of one State. The people of England, in course of time, had to face the realities of the situation and had to discharge the responsibilities and burdens placed upon them by the Government of their country and they went through that fire, step by step. Today you might say with justice that Roman Catholics and Protestants do not exist: What exists now is that every man is a citizen of Great Britain and they are all members of the nation.

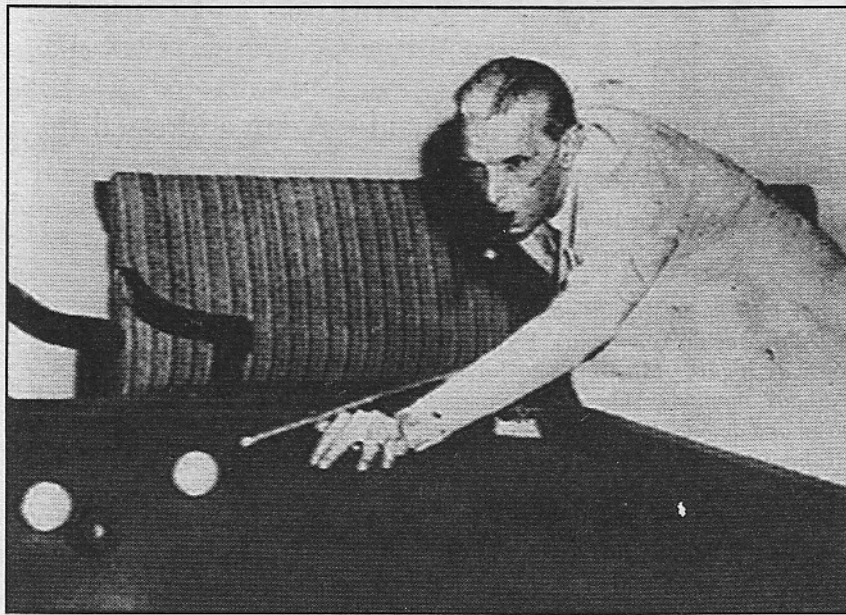
Now, I think we should keep that in front of us as our ideal and you will find that in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State. △



Jinnah signing register at the Constituent Assembly.

Film Reviews

Documentary Jinnah



reviewed by I.A. Rehman

This documentary on the principal character responsible for the creation of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, was obviously made with an eye on the golden jubilee celebrations of the independence of Pakistan and India. *Mr Jinnah: The Making of Pakistan* directed by Christopher Mitchell begins by posing the all-important question: what made Jinnah a great personality?

The director proceeds to tell the story of Jinnah's life and his struggles through the recollections of a number of people who came into contact with him and had opportunity to witness the course of history standing by his side. Mitchell is obviously not satisfied with a narration of events as they took place, though he does respect chronology.

The viewer is taken through the significant phases in the Quaid's life - childhood in Karachi, student days

in England, struggle as a lawyer in Bombay, marriage to Ruttie Petit, disillusionment with Indian politics and retirement to England, return home to head the Muslim League, conduct of negotiations with British missions, arrival in Karachi to become the head of the new state of Pakistan, and his last days in Ziarat.

Alongside, the film recalls the essential political developments in the Subcontinent over the first half of the century - the founding of the Muslim League, the failure of attempts at Hindu-Muslim unity, the arrival of Gandhi, the rise of Nehru and Vallabhai Patel, the pressures on the colonial power caused by World War II, and the final act of Partition in the midst of communal carnage. It must not have been easy to mix these two trails into a smooth narrative but the degree of success achieved by the filmmaker is considerable.

Following the model set by earlier documentaries (such as the British serial on the Raj), Mitchell seeks out a number of Pakistanis to present their impressions; they include civil and military officers (Yaqub Khan, Noor Husain, Aslam Khattak and Usman Ansari), persons who were student activists back then (Javed Iqbal, Ijlal Haider Zaidi and Ghulam Umar), a couple of political activists (Shaista Ikramullah and Yusuf Haroon), and writers/correspondents (Syed S. Pirzada, Z.A. Suleri, Zawwar Zaidi).

For insights into the Quaid's life, Mitchell relies on Princess Abida Sultana, Zeenat Rashid and Dina Wadia. Although Dina did not have the opportunity of watching her father closely or for long, her extended interview, though marred by sub-standard recording, is one of the highlights of the film. Another fresh bit on offer is the account of the Quaid's last flight by a crew member of his plane.

But Mitchell is not content with collecting a group of Pakistanis to repeat their one-sided version of history. He goes to the other side, too, to gather the impressions of some well-known Indian writers (Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh, Rafique Zakaria), Congress leader (Sadiq Ali) and a political analyst (N. Kumar). This brings out some of the points that were debated for long during the Subcontinent's fight against colonialism and the failed attempts at communal unity.

However, it seems that the Indian interlocutors are merely responding to questions framed for them and are not called upon to critically analyse the issues, except for Zakaria, who seems to have received more prominence than he perhaps deserved in the given context. Nevertheless, this approach puts the subject in a better context than would have been the case if the director had relied on the chronicle popularised by the so-called history texts churned out in Pakistan.

Silence on the Raj

The present generation in both India and Pakistan has difficulty appreciating the events that led to 1947, mainly because it has the benefit of hindsight. It can look at political problems in the light of post-WWII developments, and its perceptions have been affected by the experience of five decades of independence. Anyone looking at the film from a present-day perspective may feel somewhat disappointed, but the cause of disappointment lies elsewhere. Mitchell is not presenting a critique of Indian politics of the first half of this century, he is only concerned with the current that moved large masses when the political drama was unfolding.

The problem with the film, however, lies with the subject itself. The course chosen by the Quaid-e-Azam was determined by an interplay of

complex forces, a major factor being the colonial rulers' policy of aggravating a historical divide between two communities and their determination to restrict the people's choice of their system of governance once freedom was granted. Neither the making of Pakistan nor Jinnah's political career can be fully understood without referring to this role of the colonial power. The film's silence about the most dominant of the three parties on the issue of the Subcontinent's freedom is its glaring weakness.

The Making of Pakistan ends with a scene of Baloch-looking people listening to a folk instrumentalist singing Mian Bashir Ahmed's poem on the Quaid. One doubts if they understand the lines - perhaps an indication of how little Jinnah is understood in the state he founded. ▴

But first a few welcome surprises. In view of the myths created about Jinnah and the Pakistan movement by latter-day inventors of the Pakistan ideology, many people were genuinely concerned that due respect might not be paid in the film to the Quaid's liberal, democratic creed or to his secular credentials. Such distortion has been avoided. Jinnah's impatience with conservative clerics has not been glossed over.

The film also avoids the language commonly used in Pakistan for India's Congress leaders who opposed the idea of a separate Muslim nation. Here, they are not overly ridiculed. Nehru's amorous encounters with Lady Mountbatten have certainly been given more footage than the film's theme warranted, but otherwise the Congress leaders are real persons and not caricatures. Both Gandhi and Nehru are allowed their arguments, and Jinnah is asked to seriously counter them.

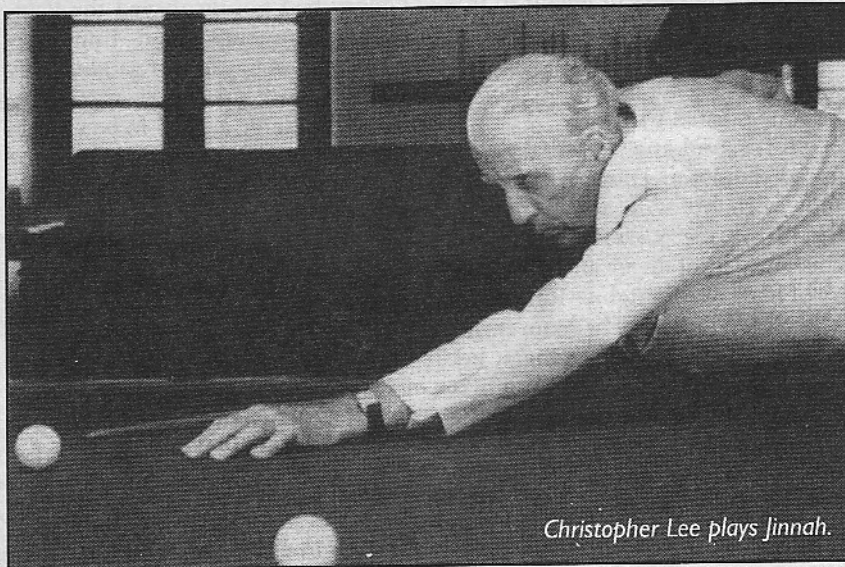
Jinnah, the movie

reviewed by I.A. Rehman

Akbar S. Ahmad's project to make a film on the founder of the Pakistan state was the subject of a fierce and protracted controversy last year. Now that the film, *Jinnah*, is nearly complete, it has been shown to prospective buyers and others, whose help may be needed to meet the finishing costs. But what the producers have to show at the moment raises even more difficult questions than what they have so far faced - primarily to do with the script and the casting of Christopher "Dracula" Lee in the title role.

Some other major deficiencies apart, the main problem with the film appears to be in the flawed approach to the subject. It deals neither with the life of the Quaid nor with his work; both are touched upon only episodically in the course of defending the Quaid's character and poli-

tics. This framework reduces the narrative to a string of anecdotes and brief pronouncements, damaging both the film's unity and movement.



Christopher Lee plays Jinnah.

before his fate in the hereafter can be determined. The most important question, of course, concerns Jinnah's insistence on Partition. The consistent reply is that there was no other way to protect the interests of the Muslim community.

Pakistan, according to Jinnah, became inevitable once Gandhi invoked religious idiom to promote his strategy of non-violent *satyagraha*. Jinnah's warning that this strategy would not only divide communities, but also families, went unheeded. Considerable emphasis has been placed on Gandhi's last-minute suggestion to accept Jinnah as the first prime minister of a free united India, an idea shown as unwelcome to Nehru and, more than him, to Lady Mountbatten. The offer was rejected as a trick by "that wily Gandhi".

Towards the end of the film, the argument is sought to be clinched by confronting Nehru, also at the heavenly computer operator's command (by pressing a button our man can travel in time), with the demolition of the Babri Masjid. While Nehru argues that he had outlawed the religious fanatics responsible for the outrage, Gandhi reminds Jinnah that he himself was killed by religious extremists for having accepted Pakistan. What the film lacks in regard to this debate is any reference to the use of the religious slogan by the Quaid and his associates, and its exploitation in the state created by them.

The second charge Jinnah is required to answer concerns his relations with his wife and daughter. While notice is taken of Peti Dinshaw's fit of anger at the discovery of his young daughter Ruttie's attachment to Jinnah, of her conversion to Islam and of Jinnah crying at her grave, the only defence offered is Jinnah's inability to demonstrate the love he bore for his wife. The impression that the argument has been left inconclusive is strengthened by the filmmaker's omission to show the

couple living together except for a single outing on horses. One also feels that the liveliness attributed to Ruttie has been converted into something resembling frivolity. As regards the relationship between Jinnah and daughter Dina, mutual attachment is stressed, but when Dina announces her decision to marry a young Parsi, the politician in Jinnah suppresses parental affection, though not without pain.

The third issue is the bloody course of Partition, the uprooting of millions of people, and the wanton killing by both Muslims and non-Muslims. Jinnah's defence is that he himself died a million deaths during the riots - the blame lay on the British arbitrators who betrayed his trust. Radcliffe is called

in to testify that he changed the Punjab boundary award at Mountbatten's behest, thus depriving Pakistan of the only military arsenal (Ferozepur) it could have got.

Braveheart

Finally, there is the unresolved issue of Kashmir. Jinnah summons Mountbatten and Lt General Douglas Gracey (Acting Commander-in-Chief of the Pakistan Army) to testify, and the implication is that Mountbatten's intrigue could have been frustrated if Gracey had not disobeyed the Pakistan government's orders. Jinnah describes his act as mutiny and Gracey counters with the observation: "Mutiny is too large a word to be used in a country like Pakistan." So far as the filmmaker is concerned, the matter ends there. It may not be considered so by those who have suffered as a result of such mutinies more than once.

The hazard a filmmaker runs while dealing with a legendary personality is that viewers tend to get so engrossed in issues of the subject figure's authenticity and wholesomeness, like in comparing images on the screen with the stereotype nourished by legend, that the director's labour

does not get the attention it deserves. Jamil Dehlavi will surely be blamed for agreeing to handle a poor script and for settling for small gatherings to depict larger-than-life characters in the act of galvanising mammoth crowds (something Attenborough did not forget while making his *Gandhi*), but he handles the technical requirements rather well, especially the art of crisp cutting.

However, in the final analysis, Dehlavi's work is undone by the flawed concept. Jinnah's life, or the life of any great man, cannot be described as a chronicle of events or in terms of intros preceding press statements. So what we have here is a disjointed piece worthy of hack journalism where one seeks in vain for the opportunities that cinema, like literature, offers in looking beyond newspaper headlines and probing beneath appearances, getting to the core of a character's heart, and analysing his moves. Cinema scores high when instead of justifying a life it enables one to understand it. It is doubtful if the filmmakers understand the milieu in which Jinnah worked.

As for Christopher Lee's performance, except for a few scenes from the forties, he plays the after-death Jinnah and suffers in comparison with the younger actor who portrays Jinnah's early life. There are characters one has difficulty in identifying with, though the person chosen to play Miss Jinnah is an exception.

The real surprise is in the filmmakers' disregard for the target audience. Neither the British nor the Indian audience will find reason to like this film and in Pakistan the religious lobby could make matters difficult for the film's producers and those who backed it. Such courageous disregard for audience reaction can be admired; only that ignorance and public money ought not to have been involved. △

I.A. Rehman is a Lahori writer active in human rights.



Ruttie was hardly seen in the movie.

Sterile Jinnah

reviewed by Imran Shirvaneer

PAKISTAN HAS NEVER had any Jinnah: he was always the Quaid-e-Azam. Attempts to dig out the human being inside the Great Leader have been discouraged as being anti-Pakistan; in fact, Jinnah's private life was never shown on TV prior to 1976 when his birth centenary was celebrated. But even the Quaid-e-Azam has never really been publicly projected, except through official photographs and some film footage kept by the government.

So when the Pakistani government constituted a Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee, one of the ideas discussed was for Pakistan Television (PTV) to "do something" on Jinnah in order to "show the real man". It fell on TV producer Mohsin Ali, a member of the committee in his capacity as PTV's Karachi Director of Programmes, to make a documentary on the Quaid.

