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# Paths to peace

## Securing ceasefires in Nepal and Sri Lanka and moving on.

FRANCES BULATHASINGHALA

9

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## Vacancy Announcement

ActionAid is a major international non-governmental development organization with its mission "to work with poor and marginalized women, men, girls and boys to eradicate poverty and injustice and inequity that cause it".

ActionAid as a member of the ActionAid Alliance works in 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Caribbean regions. It partners with CBOs, NGOs, social movements, people's organization and activists and critically engages with governments, international organisations and private companies to ensure pro-poor policies, programmes and practices. ActionAid through its innovative projects, social mobilisation and policy advocacy work focuses on issues of gender equity, livelihood, food security, education, and governance, trafficking of women and children and HIV/AIDS.

In Asia ActionAid has offices in India, Nepal, China, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Vietnam and has programme presence in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand. Its regional office is located in Bangkok.

We are presently recruiting staff with responsibilities for the following regional work.

### Media Relations Officer (Ref: 01/2003)

The Media Relations Officer as a media professional will primarily be responsible for ensuring effective engagement of the media in ActionAid's work. The successful candidate will work as part of the communications team and be responsible for maintaining a close relationship with local, national and international journalists across Asia. Other responsibilities will include writing press releases, preparing information packs, drafting brochures and presentations, coordinating journalist field trips and strengthening ActionAid Asia staff capacity to deal with the media.

Candidates will have a degree in journalism with a minimum three years working experience in a media related field, excellent communications skills with articles and press releases as back up. They should possess an insider's knowledge into the working of the broad media, understanding the mechanics and motivations of people who work in it and its consumers. They will have run campaigns and may even have worked with issues important to ActionAid.

### SAARC Advocacy Coordinator (Ref: 02/2003)

The SAARC Advocacy Coordinator will be responsible for poverty focused and people centred advocacy work related to South Asia Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The successful candidate will be ensuring ActionAid's engagement with social movements and peoples' organisations at the South Asia regional level. Coordinating ActionAid's advocacy work including policy research, campaigns, lobbying in direct interface with SAARC and related processes on issues such as peace and justice, food security and sovereignty, education, water rights, anti-trafficking of women and children, HIV/AIDS, migration will be a vital part of the responsibilities.

Candidates will have a sound understanding about poverty, human rights, geo-politics, gender and civil society issues in the region. They must have relevant higher education and more than five years of experience in policy research, advocacy or campaigning. In depth knowledge about SAARC structure, policy, processes and programmes and proficiency in a number of South Asia regional languages will be advantageous.

### HIV/AIDS Coordinator (Ref: 03/2003)

The HIV/AIDS Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring both expansion and deepening of rights based HIV/AIDS programmes in ActionAid countries and at a regional level. Supporting people vulnerable to and living with HIV/AIDS and their organisations to claim their rights and take charge of their lives will be central to this job. This role will involve carrying out research, strengthening staff capacity, doing policy analysis and advocacy work and linking with people, organisations and processes working to secure the rights and entitlements