Given such a context, Ali did what every producer employed by the government would do: pass the research buck on to others. It was never taken

up as an extensive research assignment and what emerged was all flesh and blood, no real man. Somebody with a lot of outside particulars but no detail. Sum up everything and you get nothing.

True to its reputation when it comes to projects initiated from the top, the PTV people thought more about how to tackle the higher-ups rather than the project. In the meantime, along came anthropologist Akbar S. Ahmed's idea of a feature film, *Jinnah*, which swept everybody away. Soon Ali was telling all and sundry that his "Jinnah" would pale in comparison with the movie. This defeatism helped him convince everybody that he need not work very hard. Which, of course, goes to explain the quality of acting one sees in his seven-episode serial *Jinnah se Quaid tak* (From Jinnah to Quaid).

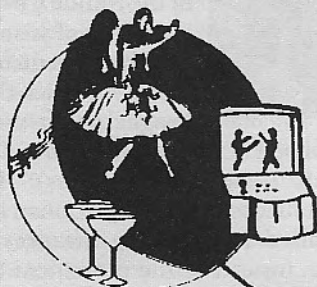
"We never went for professional actors because they have their own personalities that people relate to," Ali clarifies. "For us, it was more important that our cast should look like the

people they are going to represent." Shehryar Jehangir who played Jinnah for most of the serial and Mudassir Shah who takes over towards the end, are thoroughly unsatisfactory in their roles. Even fellow actors agree. Some of them, like Nagin Shah who plays Ruttie Jinnah, say that because of Mudassir Shah the last episode was even worse than the rest of the serial. She herself never got to work extensively on her role. Ditto for Pervez Rehan, PTV's Gandhi. "We never rehearsed seriously," Rehan admits. "They gave me the script, asked me to read it out, corrected my pronunciation once, and that was it."

Even so, the serial was keenly watched by many and pulled people back to PTV after a long time, away from the satellite soaps. They were eager to learn all they could about this man named Jinnah. Unfortunately, they got little worth their time, except for some scenes which emphasised Jinnah's progressive views on the importance of educating women. While it is true that emphasising such messages cannot be scoffed at in a country like Pakistan, one can be certain Jinnah wouldn't be amused with the final product. Δ

I. Shirvaneer is a freelance journalist and theatre activist based in Karachi.

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The Muslim League: a progress report

The All-India Muslim League was formed in Dhaka in 1906 as a political platform for Muslims in British India. Eventually, under the leadership of Jinnah, the Urdu-speaking elite-dominated Muslim League succeeded in carving out the Muslim homelands of East and West Pakistan. The following two articles, written by Lahore journalist **Asha'ar Rehman**, and Delhi-based writer **Irfan Ahmad**, look at how the party has fared in post-1947 Pakistan and India.

Party of The Great Leader

Much has transpired in the five decades between the departure of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the reign of Quaid-e-Azam Saani ("the Great Leader II"), as some ardent supporters of Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif have taken to address him. Records say both men were born on Christmas day - though some 72 years apart - and both head(ed) the Muslim League parties of their time. But that is where the similarity ends. What the charismatic Jinnah spearheaded 50 years ago and what Sharif tugs along today are two entirely different organisations, reflecting the changed times.

The All-India Muslim League was disbanded at a convention in Karachi on 15 December 1947, exactly four months after the birth of Pakistan. With Jinnah in the chair, the League leadership decided to split the party into two - to follow their respective briefs in Pakistan and India. The ageing Quaid expressed his inability to serve as the first chief of the Muslim League of Pakistan. Instead, he nominated Chaudhry Khaliqzaman, a senior politician whom he had earlier named to head the Muslim League in the Constituent Assembly of India, to the post of chief organiser.

The All-Pakistan Muslim League, as it was called initially, met in Karachi in February 1948 to chalk out party rules. Among other things, it was decided that the party offices would be kept separate from those of the government. This meant that neither Governor-General Jinnah nor Prime Minister Liaquat Ali

Khan could hold any office in the party. This was a promising start towards laying the foundations for a democratic culture in the country at its inception, but expectations were dashed soon enough.

With the Quaid's death in September 1948, a spate of intrigues followed which culminated in the League being involved in government affairs. This came with the resignation of Khaliqzaman after a protest by Mohajirs (migrants from India at Partition) outside his Karachi residence. It is believed that the protest was orchestrated by

Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan himself. It was he who benefitted most from Khaliqzaman's ouster. The offices of the head of the government and that of the party were combined to give Liaquat complete authority - a practice that continues till today, in spite of an unsuccessful attempt in 1955 to separate them.

Although Liaquat Ali Khan continues to be promoted in school history as the Quaid-e-Millat (Leader of the Nation), even the most 'patriotic' of historians have been harsh in their judgement of his role as the Muslim League chief. Writes Safdar

Mahmood in *Pakistan: Tareekh aur Siyasat* (Pakistan: History and Politics): "Liaquat Ali Khan succeeded Khaliqzaman in 1950, but he failed in restoring the prestige of the party...instead of the prominent and sincere Muslim League workers, Liaquat encouraged groupings in the provinces by unduly backing his friends and factional leaders..."

Consequently, Mahmood recalls, several old Leaguers were forced to quit the party and



Jinnah was for keeping the party and government apart. Liaquat was not.

they went on to form their own outfits; the Muslim League's popularity suffered and its political base was weakened. "Once, the Muslim League was the realisation of the dream of unity among Muslims, but within years after the creation of Pakistan it was an example of factional politics among Muslims." The large number of 'Leagues' that have emerged in Pakistani politics is in fact a legacy of this early period.

Council and convention

The transformation of the Muslim League was quick. Liaquat was assassinated in Rawalpindi in October 1951, and Khwaja Nazimuddin, a veteran politician from East Pakistan, took charge of the government as well as the party. But nothing was done to revamp the fast-crumbling party structure. By the time Pakistan's ambassador to the US, Muhammad Ali Bogra, was imported from Washington and installed as the new prime minister in 1953 by Governor-General Ghulam Muhammad, the Muslim League had become too weak to protest the move.

The party was quickly losing ground to emerging alliances. The most glaring example was provided by its humiliating defeat in the March 1954 provincial elections in East Pakistan. In a 309-member House, the League's share amounted to just 10 seats. The United Front, an alliance of various parties formed only a year earlier, captured 223 seats. That the Front had the support of the extreme right-wing Nizam-e-Islam Party on one hand and the Communist Party on the other in itself spoke of the disenchantment with the League in the east.

As for West Pakistan, although the feudals tried desperately to keep the party intact, the glorious period when they ruled over Jinnah's Pakistan and his party was over. Sensing the danger of total annihilation after the electoral debacle in East Pakistan, in 1955 the League leaders reverted to the old policy of keeping party offices separate from the government ones. Sardar Abdur Rab Nishtar, a respected politician and Jinnah's contemporary, was appointed party head. Nishtar and his successor, the "Lion of the Frontier", Khan Abdul Qayyum Khan, tried to effect some damage control. However, their efforts were yet to bear fruit when General Ayub Khan imposed martial law in the country in 1958.

Political parties were banned and all political activities remained suspended until 1962 - the year Ayub Khan, seeking political legitimacy for his rule, ordered a new Muslim League for himself. A convention of min-

isters and pro-government politicians was called in Karachi to pledge allegiance.

Soon afterwards, politicians, including the pre-ban League council veterans, held their own meeting in Dhaka which was called Council Muslim League. Khwaja Nazimuddin was again chosen the leader. Power, however, was wielded by Ayub Khan's League, supported by industrialists and landlords, who had been grafted into the system through Ayub's Basic Democracy dispensation.

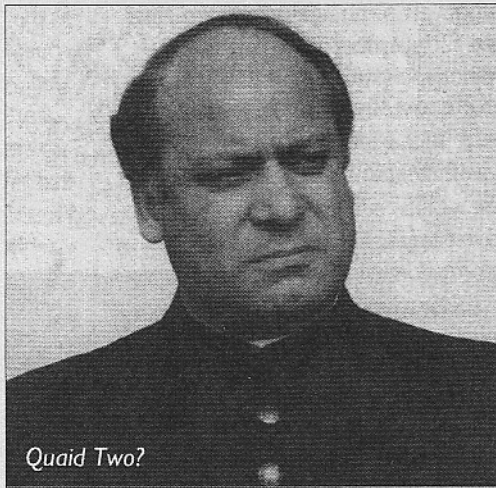
The Convention League, however, was so linked with Ayub's persona that it fizzled out after his ouster in 1969. In the 1970 general election, it could land only two seats out of the 124 contested. On the other hand, the Council Muslim League fought 119 seats and won nine. Qayyum League, another breakaway faction of the Muslim League under Khan Qayyum Khan, vying for 132 seats, also won only nine.

In East Pakistan, the polls were swept by Sheikh Mujib's Awami League. In West Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, one-time Ayub ally who had the foresight to jump off the wagon in time to launch his own Pakistan People's Party, won with a handsome margin. After coming to power in the wake of the east's secession in 1971, Bhutto played his cards deftly to further neutralise the Muslim League. Khan Qayyum Khan was inducted into the federal cabinet as interior minister, while the chief of the Council Muslim League, Mian Mumtaz Daultana, was despatched to London as Pakistan's ambassador. The Muslim League had been reduced to a shadow of its past, with the various factional heads winning themselves a share in power.

Pir pressure

Efforts to unite the Muslim League continued. They bore fruit in 1972 when the Council and Convention leagues were merged, with Hassan A. Sheikh chosen as party president and Malik Qasim as secretary general. However, old-timers like Sardar Shaukat Hyat and Daultana did not recognise this marriage and stayed away from the party. A year later, Pir Ali Mardan Shah of Pagaro became party president and under his command the Muslim League took part in the united opposition's agitation to oust Bhutto.

Having overthrown Bhutto, the Pir and his party quickly established good relations with the military ruler Gen Zia-ul-Haq. Meanwhile, Malik Qasim, as the head of his own small faction of the Muslim League, continued to ally himself with the anti-martial law forces such as the Movement for Restoration of De-



Quaid Two?



Junejo, too, had his League.

mocracy (MRD).

Zia's rule bore a striking resemblance to the martial law of Ayub Khan. Indeed, Zia, like Ayub, soon sought political legitimacy for his rule. And like Ayub, he thought that the Muslim League, the party with an ideology, offered him the best option.

For the non-party 1985 polls, Zia turned to old pal Pir Pagaro, asking for help in cre-

ating a new ruling party. The Pir was happy to oblige and lent one of his trusted disciples, Muhammad Khan Junejo, a moderate politician from his home province of Sindh. Junejo became prime minister as well as the Muslim League chief. Among Junejo's close associates was a budding Lahore politician named Mian Nawaz Sharif, who had been handpicked by Zia in the early 1980s.

Sharif began as the Punjab finance minister after the elections of 1985 and three years later, when Junejo fell out with Zia, Sharif staked his claim on the League leadership. The party moved towards another split.

The formalities were completed in August 1988 when Pagaro's League was divided into two groups: pro-Zia Leaguers including Sharif, elected veteran NWFP leader Fida Muhammad Khan as their head; those siding with the ousted prime minister formed the Junejo

League. Even though an attempt at unity was subsequently made, and the League went into the 1988 and 1990 general election as one entity, the deep-rooted clash of interests between the Sharif and Junejo camps prevented any lasting reconciliation.

By the 1993 elections, the Junejo League had again parted ways with the Sharif group. In fact, the Junejo group, led by Punjabi politician Hamid Nasir Chattha after the death of the former prime minister, played a decisive part in the PML-Nawaz's defeat by allying itself with Benazir Bhutto's PPP. In return, Junejo League nominees Manzoor Ahmed Wattoo and Sardar Arif Nakai both got a shot at being the chief minister of Punjab, Pakistan's largest province.

Despite the fall in the PPP's popularity graph, the Junejo League carried its alliance with Benazir into the next election in February 1997. Both were crushed by the PML-Nawaz which swept the polls, winning a two-thirds majority. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has since expressed his desire for removal of his initial as suffix to the party's name - obviously staking a claim on the mantle of Jinnah and his Muslim League.

Were the Quaid to descend on earth and visit Pakistan, it would be interesting to see which of the several Muslim Leagues he would have felt closest to. Would it be Liaquat Ali Khan's Muslim League, or Ayub Khan's, or Malik Qasim's, Junejo's, or Nawaz Sharif's? Or would Jinnah select for the honour the League disbanded on 15 December 1947 - a year and ten days before Sharif was born?

- *Asha'ar Rehman*

Only the legacy remains

After 1947, the Muslim League in India was caught in the Shakespearean dilemma of to be or not to be. Following Gandhi's assassination, Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly led by Nawab Ismail Khan decided to dissolve it. However, leaders from South India disagreed, and in 1948 with Mohammad Ismaile as president and Mahebob Beg as general secretary it was renamed Indian Union Muslim League (IUML).

Nawab Ismail Khan's and Mohammad Ismaile's rather opposite views reflected the different conditions in North and South. North India had to undergo the trauma of Par-

titution through the flight of its well-off sections which had earlier provided the League with most of the leadership. Partition did not affect the South as it remained peaceful; and the altogether different conditions provided a favourable atmosphere for the League to survive.

In the India after 1947, thus, Madras became the centre of IUML's politics. In the 1951 parliamentary elections, it won one seat from Madras; in 1957 and in 1971 also the party managed to capture a seat in parliament. It had some base in West Bengal where in the 1969 state elections it won three seats, and the tally rose to seven seats in 1971.

The IUML was able to strengthen itself when the state of Kerala was formed in 1956. The party played a decisive role in the state's politics and was included in coalition governments headed by both the Left parties and the Congress. Since 1957, it has consistently maintained a strong presence in the state assembly, although it has never held more than 20 seats. In the 1962 Lok Sabha elections it won two seats, and since then it has been unfailingly sending two members to the Parliament. Malappuram, a separate district carved out for a Muslim-majority population, is the main centre of the League's activism in the state.

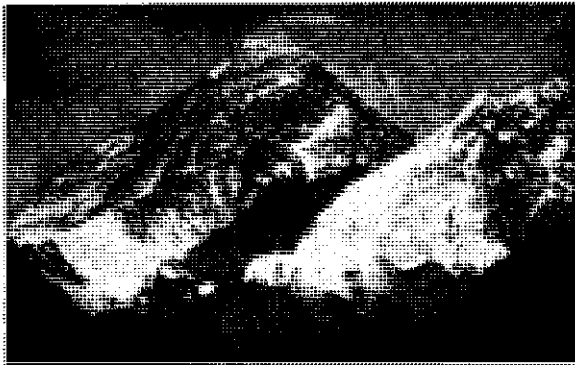
After the demolition of Bahri Masjid in 1992, the party split on the issue of alliance with the Congress. Sulaiman Saith, then one of the IUML MPs, was against any truck with

the Congress blaming it for the demolition. G.M. Banatwala, the other IUML MP, took a moderate stand. In protest, Saith in 1994 floated his own party, the Indian National League.

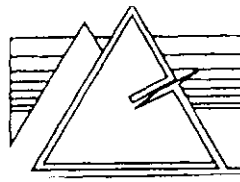
In retrospect, it is ironical that, as the only platform for Indian Muslims as the IUML claims to be, the party has no base in Jammu and Kashmir or Lakshwadeep, the only two Muslim-majority areas of the country. Nor does it have any following in North India. Ninety-two years after its birth and 50 years after Partition, in India, with its Muslim population of around 100 million, the party which began with the clarion call to represent all Muslims of the Subcontinent is today reduced to a tiny district in the south of India.

- Irfan Ahmad

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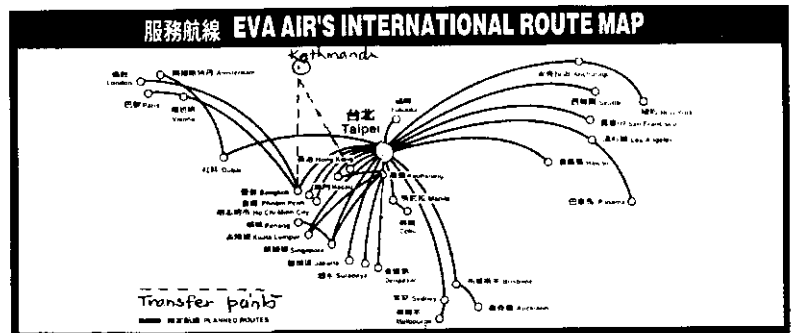


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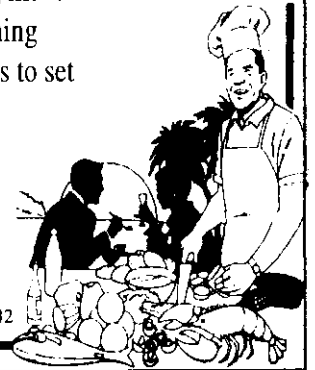
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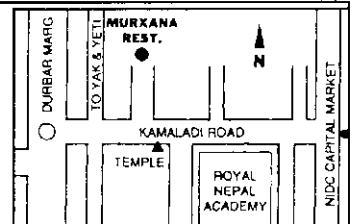


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Life in the ghetto

Educated Pakistanis are leaving the country in droves.

by Syed Ali Dayan Hasan

Various theories have been propounded to explain why more and more people ('intellectuals' as some would call them) are leaving Pakistan for the West; the general impression being that they have no place for their country in their heart. The truth, however, is that it is Pakistan which spurns them and not the other way around.

This is especially so since Pakistan is rapidly evolving into a society where the primary determinant of social worth is money. Intellectual pursuits, whether in academia or the performing arts, are not only constrained by arbitrary and, frankly, ridiculous censorship, but are also regarded as the path of losers.

Take the case of historians. What hope do they have in a country that has no academic infrastructure worth speaking of and, more ominously, no desire to create one? What role does the study of history have in a country where children are taught that Pakistan came into existence the day Mohammed Bin Qasim stepped on subcontinental soil, harem and all, in the 8th century? How does one propose to engage in genuine research, given an academic environment where the state is constrained to teach Pakistan Studies instead of History because of the inconvenient fact that History predates Pakistan?

How can there be any questioning and debate in a society where the tentacles of state-sponsored and state-tolerated obscurantist orthodoxy reach into almost every arena of life? Yes, people are free (almost) to do what they like within the four walls of their own or somebody else's home. There, they can have sex, drink alcohol, dance. They can even watch the latest Indian film on the laser disc player.

But, at the end of the day, this is not enough. A ghetto, regardless of its comfort, remains a ghetto. Which is why so many people today want a life outside that ghetto. And those who, through luck or ability, do manage to escape and create a life

elsewhere should not be condemned for seeking basic freedom.

Have property, will agitate

A telling example of the schizophrenia that envelopes Pakistan's ruling establishment can be found in a question from the Islamic studies examination, required to join the civil service of Pakistan: "The Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) was the best and most perfect man of all time. Discuss." It is difficult to conceive how anyone would dare "discuss" this issue at any depth, with a blasphemy law hanging over their heads. As for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him indeed after the uses Pakistan has put his good name to.

Despite what apologists may have to say, Pakistani society is a study in ever-increasing conservatism and conformity. The Islamabad government has just elected as President a bigoted, sexist, minority hater. After a lot of hemming and hawing and the writing of a few obligatory English editorials on the matter for the minuscule English-speaking audience, like so much else, it was taken lying down.

This is not a blanket indictment of the people of Pakistan but a sad reflection of 50 years of stymied political and intellectual growth. A state shackled by ideology, insecurity and retrogressive rhetoric has ensured that the parameters of public discourse be progressively narrowed over time. Today in Pakistan, politically and culturally, there is no place at the margins. You are either mainstream or you are out. The Constitution of Pakistan, and the state, the upholder of that Constitution and public moral standards, continue to legalise discrimination, bigotry, prejudice and exclusion.

Academics, writers, poets, scientists or just ordinary individu-

Wealth helps:
Asma Jahangir.





President Tarar

als who do not agree with these limitations are outsiders. Either they have to be wealthy enough to maintain some autonomy or they will have to simply conform. Some fight to be immediately marginalised, but not everyone is brave enough to suffer thus.

Of course, there are a few fearless ones who continue to question and propose alternatives. Lawyer and human rights activist Asma Jahangir is one of them, but she is in the fortunate position of being financially advantaged. Several years ago, when this writer was toying with

the idea of returning to Pakistan and saving it (the idealism of the young), Jahangir surprised me by asking whether I owned two properties, one to live in and one to rent. The answer being in the negative, her advice was that the dotted line be toed until I achieved the required level of economic independence. Rather scornfully, I retorted that money does not give one happiness. "Yes, I agree, but it does make unhappiness a lot easier to deal with," was her crushing and (in retrospect) perceptive reply.

Still A Pakistani

There is much that is wonderful about Pakistan. Interesting, and sometimes brave and committed people, are some of its greatest assets. Above all, it is my home. Regardless of where I am I will not stop being A Pakistani.

But, within Pakistan, self-censorship is endemic. It is so deeply ingrained that creativity has no place in the Pakistani mind. Already, having written this article, I have opened myself up to charges of being an "anti-Pakistan element". I could be tried under the blasphemy law, the hudood laws, the prohibition act. In all probability, I will not get into any trouble, till I actually become a problem, at which time this article may come back to haunt me.

Do I want to live with this fear? Will I be able to say what I think over time if I live this life of sustained fear? I grew up in Pakistan and already my capacity for self examination and airing the truth is limited. I should not allow it to get any worse.

Life in a country which has forgotten how to tell the truth is not desirable. △

S.A.D. Hasan is reading towards a DPhil in Modern History at St Antony's College, Oxford.

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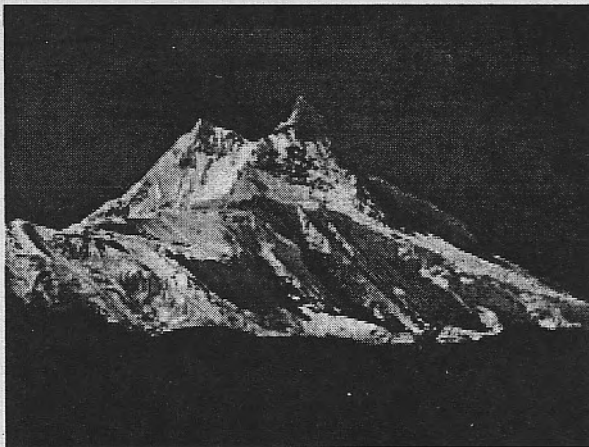
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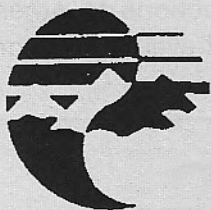
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3. The Fellow will be expected to engage in research on a topic under the following themes:
 - Poverty, Inequality, Human Development and Social Exclusion
 - Quality of Public Life
 - Regional Disparities
 - Identities
 - Culture and Media
 - The Labouring Classes
 - Economy and Environment
 - The Indian Diaspora
 - Comparative Studies with a South Asian perspective
4. The Fellowship is open to candidates from the SAARC region. Applicants should be established scholars in the social sciences with experience of research on the Indian subcontinent. (The Fellowship is not intended for students registered for a degree or a diploma.)
5. The Fellow will be expected to finish his or her research during their stay and make a presentation at seminar or lecture arranged by the Asia Research Centre.

Applicants should send their curriculum vitae and an outline of their proposed research along with the name and addresses of two referees, familiar with their work, who will be contacted by the Chairman. Applications should be addressed to The Chairman of the Management Committee, The Asia Research Centre, Room Y314, London School of Economics & Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE. The final date for receipt of applications is 28th February 1998. Candidates will be informed of the decision by the middle of May 1998.

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"Mr & Mrs Ten Percent"

ON 9 JANUARY 1998, *The New York Times* outdid itself in its South Asia coverage. The newspaper whose motto is "All the News That's Fit to Print" thought it fit to print an exposé of massive corruption within the Bhutto clan.

South Asia correspondent John F. Burns, a Pulitzer Prize winner, was allowed front-page treatment and (rather incongruously, actually) two full pages on the inside, following the shenanigans of Asif Ali Zardari from Pakistan to Dubai, Geneva, Channel Islands and the British Virgin Islands. In doing so, Burns compiles in one story and confirms much of what had been widely known of Benazir Bhutto's husband Asif Ali Zardari. It also provides some new angles.

Burns reports on the financial deals which got Benazir Bhutto's husband the sobriquet "Mr Ten Percent", including millions made off gold bullion trade into Pakistan, customs scams, licensing scams, etc. Besides these, according to officials interviewed, Zardari exploited "defence contracts; power plant projects; the privatisation of state-owned industries; the awarding of broadcast licences; the granting of an export monopoly for the country's huge rice harvest; the purchase of planes for Pakistan International Airlines; the granting of oil and gas permits; authorisations to build sugar mills; and the sale of government lands."

The NYT correspondent also studied property records to show that

Zardari did indeed purchase Rockwood, the opulent nine-bedroom estate in the Surrey countryside, through the intermediary of offshore companies based in the Isle of Man. He paid USD 4 million, not including a complete renovation of the 1930s mansion at a cost of USD 1.5 million.

Burns quotes Pakistani officials as saying that the USD 100 million they have identified so far is only a small part of a windfall from corrupt activities: "They maintain that (Ms Bhutto) and her family and associates generated more than \$1.5 billion in illicit profits through kickbacks in virtually every sphere of government activity - from rice deals to the sell-off of state land, even rake-offs from state welfare schemes."

But what of Benazir, whose entry into politics so mesmerised Pakistanis "as the daughter who had avenged her father and the politician who had restored democracy"? She described the investigations as persecution, and was "alternately tearful and defiant" during the interview, reports Burns.

Asked about her wealth, she said her family had inherited wealth, although not to the scale implied in the charges. She continued:

I mean, what is poor and what is rich? If you mean, am I rich by European standards, do I have a billion dollars, or even a hundred million dollars, even half that, no, I do not. But if you mean that I'm ordinary rich, yes, my father had three children studying at Harvard as undergraduates at the same time. But this wealth never meant anything to my brothers or me.

Bhutto said she knew nothing about the purchase of the luxury estate in Surrey, and even suggested that her husband may have bought the property "for some other woman". "I don't know whether my husband had an affair or not... He tells me he didn't. I don't know if he bought Rockwood, or did not."

Then, reports Burns, Bhutto paused and added, with tears in her eyes, "But I think it's absolutely cruel to take people's personal lives and turn them into methods of psychological warfare against a female political opponent."

At another point, Bhutto said that "irreparable damage had been done to my standing in the world".

That, at least, would be true. Who could have been a shining beacon to the intelligentsia and to feminists, reduced to this...

Pop nationalism



The poor and homeless realising their dream beneath Karachi flyover.

DESPITE PRIME MINISTER Nawaz Sharif's thundering tirade against what he calls the "jean-jacket culture" in the land of the Quaid-e-Azam, and despite the fears of the "new media policy", pop songs are still aired on PTV and male-female newscasters still share the same screen. Perhaps in today's global village, where the issue of economic advancement seems to be tied inextricably to the issue of liberal social values, it could not be otherwise. Even so, the dozens of rock bands that have sprung up over the last decade in Pakistan invariably feel duty bound to churn out at least one patriotic song in order to prove their credentials as "Proud Pakistanis" (the title of one number).

The most recent example of nationalistic fervour in the pop genre was the concoction of a group calling itself Contraband. On 25 December, the Quaid's birthday, Pakistan Television viewers were assaulted with the sight of three jeans-clad young men

(one of them wearing a kurta on top), strumming guitars, and jiving to the beat of a song titled "Father of Our Land".

The video song is interspersed with archival clips of Jinnah in the elegant three-piece suit he favoured, as well as in the shervani, addressing crowds and the Constituent Assembly, and suchlike historic footage. Contraband makes use of the Quaid's famous slogan of "unity, faith and discipline" in its lyrics:

*Through unity, faith and discipline
You led your people
And you made your stand
You are the father of our land...
ye-e-a-a-ah...*

Other lines:

*...When the poor and homeless
people*

*realised their dream...
ye-e-a-a-ah...*

Led by a singer in dark glasses, black jeans and T-shirt, the group runs a victory lap around a cricket stadium, waving a Pakistani flag. And as they end their song they vroom down Islamabad's Constitution Avenue (wags call it the "Amended Constitution Avenue") on motorbikes past the Supreme Court, National Assembly and Presidency, flashing victory signs and advocating:

*...Peace and har...monee
ye-e-a-a-ah...*

If nouveau riche teenybopper anglo pop could bring peace and harmony to the fractured land that is Pakistan, Contraband may just be able to smuggle it in.

Independent art at Independence

AS SRI LANKA celebrates 50 years of independence from British rule, its art community is divided over who best represents the country's artistic ethos. In fact, an "alternative art exhibition" is planned by some rebel artists to go up against an official exhibition that is being organised by the Art Council of Sri Lanka.

On behalf of the Ministry of Cultural and Religious Affairs, the Art Council is opening its exhibition of paintings and sculptures on 4 February, which is Independence Day. To begin with, the response of the younger painters and sculptors has been lukewarm. They did not like the idea of the state suddenly playing benefactor, when, as they claim, it had done precious little to help the art scene over the decades.

These artists also question the creden-

tials of the exhibition's curator and President of the Art Council, Ven Mapalagama Vipulasara. He is a Buddhist monk living in a plush temple south of Colombo who is better known for his mass-production of shining fibre-glass Buddhas.

The 'dissident' artists say that some of the Council's other members do not know much about contemporary visual arts, as seen in the way they went about selecting works for the exhibition and in sending out participation invitations. "We don't want ugly modern paintings for this exhibition," one of them was quoted as saying. The disenchantment is such that many artists have rebuffed the invitations.

The artists' ire is further fuelled by the government's neglect of art institutions. Says one of them: "Look at the state of the so-called National Art Gallery. It re-

flects the mind-frame and the ideological position of the Art Council. Can you believe it, they have funerals there, they might as well turn it into a funeral parlour." All seem to be agreed that the Gallery displays its permanent collection of paintings and sculptures in appalling fashion, untouched by curatorial expertise.

Parallel art

The alternative exhibition is being put up by artists involved in the recent revival of Sri Lankan painting, sculpture and installations. These are people who have been experimenting with and challenging the boundaries of conventional art in the island, stand ideologically apart and deviate from the much more prevalent, and stagnant, established conventions.

Their works are to go on display from 9-12 February at Colombo's Lionel Wendt Art Gallery, under the curatorship of

Parrot patriotism

IT IS NOT easy to kick one's old habits, and it's a lot more difficult to get others to give up theirs. Ask the top brass of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Now that election is in the air, and a real possibility of storming the Delhi durbar, BJP leaders want their cadre to play down their family ties with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and its strident Hindu agenda.

But it is not proving so easy. Instead, the dyed-in-saffron middle-rung leadership of the party is improving upon and overdoing old habits.

In the heart of the cowbelt, Ravindra Shukla, the Minister for Primary Education in BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh, is bent on implementing the VHP slogan, "Bharat Varsh Mein Rehna Hoga to Vande Mataram Kehna Hoga" (If you want to live in India, you have to recite the Sanskrit phrase which means "Hail Motherland").

Some time back, Shukla passed an order that required all primary school students to start their day by worshipping a portrait of the motherland and reciting *Vande Mataram*, the nation-



NO SYHENS

alist song of that title written by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Completely carried away, the minister also directed that students henceforth say "Vande Mataram" instead of "Present" or "Yes Sir" during the roll call.

The sizeable Muslim community within the state was outraged. The All-India Muslim Personal Law Board said Islam prohibits idol worship and asked all community members within the state not to follow the order. The Board's legal adviser, Zafaryab Jilani, told *The Indian Express* daily: "I know that the government might brand all

of us Muslims as traitors after this decision. But we do not need a certificate for our patriotism from any political party or person."

Shukla claims that his directive was designed to inculcate patriotism among the youth: "Nobody should have objections to this order which asks them only to hail their motherland... Why are they raising such a brouhaha now while they remained silent when Vande Mataram was made into the national song?" However, the minister did withdraw the diktat on daily worship of the motherland's portrait, but not before suggesting that it could still be done once or twice a year.

Jilani said the Board was toying with the idea of challenging the order in a court of law as it violates the right to religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution. Back in 1973, a similar reaction from the Muslim community had forced the Government of Maharashtra to withdraw an order seeking the recitation of Vande Mataram in municipal schools.

The Vice-President of the Board, Kalbe Sadiq, says it is examining the connotations of Vande Mataram in the context of Islamic law. Until that's through, they have instructed their students not to follow the order. The Board is also waiting to see what action Lucknow's BJP government takes against Muslim students who refuse to follow Shukla's order.

...and the BJP wants to unfurl its newfangled secular credentials?



Lankan motifs for the 50th.

Chandragupta Thenuwara, Director of Vibhavi Academy of Fine Arts. The exhibition will feature well-known artists like Kingsley Goonathileka (whose latest show was "Displaced Bodies"), Mohammed Carder, Jagath Weerasinghe, Dhruvinka and Balbir Bodh. Curator Thenuwara himself will be a big draw with

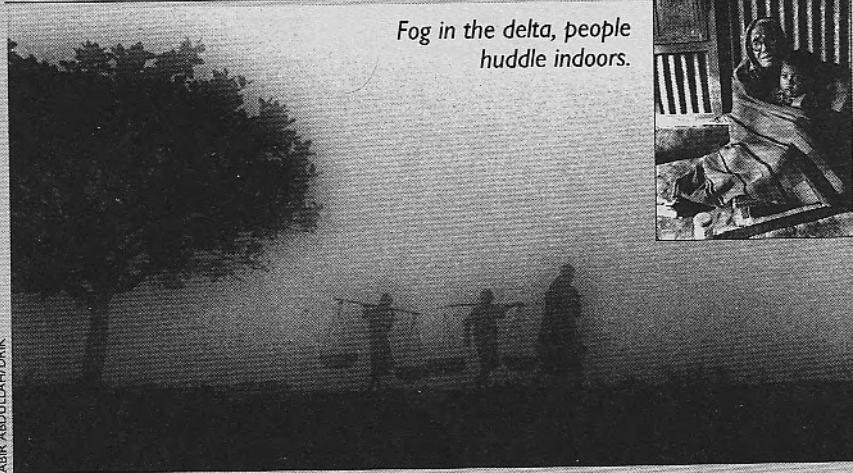
his installations which use barrels with camouflage paint, as he investigates and critiques the present war situation.

The parallel exhibition has already caught the imagination of the country's art community. It has even spawned another show at around the same time, "Generation Z", organised by students and graduates of the Institute of Aesthetic Studies.

Controversies apart, in the country's 50th year of independence, art is competing with itself. Even as the state celebrations unfold in recently bomb-blasted Kandy, the last kingdom in the island to fall to British rule, the country's independent-minded artists will be making their own statements.

Neither the planned international limited-overs cricket tourney, nor the visit of Prince Charles can hold a mirror to Sri Lankan life at 50 years. Art can.

-Anoli Perera



Fog in the delta, people huddle indoors.

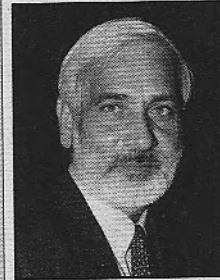


South Asianist to Southeast Asia

ONE OF THE last things that Inder Kumar Gujral did before he became 'caretaker' prime minister in the run-up to the forthcoming elections was to appoint S.D. Muni ambassador.

Perhaps it was a matter of pride for Indian academia that one of their kind had been thus honoured. But where was this South Asianist assigned? To the farther reaches of Southeast Asia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

From his eyrie in Jawaharlal Nehru University's School for International Studies, Muni has written on all South Asian countries, quite a lot on SAARC, and much on Indian policy vis-a-vis smaller neighbours. Said a Bangladesh scholar who asked not to be named, "A genuine, firm and sophisticated defender of India's foreign policy, Mr Muni's appointment as an Indian ambassador is a sort of reward for his position over the years. Those who followed his work, heard his views and noticed his equation with South Block would hardly be surprised with this appointment."



The scholar added, "But the fact that he eventually got Laos and not any South Asian country may have to do with, more than anything else, equa-

tions within the Foreign Ministry which is never too happy with appointments from outside the fold."

Muni himself, already off to Vientiane, could not be reached for comments, but it can be guessed that he would probably proffer his South-east Asianist credentials as well, having spent time recently as a visiting scholar in Singapore. As the Bangladesh scholar said, "He would also probably take pride in speculating that his appointment to any South Asian capital would not be very popular with the receiving country."

The great chill

COME THE MONSOONS, and the floods in Bangladesh are a given. If the weather pattern of the past couple of winters are to continue, the cold months are going to prove equally hard on Bangladeshis. The cold wave that swept across the Ganga plain from Delhi to Dhaka this winter left hundreds, mostly elderly folk and children, dead, and countless domestic animals lost.

Weather officials say the absence of the sun for days on end due to thick fog which hugged the ground resulted in "a narrow maximum and minimum temperature band" which made the cold that much more unbearable. The fog was the result of increased humidity due to the high pressure systems moving into Bangladesh from Bihar and West Bengal. To make things worse, the cold winds from Siberia chose to pass through the deltaic region at the same time.

The drop in temperature grievously affected daily life. As it was, under normal circumstances very few would have ventured out after sunset during Ramadhan (which fell in January this year). But the cold wave kept even the brave-hearted indoors; the result of which was that Dhaka city was incongruously traffic-less. Shopkeepers closed up early evenings. In many localities, schools were closed as children were kept home. Labourers stayed away from work, and brick kiln workers suffered as the sun required to dry their bricks was blocked off.

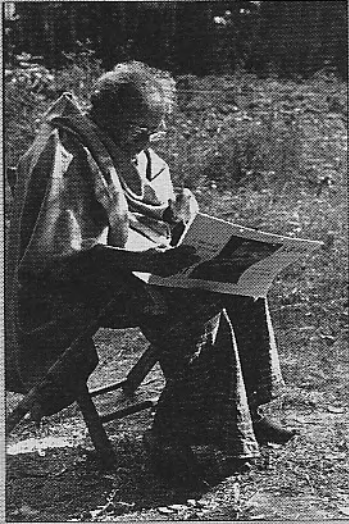
Meanwhile, Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, in the extreme north-east of Bangladesh, reported a two-fold increase in patients complaining of respiratory tract infections.

The big news of the season, however, was reports of snowfall in the north-western part of Bangladesh, near the Duars plains of northern West Bengal. Residents of the frontier villages of Patgram and Burimari claimed that the snow began to fall at around 5 am and continued for half an hour. They reported seeing a white, cotton-like substance falling from the sky. A local NGO reported that temperatures in the area had dropped to 4.2 degrees Celsius. If confirmed, this would be the first-ever case of snowfall in Bangladesh.

Sajedur Rahman, of the meteorological office, dismissed the idea that snow had fallen, saying that atmospheric conditions in Bangladesh do not support such a phenomenon. "It will be another couple of centuries before temperatures go low enough to warrant snowfall," he added. The met office also refuted the claimed 4.2 degrees Celsius temperatures recorded, even though it admitted that it does not have observation points of its own near the area.

Snowfall or not, the winter was cold. And Bangladeshis could do nothing but bundle up and wait for the speedy arrival of the promised warmer air from the Bay of Bengal.

-Talat Kamal



SHAHIDUL ALAM/DRINK

Departure

Golam Kasem 1894 – 1998

IT WAS IN the foothills of the Himalaya that he was born, in a bullock cart amidst a freezing storm. It was in the cold chill of January, in the severest winter in Bangladesh's memory, that he died. Alone and uncared for, frail and shrunken with age, Bangladesh's oldest photographer, Golam Kasem, known to one and all as Daddy, died at the tender age of 104.

Born on 5 November 1894 in Jalpaiguri (West Bengal), Daddy lost his mother hours after his birth. Brought up by his aunt, the young man took up photography for the same reason many young men do many things: to impress a girl. She had promised to cook a meal for him if he could develop the film that others had failed to. With the same zeal for disciplined research that he maintained till his death, Kasem went around the studios of Midnapore (now in West Bengal). He discovered the use of a hardener to prevent the emulsion from peeling off - and got his meal.

"Her first dance". (1927)

Later, he saved his bus fare to school to buy a quarter-size Ensign Box camera with which he began taking photographs of the things he loved most, animals, flowers and children. Most importantly, he preserved those negatives. In his archives, inside old paper sachets marked in his neat handwriting are glass plates dating back to 1918: the harbour in Calcutta, early steam engines, the Gurkha regiment in shorts, and many, many portraits. Period pieces lit in that soft natural light that early studios used. Grainless negatives of people, generally in studied poses.

Kasem's spontaneous pictures were those of animals and children, and amongst them are some gems. "Her first dance" is a delicate photograph of a child at centre stage with her family as audience (see picture below). Strong portraits of his friend, a teacher, and one of his grandmothers in calm repose. Incredibly, for a man so photographically prolific for so long, he sold his first photograph at the age of 98, for the Dhaka-based Drik Picture Library's 1993 calendar.

Light cameras, short stories

As founder of the Camera Recreation Club, Daddy arranged regular meetings at his single-storey 73, Indira Road home where the club was housed. Competitions at the Camera Recreation Club tended to be unusual events. Photographers who generally abstained from many local competitions would submit small 4" x 5"

prints and they went away proud of the simple prizes they sometimes won. The prize-giving was always accompanied by a cultural programme and Daddy would always sing.

Once at a meeting at the Bangladesh Photographic Society (BPS), where he had been presented a new camera, Daddy spoke of how the camera he had been given would be much more than a machine to him. He talked of how he would keep his camera next to his pillow when he went to sleep. How, when he was sad, he would speak to it, and that it would talk back and comfort him. Unimpressed by the modern motor-driven models, he preferred a simple manual single-lens-reflex camera, "preferably not too heavy", he would add. This is not to say he shied away from technology as was evident from his fascination with email through which he used to correspond with his grandson in Canada.

Daddy was always loathe to talk of himself, and it was only in passing conversation with the late Nasiruddin, editor of the first Bengali magazine *Shawgat*, that this writer discovered that Daddy was considered the first Bengali Muslim short story writer. He used to write regularly for *Shawgat* and continued to write, both technical articles on photography for the BPS newsletter and short stories for general publication.

Always articulate, on his 100th birthday, at the opening of a joint photographic exhibition by him and the other photographic guru Manzoor Alam Beg at the Drik Gallery, he talked eloquently of how photography was the way for people of the world to make friends, to break barriers, to discover one another. Later, as the chief guest at the opening of the 1996 World Press Photo exhibition in Dhaka, he talked of his own struggle to overcome the limitations of an ageing body. "My body says no, but my mind says you must, and in the end it is the mind that wins." On Friday, 9 January 1998, the body finally said no, and the mind took wing.

-Shahidul Alam



GOLAM KASEM/DRINK

Well, if I see another newspaper picture or election cutout of the two Gandhi madams in hand-raised-high posture waving at the Indian nation,



I will file a case at the recently-constituted Commission against Repetition of Imagery in Public Life. Okay, okay, they have decided to get involved, but what about the perspiration patches? To begin with, I thought this was a summer phenomenon. And as long as the world is being globalised, shouldn't we all be thinking deodorants even if this is not a properly South Asian solution to armpit moisture? I rest my case and await the rotten eggs.

It was a proud moment for Dhaka's denizens when worldclass cricket came to their fair and polluted city with the Independence Cup. What was worth observing, however, was how the Indian media drew parallels with the 1971 war, with the finalists Pakistan and India fighting on/over Bangladeshi soil. The most contorted of these reports, however, was the *Times of India's*, which put out a boxed front pager lead news report by Pradeep Vijayakar, starting with the following: "DHAKA: Thousands of Bangladeshis were hailing India again, 26 years after India helped them in their war of liberation in 1971." Hardly the stuff of good journalism. And then this down in the third paragraph, "The Dhaka Sta-

dium, the scene of India's mind-boggling triumph, they chased Pakistan's total of 314 to win by three wickets with one ball to spare, was barely 2-km away from the Suhrawardy Udyan where Pakistan's Gen Niazi signed the treaty of surrender and handed it over to Gen Jagjit Singh Arora..." Where, oh where, is the connection? For future reference, cricket journalists are bad at geopolitics.

It had been a long time (many years, actually) since I had glanced at *The Statesman* of Calcutta, and I was very pleasantly surprised to see that the paper has spruced up its visuals and prints good colour. The competition from the finely laid out *Telegraph* has obviously done the paper good. I also see that the editor-cum-proprietor C.R. Irani is still up to his old tricks, monopolising the front pages for his tirades against the high and mighty, in a column entitled "Caveat". I have always wondered why Mr Irani does not get more press than he deserves for his forthright comments on current (Indian) events.

With some more skeletons tumbling out of Bhutan's state closet, this little extra bit of information may not be out of order. If democracy is what we want, then the conservative United States NGO (yes, that's what I would call it) Freedom House carries out a rather simplistic survey of the countries which are still not safe for democracy. AP reports that Freedom House's 1997 survey revealed the following countries as those with the least political rights and civil liberties for their citizens: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Burundi, China, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkmenistan and Vietnam. Ah, Druk

Gyalpo, respected monarch, what company you do keep...

While Mr Irani perhaps at times displays more hubris than required in his columns, he shares my award for the **Best Headlines of the Winter of 1997-98** in the Indian press. This is for "But Madam, your Slip is showing!" which is a sharp analysis of why Sonia Gandhi thought it opportune to rake up the Bofors issue. He ends with, "I respect the lady's capacity for deception and lies, for raw courage in mouthing them and for the impression of innocence she is bravely trying to project."



Rather late in the day, but the award for best headlines is shared by the *Statesman's* competition *The Telegraph*, for this one dated 23 November: "Kalpana satellite goes spinning." The story, of course, was about the diminutive lady who, in all unfairness, was probably responsible for the spinning out of control of the Spartan satellite while being released from the space shuttle. The release seems to have been botched by the "jerky arms being operated by Indian-born Astronaut Kalpana Chawla", said an initial report. Subsequently, however, a protective Indian media shawl has shielded Ms Chawla from more incriminative coverage.



But, whatever, good headline!

Bill Clinton was uncharacteristically in the arms of his own spouse Hillary, waltzing away at a beachhouse vacation in Megan Bay, St Thomas, US Virgin Islands.

An AFP photographer caught them in the act. An interesting visual which I would have printed too if I were editing a paper, but on the front page, as so many Indian papers did on 6 January, including *The Times of India*, *The Asian Age*, *The Telegraph*? No. First Family skin is interesting but not that interesting.

Good feminist theme being pursued in Thailand which should interest South Asians, as reported by the Inter Press Service has to do with the goddess-like **Kaki of Buddhist mythology**, who is said to be a "loose woman" and whose name is associated with adultery and promiscuity in Thailand. Kaki, you see, was the Queen of Banaras who was expelled from her palace by her husband Bramadhat after she fell for Garuda as well as the king's musician. Ballet dancer Vararom Patchimsawat has created a dance drama titled *The Love Story of Kaki*, mixing traditional Thai dance with ballet. By challenging the interpretation of Kaki's life, and showing the queen's banishment as actually "something opposite than punishment", Patchimsawat's piece is a strong cry of defence on behalf of women who dare express their passion. It is a cry for liberation, a play which should travel from Bangkok's stage (where it has been very successful) to Kathmandu, Dhaka, Delhi and - why not - Banaras.

Sri Lankans eat too much and that makes them sluggish and the least productive nation in the region, Trade and Food Minister Kingsley Wickremaratne told the Lankan Parliament in late November. It is too good to paraphrase, so I repeat verbatim: "The basic problem with us as a nation is that we overeat. A classic example is this very parliament. Take the restaurant - we have three kinds of rice, six to eight curries, curd and honey, watalappan and caramel pudding. A massive meal. There are arm-chairs in our resting rooms and that is why there is no quorum in the House after lunch. Productivity is at its lowest. Whereas in successful countries in Asia, for lunch they consume cup noodles or rice with two

curries. In the West, they have a sandwich or salad. That is why their productivity is high. If we can reduce overeating by 30 percent we could save 52 billion rupees (USD 866 million) and there would be no budget deficit." I nominate the observant and outspoken Mr Wickremaratne as Minister of Trade and Food for All South Asia.

Across the Wagah-Attari border, then, to Pakistan, where advertisers have to find all kinds of ingenious stratagems not to show skin while showing female bodies. And so, welcome to the Citrus Collection, which advertises its ladies' apparel by having an attractive model project her bottom at an angle which would without doubt have her court sciatica. At the other end, which might not be visible in this copied image, the photographer has even managed to get a slit of skin and bra showing through the unbuttoned top. Special award to the Headstart ad agency for "creativity without necessarily great taste".

The Assam police in mid-January arrested four senior officials of Doordarshan, the government television broadcaster of India, accusing them of inciting "communal passion" while reporting a massacre of 18 people. Apparently, however, this was a reaction of a government of an increasingly beleaguered chief minister who is facing snowballing graft charges. Also, it indicates the shift made in news choice in Doordarshan after it gained autonomy under the Prasar Bharati Act. If the arrests, then, were the result of more journalism within Doordarshan, I say let us have more arrests.

The *Pioneer* carried a news item which I did not see elsewhere, of an

international seminar on *Lucknow ke Sher-o-Adab ki Ahmiyat*, where Urdu scholars from the world over had gathered to discuss the contribution of the Lucknow school of poetry to the language. Dr Qasim Raza from Pakistan said that the Mohajirs from Lucknow still remembered and practised their rich culture and *tehzeeb*. Noted poet and writer Syed Ali Jawad Zaidi protested the fact that though some leading Urdu poets had lived in Lucknow, they were given the tag of *Dehlvi*, meaning of the Delhi school of Urdu poetry. He was sad that more glory and admiration was bestowed on the

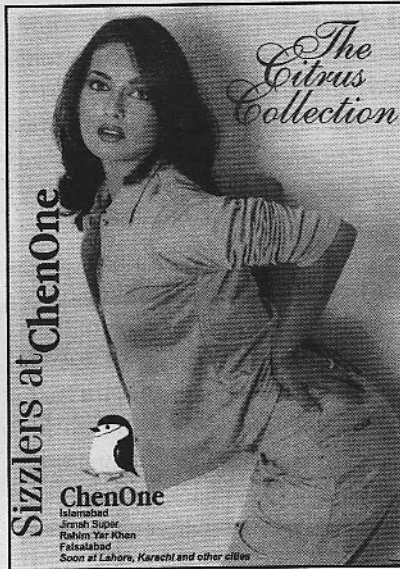
Delhi School than on the Lucknow School. S.M. Jafar, a noted journalist, said Urdu could be used as a strong tool to bridge the gap between India and Pakistan.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all four dashos who were in early January awarded the Orange Scarf by King Jigme Singye Wangchuk in Thimphu, signifying deputy ministership. They are, from



left to right, Secretary of Health and Education Dasho Sangay Ngedup; Secretary of Finance Dasho Yeshe Zimba; Secretary of Agriculture Dasho Kinzang Dorji; and Secretary of the Royal Civil Service Commission Dasho Thinley Gyamtsho.

- *Chhetria Patrakar*



V O I

BANGABANDHU ON INDIA, while in conversation with Zafar Choudhary, the Pakistani Air Marshal who was deputed to accompany him from Islamabad to London after his release from Pakistan in January 1972. From the recently published *Blood-Beaten Track* (Book Traders, Lahore) by Ahmed Salim.

"This man Yahya Khan has destroyed the country. Now we have Indians sitting in Dhaka, imagine Indians in Dhaka! If the army had been able to hang on to even one district, I would have rallied my people, built a base, broken out of there and driven the Indians out of my country. But, now, everything has been lost. I don't even know where to begin. But let me get back. I shall manage something. The Indians must be driven out first, everything else comes afterwards.

"I am the leader of the Bengalis and my people will follow me anywhere... My people love me and will do anything for me. Bhutto is a good man. He has saved my life twice. You must stand by him. Don't worry, I shall find some way of staying together [with Pakistan]. Yahya Khan put me in jail and wanted me hanged. Now I shall have to say things to the Indians I don't mean."

PAKISTANI ANACHRONISMS ABOUND, says Ashis Nandy in "The Fantastic India-Pakistan Battle" in *Plural Worlds, Multiple Selves: Ashis Nandy and the Post-Columbian Future* (Emergences, No.7-8, UCLA Berkeley). This is from a section titled "Pakistan's India" which follows "India's Pakistan" in the essay.

...Pakistan was built as a home of South Asian Muslims, against the proposal for a multi-ethnic society that looked, rightly or wrongly, to most of the subcontinent's westernised Muslim elite, like a plan to create a majoritarian nation-state dominated by the Hindus. Anti-Hindu sentiments therefore have to be an ingredient of the ideology of Pakistan. Pakistan, however, is a nation-state and, like all nation-states, uncomfortable with the demands of an ideological state. (For instance, it likes

to be on good terms with Nepal. The fear of big brother India brings them together but, for both, it is not a happy exposure. Pakistanis discover a Hindu state with whom they are forced to be friendly; the Nepalese, living in the world's only Hindu kingdom, discover a peculiar ally which claims to hate a central plank of Nepal's cultural self.)

Also, thanks to the large-scale violence in 1946-47 and the separation of Bangladesh, anti-Hindu themes have increasingly become an odd, anachronistic presence in Pakistan's national ideology. Many young Pakistanis, who have not even seen many Hindus, do not find the themes evocative, despite being brought up on a steady diet of anti-Hindu texts. That only increases the stridency and bitterness in official Pakistan, for it has come to feel in recent years that the younger generation in Pakistan is not adequately patriotic or aware of the sacrifices made for Pakistan by the older generation of Pakistanis.

THE ADROIT LIE. Editorial in the Kalimpong-based literary journal *Flatfile*.

Having just purchased - as much for its provocative introduction as for the contents - a copy of *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing*, a few grouchy thoughts emerge on writing in English in the region. Rushdie's caveat is to the effect that the "anthology has no need of Partitions" and the collection includes under the proprietary umbrella of "Indian" writing, no less than three writers, Saadat Hasan Manto, Bapsi Sidhwa and Sara Suleri, from the other side of the partitioning.

For Rushdie, Bapsi Sidhwa is only "technically" a Pakistani, a minor detail when culling the finest from the stock of writers of the Subcontinent. So long as the collection is made on this side of the LoC, this would find favour with most Indians. It may of course be argued successfully that, like Indian food, our writing now includes delectations from as far abroad as Afghanistan or that - citing as a case in point, the late and excessively mourned Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan - art has always transcended political boundaries. On the other hand, those who take up such laudable positions would prob-

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ably not be pleased at the inclusion, by the same polemical sleight-of-hand, of *Tryst with Destiny* in a hypothetical anthology of Pakistani writings.

The marginal gains made by transnational exchanges in the realm of literature across the Subcontinent are more often than not likely to be subverted by hegemonistic and insensitive lumping of writing under the grandiose title of "Indian" literature. The paranoia instilled in the region's smaller countries thanks to India's sheer size and the jingoism of Rajiv Gandhi (and other heroes of that kidney) is palpable to any traveller in the Subcontinent. If literature is, to use Rushdie's words, "a means of holding a conversation with the world", it is no less a means of holding a conversation with the peoples of the region. Implicit in the notion of subcontinental "voices" in English is the space for articulation both from the centre and from the edge and to ignore this would be pomposity of the worst kind.

HOW DHAKA HAS FALLEN, *reflects*
Razia Khan in "Razia Khan's Column" in *The Independent of Dhaka*.

Dhaka was then, not the rustic, half-baked metropolis that it is now. It was a quiet university town, the seats of government notwithstanding. There was a measure of civilisation in all do's. The nouveau riche did not exist. The dilettantes and the charlatans were more subdued, the mediocres were less ambitious and more humble. One heard good Bengali and sometimes good English.

The sight of heavily bejewelled women in ugly gaudy saris, which do very little to enhance their looks, was rare. Now I find this prattling lot, incurably rustic, blurt-ing out their inanities at the club, at dinners and state receptions, accompanied of course by heavily drinking, dull, ogling, discourteous men who do not return your greeting. One such bloated personage makes it a habit to insult me whenever I *salaam* him out of sheer habit, not that his presence enthuses me in any way. I believe the actor Dilip Kumar took offence when he was treated similarly when he came to Dhaka. This land of heggars

and parasites, mendicant mullahs and delinquent demagogues, bribe-greedy clerks and peons, is my own and yet I feel a fish out of water here, my soul longing for peace and privacy, the company of sensitive self-controlled individuals, good conversation, light healthy food, order and discipline, cleanliness and hygiene.

WOMEN AND PANCHAYAT. *Why, when women office-holders seek advice, are they said to rule by proxy, ask Shail Mayaram and Pritam Palin* *The Hindu of 21 November.*

Academics, activists and the average person-in-the-street seem to have joined together in the outcry against women's role in panchayats which is increasingly being described as rule by "proxy". The dictionary meaning of "proxy" is "authority given by one person to another to act for him". The term bears insinuations of complete passivity for the agency of women in politics. Needless to say, it has implications for the role of women members in the panchayat system elected under the 73rd Amendment and the Panchayat Acts enacted by the States. These women are not an insignificant number; about one million have been elected members and chairpersons of rural councils at various levels.

Indeed, the strong allegation of "proxy" performance of women in the media and elsewhere is itself a manifestation of the backlash against women representatives in a variety of forms. The first allegation, of course, is that it is men who are ruling on behalf of their wives. But does drawing upon help/support of others constitute "proxy" governance? What about the kitchen cabinets of powerful politicians? What about the close kinship and other networks that leaders of our country and elsewhere draw upon for support? Do not men function in the context of patrilineal systems where significant authority is exercised by heads of households, clans and caste *biradaris*? Men's responses in many cases are also influenced by the party *diktat*. Why is it that none has ever called them "proxy" representatives on these grounds?

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The visa war

Two 50-year-old siblings still play tit-for-tat.

For all of Inder Kumar Gujral's overtures to Pakistan, it is still ludicrously difficult for Pakistanis to visit India, as Lahori journalist Salman Rashid found out. He concedes that it might be equally frustrating for Indians headed the other way.

On or about 12 August 1947, my grandparents and two young aunts went missing in the violence that struck Jalandhar in Punjab, India. My father, Divisional Engineer for the North Western Railway, and my doctor uncle were then both in Delhi.

A month later, by when the rest of the family had moved to Pakistan, my uncle (still working in Delhi) went with a foreign mission to Jalandhar where disease had broken out because of the thousands of rotting corpses. There he met the refugee commissioner to ask of the fate of the Muslims who remained in the city. There were none, he was told. They were either all dead or had immigrated to Pakistan.

My uncle did not have the heart to visit that house at Railway Road where he had spent most of his childhood for he yet believed that he would be reunited with his parents and sis-

ters when he eventually made his way to Pakistan. But that was not to be. It did not take long for the surviving family to recognise that their most dearly loved ones had been lost in the making of the new nation.

To me, born almost five years after Partition, Jalandhar was just another name in the atlas. Since my entire family had moved to Pakistan, and as no one ever visited India, there was no news of the state of the two houses in Jalandhar. Then, in 1983, a distant relative visited the city and came back with a photo of my grandfather's house. It still stood. And the dream to visit my roots was born. But even before I could begin working towards it, relations with India soured. Shortly afterwards came the Sikh separatist movement and the Indian restriction on Pakistanis travelling in their part of Punjab.

Early last year, Inder Kumar Gujral, upon becoming prime minis-

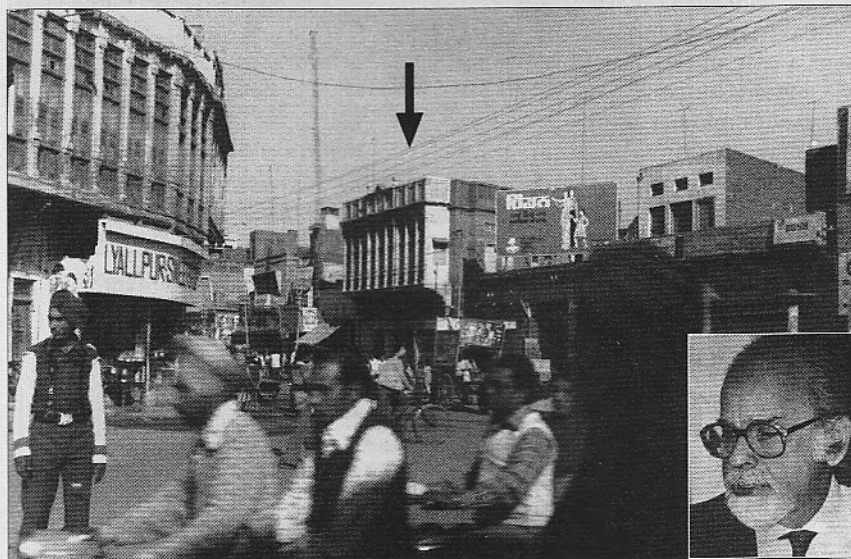
ter, removed several restrictions for visiting Pakistanis and I saw, once again, my chance of visiting Jalandhar. Because a visa between our two countries allows a traveller to visit specifically named cities or villages where the visitor must report to the police on arrival and before departure, it seemed extreme goodwill on the part of the Indian Prime Minister to allow Pakistani journalists gratis visas for twelve cities exempt from police reporting. It seemed I would finally be able to visit Delhi, Solan, Jalandhar and the nearby village of Oghi - all places that featured in our family's life in united India.

Meeting Mr Bihari

Enquiries revealed that a simple visa application would be simply turned down, since the restriction on travelling in Punjab was still in place. An interview to explain the need to travel to Jalandhar and Oghi was suggested. My application that explicitly stated my reason for visiting Jalandhar, duly endorsed by my editor of *The News on Sunday*, secured me an interview for 9:00 am, 21 August 1997.

The pace of things was set by the interviewer (called 'Bihari') duly forgetting to notify the gate about letting me in. However, a telephone got me into the busy visa section where I was told by an operative in a grey uniform to fill in some very tedious forms in quintuplicate. It is noteworthy that these visa forms assume all intending travellers to have relatives in India with whom they are expected to stay since the forms explicitly state that one can travel only to cities where one has relatives.

I left this column blank and sent in the forms and my passport. Fifteen minutes later the uniformed man returned the documents saying I could not be given a visa because I had listed Jalandhar as one of the destinations. I explained. He asked me to list my relatives. I told him our entire family had immigrated to Pakistan. He said in that case I could not go to India for I would have no place to stay. I suggested hotels and the man said I should name the hotels I would be staying in. But since I had never been to India, and nor had any relatives



The Rashid house in Jalandhar. Will candidate Gujral let the writer through?

who could go hotel hunting for me, I did not know the names of any hotels. In any event, the slight irregularity of my case was the reason I had sought the interview, so could he please be so good as to tell Mr Bihari I was waiting to be seen.

The man did the needful on the in-house telephone and I was told to wait. Time slipped by and in the course of the next hour and a half this man attempted more than once to convince me that I was wasting my time. I eventually left when a colleague of his repeated the refrain. In all these nearly two hours, Mr Bihari did not once make his appearance.

I came away convinced that whatever Mr Inder Kumar Gujral (or any other politician for that matter) may say, their injunctions will be tossed out of the window by the almighty bureaucrat without even a look. It is clear that Indian hureaucracy will scuttle anything that challenges their traditional view of Pakistan, the enemy. Political initiatives to thaw relations will therefore endlessly be fouled, and one does not need to be an expert political analyst to see the truth in that.

In India

This is not a Pakistani tirade against India although it may have begun to sound like one to some. I am very much aware that our own hureaucrats are no better. Shortly after my experience at the Indian High Commission, I read an article in the Sunday Magazine of *Dawn*. Written by a woman who had travelled to India last summer and visited the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi out of curiosity, it brings shame to folks that call themselves Pakistanis. Compared to the treatment meted out there to intending travellers to Pakistan (mostly Muslims, mind you), the dealings of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad suddenly seemed quite civil and almost charitable.

From Saman Khan's writing, it seems that the sole purpose of the Pakistani visa officer in Delhi is to obfuscate, obstruct or, in an almighty display of compassion, delay the intending visitor for as long as possible. Since most are from the poorer seg-

ments of Indian society with little (and sometimes no) education, the visa-seekers are at a complete loss to find a way around the frustrating rigmarole of the bureaucracy. Many had been trying to visit Pakistan for months, if not years, and had stood day after day under the blazing sun or in the bitter cold to get inside. Once inside, there was always this bit of information or that which had not been supplied, forcing the applicant to withdraw crestfallen. Since visas are issued only at the High Commission in Delhi, this also entailed tedious hack and forth journeys of several hundred kilometres across the length and breadth of India.

As for the procedures, they are no different from the ones that the Indian High Commission requires of Pakistanis. The forms (in quintuplicate, surely) are as tedious as the Indian ones; the information to be furnished is the same. This includes names and addresses of relatives to be visited which, in effect, precludes a tourist visit. It appears that the High Commission in Delhi has set for itself a quota of visas it will issue each day, and there is no method in rejecting or accepting a visa application. Rude behaviour of the staff was another thing that Saman Khan writes about. I must confess that the uniformed functionaries at the Indian High Commission, even the toughie with the red *tilak*, were quite civil, always addressing me as "sahib".

Pakistan and India simply represent a case of two 50-year-old brats playing a nasty game of tit-for-tat: You expel our diplomat, we'll expel yours. You make it difficult for intending travellers, we'll make it more so. The game is endless. For all of us in Pakistan longing to visit an ancestral home on the other side of the border, there is an equal, perhaps greater, number in India yearning to re-live a childhood in what is now Pakistan. Many of us will die dreaming our dreams.

I hear Prime Minister Gujral is fighting elections from Jalandhar, my ancestral town. Perhaps I will try again when he is back in power.

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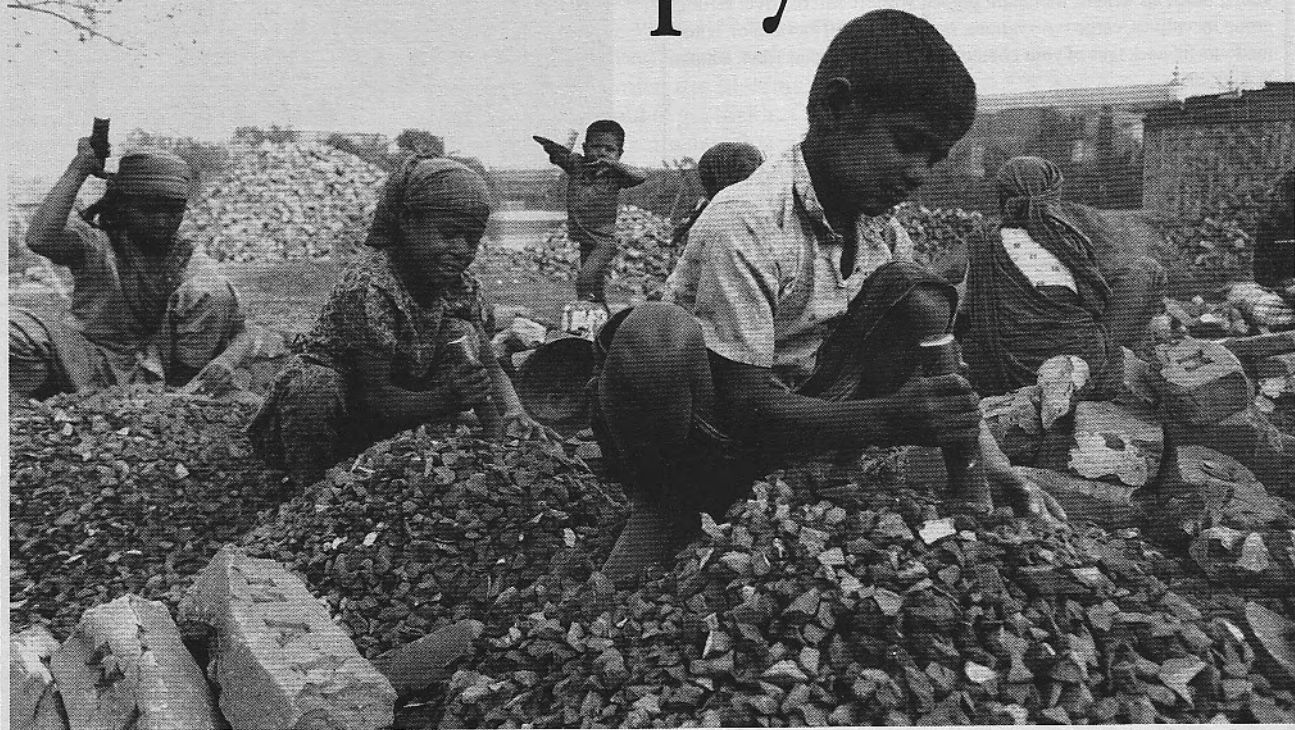
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South Asia must rid itself of the most heinous forms of child labour.

by Sabur Ghayur

The debate on child labour in South Asia has today entered a phase where, compared to two earlier phases, it is more mature, knowledgeable and practical minded.

The first phase, started in the mid-1980s, involved recognition of the problem itself. However, many activists projected highly exaggerated figures and horrific situations without the backing of scientific surveys. Some international agencies quickly accepted these claims, and the world media was only too happy to report on the dismal situation in the Sub-continent. The governments, meanwhile, went on the defensive and

spent a lot of energy issuing denials or challenging the numbers.

Sadly, this profuse show of concern from all sides did little to improve the lot of the millions of South Asia's working children. The main outcome was the palpable hostility generated among consumers in the industrialised nations towards specific products and their exporting countries. Many children were dismissed due to the publicity and pressure, and they often ended up in jobs that were even more exploitative; some landed in beggary and some even in prostitution.

The second phase started with the

ratification of United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (1989) by six countries of South Asia over 1990-92. Though a few still insisted on playing the numbers game, other activists and governmental institutions did actually start some serious deliberations. The governments, for instance, enacted new laws on employment of children in factories or in otherwise hazardous occupations. They also spelt out the minimum age (between 12 and 15), the acceptable conditions of work, and formed implementation and monitoring committees. Some collective efforts were also made by SAARC, including the

convening of ministerial meetings on children. However, this phase too, failed to deliver concrete policies and action plans.

The third phase, presently underway, began with the signing during 1992-94 of memoranda of understanding by most of the South Asian countries with the International Labour Organisation on the International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC). Besides formulating policies and action plans, an attempt was finally made to properly understand the problem of child labour and to determine its nature and extent. In the case of Pakistan, the result of the first nation-wide child labour survey was made public in late 1996.

Work and labour

Much of what is termed 'child labour' actually requires few hours of work from children and are mostly undertaken on family farms or enterprises. Work in such situations is neither harsh nor exploitative. In fact, some experts argue, this kind of work prepares children for adulthood in the particular socio-economic conditions of South Asia.

As opposed to such "child work" are those activities where children do the job of adults, are poorly paid, and are denied education. Such conditions add up to denying the young their very childhood. Children who are too young to work are on the job for longer hours than adults. Working 50-plus hours weekly is the norm in South Asia, under unhealthy and dangerous conditions.

It is clear to planners and activists that strategies for tackling child labour should therefore clearly differentiate between "child labour" and "child work". There must be rehabilitation programmes for children who lose jobs. The plans must also study the situation of working children in various arenas, including the organised sector, informal sector, hazardous occupations, agriculture, domestic services, and the sex trade.

The strategies to end child labour must also tackle the broader issues of poverty, unemployment, under-employment, working conditions, labour

laws, education and training, and social security. They must clearly spell out the steps to be taken in the short-, medium- and long-term, and specify the role of government, employer and worker organisations, exporters and the media.

The roadmap

Community pressure groups. The complex and challenging task of restoring childhood to tens of millions of South Asian children requires a coalition between the state and civil society. Coming to specifics, there should be no hesitation in immediately withdrawing children who are in hazardous occupations. The regional countries do have laws dealing specifically with such occupations, all that is missing being their implementation.

The effectiveness of existing laws can be enhanced by building social pressure and motivation, which can in turn influence behaviour. This can be done through tripartite committees, consisting of government officials (including those of local bodies), employers (including trade- and location-specific organisations), and representatives of workers (including concerned citizens, elders, and teachers in rural areas). These committees should function at all levels - from the national and provincial (state) all the way down to cities, and localities within cities, and also to village blocks.

Working and studying. Children who work should have greater access to education, particularly at the primary level, and to training institutions. Given the number of working children and the way the labour market functions, this cannot be achieved through government efforts and formal schooling alone. The private sector must get involved, and members of civil society will have to participate and contribute. A recourse to non-formal primary education must be made, allowing flexible study hours to the pupils. The Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) experience in Bangladesh has clearly demonstrated how non-formal primary education can work with the support of local groups.

For vocational training, the traditional system *ustaad-shagird* (master craftsman-trainee) needs to be fine-tuned, with a special focus on improved working conditions. The "open-tech" programme of Pakistan's Allama Iqbal Open University provides one model, where the faculty approaches the *ustaads* and owners in, say, a neighbourhood specialising in automobile repair, and motivates them to spare their *shagirds* for two hours twice a week. The employers provide space for the working children to assemble, and the University provides functional literacy classes and programmes to upgrade skills. This Pakistani experience could well be replicated in other South Asian



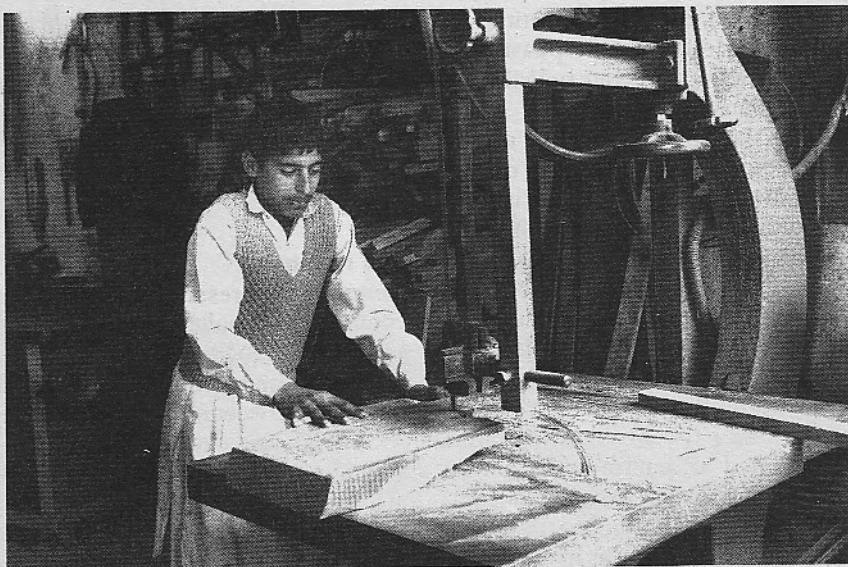
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countries, preferably through their respective open universities.

Practical education. The curricula of post-primary education has to be adjusted to respond to the needs of the labour market. The employment scene in South Asia in the foreseeable future will continue to be dominated by the informal, agricultural, and rural non-farm sectors. Children must therefore be trained in areas relevant to these sectors - how to organise a business, open a shop, start a poultry farm, obtain credit, manage a store, do marketing, open a letter of credit, operate livestock farming, bee keeping or horticulture, prepare land for cultivation, procure raw materials, and so on.

Domestic child labour. Bringing about a change in social attitudes is also essential within households, which employ a large proportion of our working children. Most employers of domestic children in South Asia share the perception that hiring children as domestic servants is essentially a humanitarian act on their part, a form of social service. Such a grave misconception - for how can there ever be justification in making children earn their keep? - needs to be removed through media campaigns and sensitisation work by the tripartite committees.

Social security. It should never be



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forgotten that many children work in order to supplement their families' meagre incomes. Any intervention to alter the status quo has to take into account the fact that a meaningful social security system does not exist as yet anywhere in South Asia. There must be a mechanism to care for the needy and under-privileged families even as their children are taken off the labour rolls. In the case of Pakistan, a social security system can evolve out of the Zakat Administration and the Pakistan Baitul Mal (these are Islamic institutions for collecting tax for the benefit of the under-privileged). A similar evolution could overtake existing institutions in the other countries.

Policy-makers in each country need to focus on developing effective social security nets to meet the commitment to working children made by the SAARC organisation, which is to remove children from hazardous occupations by 2002, and to completely eliminate all child labour by 2010. Governments need to adopt policies that will generate productive employment opportunities for all able and willing-to-work adults. Initiatives like those of Bangladesh's Grameen Bank must be replicated so that small, collateral-free loans on group guarantees can be arranged for a range of self-employment activities.

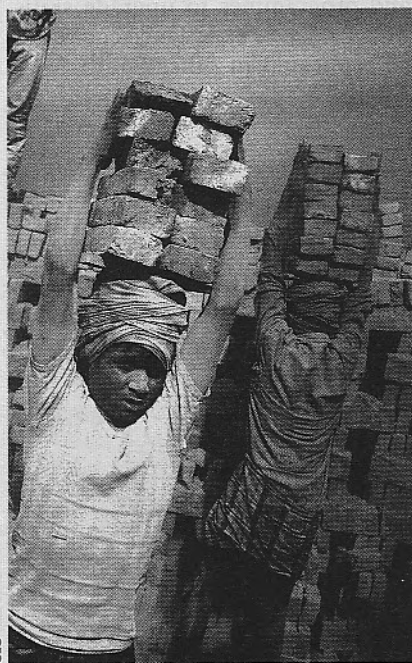
Co-operative mechanisms. The South Asian neighbours must pool their knowledge and share experience

regarding child labour. There can be joint research, particularly about the nature of labour-intensive activities which tend to hire children, and the society's response. The SAARC member countries can also take joint stands at international fora when it comes to coordinating their activities to eradicate child labour on the one hand, and countering ill-informed but economically devastating allegations on the other.

Right of the young

The centuries-old tradition and practice of using children as labourers can hardly be eliminated overnight, and no one agency, governmental or otherwise, can address the task alone. Neither will mere legislation or strong-arm tactics work. It will be some time before working children disappear from the face of South Asia, to be replaced by youngsters going to school, enjoying family life and running carefree. However, it will happen if those engaged in this longhaul campaign have the conviction that enjoyment of 'childhood' is a fundamental right of the young. Rather than labour in the sweatshops, the young should be at play, study or rest. ▽

S. Ghayur, a labour and manpower expert, is with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Islamabad, and is a member of the Coalition for Action on South Asian Co-operation.



GEO

An open letter to a starving child

Dear Starving Child,

I saw your picture in one of these "Feed The Children" magazine ads. It said your mother dumped you in a Sri Lankan back-alley trash heap, and that you've been a street urchin, begging for scraps from Bedouin traders, since you were five. And it said for two cents a day I could feed you. Well, I must say, I don't know how you can live like that. I mean, what are you thinking? If I were you, I'd high-tail it home and make myself a juicy ham sandwich with some cheese on it, then I'd put it in the microwave so the cheese melts and the sandwich is nice and warm. In fact, I'd toast the bread so it has a little crunch to it.

And that brings me to why I'm writing you. I think I can offer you some basic tips on how to get along better in life. Instead of giving you a mere two cents a day, I'm going to give you a lifetime's accumulated wisdom. You see, as a successful carpet salesman, I do all right. And I think I can share a lesson or two about getting the most out of this crazy game called life.

First of all, you've got to consolidate your debt. Those interest payments will kill you. I learned this one the hard way. And seeing how you don't have a home, you should be able to pay off any high-interest loans and start putting your money into no-load mutual funds. That's where the real growth potential is. It may not seem like much every month, but over time, you'll be building quite a nest egg. And when you get to be my age, it's nice to be able to pamper yourself a little bit with some of your dividends.

Like just last night, I spent over \$100 on a lobster dinner. We had lobster soaked in butter, mashed potatoes with chives, and yellow squash with yogurt sauce. I'm telling you, I was so stuffed, I felt sick. I came home and vomited! It was a great meal, but I hate when I stuff myself. That takes the pleasure out of eating. It's almost like I threw that \$100 right into the toilet. But for a brief moment, it was heaven.

Second, living on the street is no way to build equity. For as little as \$1000 down you can get a modest two- or three-bedroom home. This will not only help you build a financial future, it will help you build self-esteem. Homeowners are self-assured, productive members of society. And remember, the three most important things in real estate: location, location and location. So buy in a nice area. You'll want to look at schools, since you're eight years old.

You know, it occurs to me that you don't even live in America. And I've got to know, what the heck are you doing living in Sri Lanka? What do they have there? Camels? Rugs? Well, I can tell you one thing they don't have: 100 percent grade-A American opportunity.

America is the land of milk and honey. You can probably catch a flight here from Sri Lanka for as little as \$2500 if you shop around. So what's keeping you? Okay, I can imagine how it is: you live in a back alley and you eat garbage. And maybe you don't have the liquid capital to outlay \$2500 on a luxury-like first-class airfare to the US. Well, you can always fly coach for about a third of first-class fare, and if worst comes to worst, put it on the plastic. As long as you pay it off as quickly as you can, the interest won't cramp your style. (See Tip #1)

Now, since you're eating scraps from dumpsters, my guess is you could use a little shot in the arm when it comes to income. Well, maybe I'm tooting my own horn here a little bit, but have you ever considered a position in carpet sales? It's a high-profit industry, and commissions are good nowadays. With new homes being built at a record pace all across the country, and remodelling positively going through the stratosphere, there's never a shortage of demand for new, high-quality carpets. Thick shag, thin shag, knit, indoor, outdoor - any variety of colour.

Heck, I could take you over to the warehouse and show you some of my samples if you like. Well, I hope I've given you some fat to chew on. I'd like to know if I can be of any more help, so I'd appreciate it if you could write back. And FedEx it. I bet international mail takes forever.

Sincerely,
Ned Crimwelt
Carpet Salesman

PS: I hear some editors of a South Asian magazine are going to pluck this off the internal email network of a United Nations specialised agency and flash it. So take my advice before it gets public. Use that plastic. NC.

Waiting for the Islamic moderniser

Secularism is not an overwhelming reality in Bangladesh.

by Chanchal Sarkar



RAFIQUR RAHMAN

The 60-domed mosque of Khulna.

Scholarly dissection of Islam in Bangladesh has forever posed the interaction of an outside religion with a native culture. The introduction of 'Arahic Islam' changed the psyche of the Muslim masses of Bengal, but their links with local culture could not be disturbed so easily and this great tension in Bengali Muslim society lasts to this day.

More recently, the focus of discussion has been on the ability of Islam to modernise. From modernisation to secularisation is a feasible and smooth step, but it is doubtful if Bangladesh can take that step or whether it even wants to. Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was roundly upbraided by his dictator-successors for putting Secularism into his four State Principles (the others being Nationalism, Democracy and Socialism). It is often said, even by modern-minded scholars, that the absence of an organised priesthood makes secularism impossible in the country and that Islam is, by definition, averse to it.

Gathered around for *adda* and tea

and snacks with "our own" kind of people, staying with them in their homes, eating at their tables, reminiscing about shared student days, chatting with their grown-up children, dipping into the abundance of prose and poetry published, however, the impossibility of secularism seems a very unlikely proposition. And friends are emphatic in asserting that fundamentalism can never be dominant in Bangladesh. But this is probably self-delusory to an extent, overlooking the orthodox layer of the population, largely in the upper and lower middle class. And also the thickest, popular layer made up of - as the driver who always takes me around in Dhaka says - 'hearsay' Muslims. He says, "We only hear preachers, we cannot read any texts."

Bizarre legacy

Also perhaps overlooked is an acquisitive streak in the people for whom greed for property is more powerful than the bonds of the Bengali language: these are the ones who not only welcome Hindu out-migration

but push for it. The popular layer knows little about the Arabist element of Islam and its *Umma*, but village Imams talk about an Islamic State even while legalists argue that to have a state religion does not mean having an Islamic state. The liberals downplay the dictators of the past and political bigots who consciously use Islam as a vote catcher deliberately set 'Hindu' India up as a potentially invasive giant.

A very senior Bangladesh National Party (BNP) leader went to an election meeting and proclaimed, "If you vote for the Awami League you will get the conchshell bangle and *sindoor* (the mark of married Hindu women), if you vote for the BNP you will get the Koran." Sticking stubbornly to Sheikh Mujib's Four Principles, including Secularism, reduced the Awami League to a minority party, a status it certainly does not want to go back to and so it has done quite a lot of back-peddling. Notwithstanding Sheikh Hasina's sometimes harbed statements about India, the League's opponents still accuse it of being an "India lover". Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the League is no longer called a "Soviet lover".

What is significant is that those in the Jamaat-e-Islami and other Islamic parties, who collaborated with the Pakistani administration and forces during the Liberation War, were left undisturbed even after Zia and Ershad were allowed to regroup and play an important role in parliamentary and national politics. This is perhaps a bizarre factor of Bangladeshi life, but without a stream of support and sympathy it would not have been possible.

All the post-liberation rulers have played on religion and manipulated Islam to negotiate legitimacy for their regimes. Some also used Islam to curry economic and political support from other Islamic states. This despite the fact that no Islamic country supported Bangladesh in its death-

struggle against Pakistan. Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Libya did not even recognise Bangladesh till after the assassination of Sheikh Mujib. Obviously, West Asian money has been coming to Bangladesh for mosques and *madrassahs* and maybe to the fundamentalist parties too.

It is customary to praise Sheikh Mujib to the skies for his stand on Secularism in 1972, but the fact is that as the political challenges grew he too tried to firm up his political base by appealing to Islamic sentiments. He revived the Islamic Academy, which was abolished in 1972, and even dropped the "Joy Bangla" slogan. Petro-dollars were more important than secularism.

M.N. Roy probably summed it up best. Secularism, he said, is not a political institution but "a cultural atmosphere", which cannot be created by proclamation of individuals, however highly placed and sincere. Such an atmosphere is not found in Bangladesh yet. Among the highly-educated and modern, yes, but for a very large number, culture and language, sadly, are not thicker than the divisive aspects of religion fuelled by fundamentalists who rue the passing of Pakistan. True, as liberal Bangladeshis always say, "There are no communal riots in Bangladesh," but as a Muslim colleague commented wryly, "What need for riots if there can be bloodless coups?" To one scholar's conclusion that liberation has produced in Bangladesh an Islamic-cum-secular culture the response is, "not so". In fact, the attempt at secularisation probably caused fundamentalists to close ranks and be more aggressive.

Fatwas and dorras

The stranglehold of narrow religion is the result of poor education. The Bangladeshi educational system is in shambles, from the primary through the middle stage right up to the university level. In the deep interior of Chittagong district, in a small *thana* (sub-division within a district) called Banshkhali alone, there are 17 *madrassahs*, where the teaching is Islamic. Countrywide, there are a few very famous rebel breakaways from

the *madrassah* system, like the artist Kamrul Hassan and the still living literary figure Shaukat Osman. But the regular products of the system are blinkered, ignorant and intolerant, readymade material for fundamentalist campaigns.

The Qudrat-i-Khuda Commission set up by Sheikh Mujib strove hard to rationalise the education system and separate it from religious teaching. Mujib's successors undid the Commission's recommendations and also provided for a compulsory paper called *Islamiyat* from standards I to VIII. Zia and Ershad also introduced religious teaching and practices in the Army.

As in Pakistan and in Saudi Arabia, some aspects of Islam in Bangladesh are extremely sadistic. A heretic or non-believer can be declared a *murtad* and stands in fear of his life. I once met a highly rated professor of Dhaka University, Ahmad Sharif, who, though a brave man, could not stir out of his house or even stand in the verandah after he called himself an agnostic. Others writing critically about Islam have had to flee the country.

There are not many cases of *fatwas* pronounced, said Hahibur Rahman, retired Chief Justice and an extremely liberal man who was Chief Adviser to the government which oversaw the period that produced the last election. He is probably right, but a 535-page volume given to me, *Fatwa 1991-1995*, is a detailed anthology of all that has appeared in the print media about *fatwas*, mainly against helpless women. It makes frightening reading.

There is as yet no law against socially irresponsible mullahs pronouncing *fatwas* or passing sentences for stoning or lashing. Often, the unfortunate victims do not have to be punished with death; they commit suicide. In Chittagong, I talked long about this with a college teacher, an extremely devout and courteous man who, however, argued that as a deterrent the *dorra* (lashes) should be used.

Vote and the Prophet

Spiritual leadership in Bangladesh has been poor, and there is not a single cleric today like Maulana Bhashani,

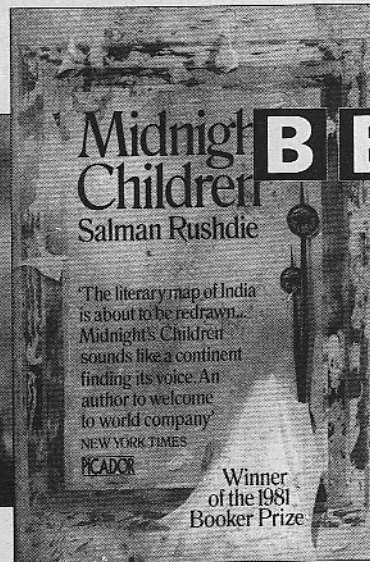
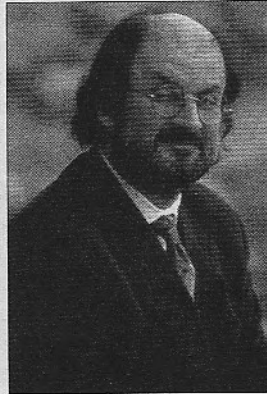
who commanded nationwide respect. The *pir* of Sarsina (Barisal district) and Chak Bara (Bogra district) cultivated by Zia, and the *pir* of Artoshi supported by Ershad both warmly blessed the dictators' political moves. The student wings of the political parties like Islamic Chhatra Shabir (the Jamaat Front) and the Jatiya Chhatra Ulema (of the Jatiya Party) are openly fundamentalist and violent. Unlike in India, the use of religious symbols and slogans are allowed in Bangladesh, like "Anno, Bastro, Basasthan Islam debe samadhan" (Islam will solve the problems of food, clothes and shelter). Or "Vote dile kurale khushil hobc Rasule" (The Prophet will be pleased if you vote for the axe).

On the other hand, modernisation has shaken up the mullah's teachings in at least three areas - family planning, women's rights, and modern agricultural methods. Family planning is very widely practised in Bangladesh and the birth rate has fallen sharply. The large and ever-growing numbers of young girls in the garment factories are disregarding the directions of mullahs who say women should not go outside the home to work. The Export Promotion Zones will employ more and more women, who make up 48.5 percent of the population.

In assessing Bangladesh and its Islam, it is most important to realise that over half of the Bangladeshi Muslims observe and practise religion in more than a casual manner; much more so, of course, in the rural areas. The people and the country claim themselves to be the disciples of a just and all-merciful Prophet. If so, the very first thing they should do is to annul the draconian and blatantly unconstitutional Enemy Property Act, 1965, which survives even today in all its communalist and discriminatory garb as the Vested Property Act, aimed directly at the Hindu community.

C. Sarkar, well-known columnist and broadcaster, lives in Delhi. This article, a version of which appeared in The Hindu, was written after a recent three-week visit to Bangladesh.

How "hurt" can you be?



BBC

by Sasanka Perera and Ameena Hussein-Uvais

After being disallowed from shooting in India, the filming of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has been booted out of Sri Lanka as well. The self-appointed Prevention of Vice and Maintenance of Virtue Squad of Sri Lankan Muslims ruled that *Midnight's Children* was not to be filmed in the country and President Chandrika Kumaratunga's characteristically indecisive government acquiesced. The permission that had already been granted the BBC for filming was revoked.

This ban is the latest in a series of such refusals that have afflicted Sri Lanka of late. Stanley J. Tambiah's *Buddhism Betrayed?* was banned in 1997 because a group of Buddhist ethno-cultural vigilantes decided that it hurt their feelings. Earlier, proscriptions were placed on *Satanic Verses* and *Lajja* because they apparently "hurt" the feelings of the Muslim community. A few years ago, the Uni-

versity of Colombo banned the screening of the Indian film *Bombay* because some Muslim students complained to the authorities that it would hurt their feelings. This, despite the fact that in neighbouring India, with its large Muslim minority, the film had already become a box-office success.

Religious commandos

There is a clearly defined parochial tradition within Sri Lanka, which cuts across ethno-religious boundaries. Every time there are calls for a ban on a book, film, or when there is another equally nihilistic and anti-intellectual demand, the justification is the "hurt" that is felt by one community or another. The fact is that ban calls are no more than crass exhibitions of the power and influence of a community. On this particular occasion, what "hurt" there was, was rooted more on emotion and lack

of relative enlightenment than on hard facts. For example, none of the supporters of the present ban has elaborated on what exactly is offensive in *Midnight's Children* or in the film script. More to the point, the book has been available in Colombo bookstores for over a decade and it is still there. For over ten years, it hurt no one's feelings. It was simply read and enjoyed.

It is clear that the main reason preventing *Midnight's Children* from being filmed in Sri Lanka is that Salman Rushdie wrote it. When Rushdie came out with *Satanic Verses*, he wrote himself out of the Muslim world. Technically that should be quite all right, if that is what he wants. After all, the Holy *Quran* says, "Let there be no compulsion in religion", and "Truth stands out clear from Evil" (S2, V256), which seems to indicate that a choice is there to be made. But as the present ban indicates, some

members of the Sri Lankan Muslim citizenry have taken it upon themselves to police and champion the cause of what they think and interpret as Islam, regardless of the rights of many non-Muslims as well as Muslims who do not share such parochial thinking.

What the 'morally upright' religious commandos fail to grasp is that they are doing more harm than good to Islam. For, their actions serve only to reinforce in the minds of non-Muslim Sri Lankans the image of the "fundamentalist, intolerant and irrational Muslim" that has been constructed by Western media and politics over the last two decades or so. It is dangerous, in multi-cultural societies, for a religion to be interpreted so prejudicially. By projecting, through their politicians, their imams and the heads of *madrasahs*, an image of a persecuted community for the most trivial of reasons and holding a vigilante outlook of the world, Sri Lankan Muslims may find their intolerance manipulated and used for justification or legitimisation of anti-Muslim sentiments.

Intolerable intolerance

Most Muslims, irrespective of the intensity of their religious fervour, seem keen on banning *Midnight's Children*. They express this opinion either vocally or, by keeping mum on the issue, passively. Those Muslims who do not support the ban are in danger of being branded as traitors, sell-outs to the West, and in the extreme, as apostates. The unambiguous message is "toe the line or else...". While that might explain the deafening silence regarding the ban from Muslims who do not approve of it, sooner or later Muslims of Sri Lanka will have to decide what exactly their role in Sri Lanka is. If they do not want to be considered the perennial "Other", they have to decide how far they are going to allow their leaders, self-appointed or otherwise, to lead them thus.

Of course, this kind of narrow-minded behaviour is hardly a prerogative of the Muslim community. It is strongly entrenched in Sri Lankan society as a whole. Sinhala

academics who opposed the ban on Tambiah's *Buddhism Betrayed?* were also demonised as traitors and LTTE sympathisers. One is reminded of how, years ago, novelist Martin Wickramasinghe was castigated for allegedly hurting (that word again) Buddhist sensibilities in his novel *Bava Tharanaya*.

This intolerable situation has been created as a result of decades of silence and absence of determined opposition when bans were called for. The extent of activism mostly tends to be limited to signing protest letters, which is hardly enough for something as serious as muzzling the right to print, publish and read. Some serious and reflective political agitation and action, which go much beyond the mere signing of protest notes, must take place if the tide is to be turned. Governments have to be given some spine, through force of opinion and activism, to oppose ethnocentric demands irrespective of the religious or ethnic community such demands may emanate from.

In the absence of such activism, any book, paper, film or drama that may "hurt" the feelings of a religious, ethnic or caste group, will be pulled up. Besides, "hurt" is a relative and subjective term. What level of discomfort constitutes "hurt" in a multi-cultural society? If the threshold is as low as we are being led to believe, will we have to seek permission from sundry caste, religious and ethnic tribunals prior to publishing or producing anything? This would surely be devastating for

creativity in the country.

On the other hand, perhaps this is the way ahead - just ban everything that is potentially offensive to anyone. The *Dhammapada* can be banned since it is likely to offend some intolerant non-Buddhist. It may also be prudent to ban the *Bible*, the *Quran*, the *Vedas* plus whatever other religious scriptures that are in danger of being published, for they too are likely to offend one kind of religious or cultural watchdog or another. Ethnographies on political and caste violence also will have to be banned since they will certainly "hurt" the feelings of mass murderers, torturers and caste puritans. Films and dramas that even glance on some communal or religious subject can similarly be proscribed. All in all, we would have succeeded in creating a brave new world where no one is offended and where the harmony of silence and complacency prevails. In such a Sri Lankan society of the future, the citizens would vegetate. They would not read or see, they would not think or debate, they would not write or dissent. Sri Lanka would be - and may be becoming - a society whose thoughts and ideals are formulated by politicians and ethno-religious vigilantes alone.

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Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi and my maternal grandmother all had the same idea. Jesus told his disciples: "Blessed are the poor, for they shall inherit the earth." Gandhi said: "Poverty is divine." My grandmother used to say: "Hey you, finish all your rice. Don't you know there are people starving in Biafra?"

They all loved to glorify poverty. And I'd never understood why, till the Asian currency crisis exploded in the East with the full force of an economic Krakatoa. To paraphrase Deng Xiaoping slightly: "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white as long as it is hungry." Never was this more true than during Asia's ongoing turmoil when South Asians had a ringside seat to the massacre of the Big Cat economies.

While the baht bit the dust, and the rupiah fell into a black hole, our own roops and takas were serene and untouched by the swirling storm. Ingenious South Asian economic planners had managed to keep our currencies so unattractive that bandits like George Soros did not even look at us twice. In the age of economic globalisation, it seems, it is better to be a hyena than a tiger.

No doubt, the East Asians had been getting some bad advice. They put all their trust in Big Bang economics, and anyone with even elementary knowledge of the discipline will tell you that what goes bang will go bust. Their *fundas* were all wrong, *yaar*. The East Asians could learn from these ten tips that we in South Asia have abided by to insulate our economies from globalisation:

1. *Frequent government changes. In the Subcontinent, we have managed to ensure that we have a new leader every six months or so, which allows us to try out a plethora of policies so that someone somewhere will get it right by sheer trial and error. Some Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia have had the same leader for 35 years. This will not do.*
2. *Re-distribution of wealth. Frequent changes of government ensures that a*

new crew gets its turn to put its hand in the till every once in a while. This is a more egalitarian system which allows different people to get rich quick, and wealth is more evenly distributed. South Asians have also elevated corruption to an art form and woven it intricately with development. Unlike East Asia's rigid system, here corruption lubricates the wheels of development. No dam would be built, no bulldozers bought, no cement factory put up if there were no underhand deals.

3. *Incentives to the informal sector: Smuggling contributes enormously to the collective GNP of South Asia. Without it, our economies would have ground to a halt. Governments must*



continue to provide incentives for smugglers and other contraband-wallahs so that the flow of essential goods across borders is not impeded. The seeds of the Southeast Asian crisis were planted when governments there started cracking down on smuggling.

4. *Private sector. East Asian countries only pay lip service to the private sector. They haven't even begun to give it the kind of freedoms we give businessmen in our Subcontinent. Our free-for-all system guarantees that big borrowers never have to pay back their loans. I would even venture to say that South Asia has the freest private sector in the world.*

5. *Politics Now, Economics Later. This is the real secret of South Asia's success. The trouble is that the East Asians have an Ass-First Policy of economics now and politics later. How can politics ever be divorced from economics? It is a fundamental law of*

nature, and I am glad that in South Asia we give politics its due importance to make sure it always comes first.

6. *Prolific government spending. It is wrong advice to tell governments not to spend. In South Asia governments spend like there is no future; this ensures civil service compliance with government policy and also shows those upstarts in the bureaucracy who is boss.*

7. *Don't let the economy overheat. In fact, don't even let it get warm. Keep growth rates below one percent, maintain low savings rate, keep productivity low. This is why South Asia has emerged unscathed from the recent turmoil. The idea is to be in perpetual hibernation, that way no blizzard will ever touch you. The East Asians did everything wrong; most importantly, they just worked too hard.*

8. *Neglect the agriculture sector and freeze land reform. This is the best way to keep the public's purchasing power down so that the economy does not get a chance to perk up.*

9. *Maintain domestic monopolies, nationalise profit-making corporations and re-regulate the private sector. This is the only way the government can keep a firm grip on things and prevent a downward slide. If East Asian governments had maintained similar controls and diversions, they could have prevented the crisis from spiralling out of control.*

10. *Keep the budget unbalanced, don't set limits on money supply, keep interest rates low, make country inhospitable for foreign direct investment, maintain the banking sector as secretive and non-transparent. Create a "one-window policy", sure, but hide that window at the dead end of a filthy gully which is booby trapped with cowdung and dog poo poo.*



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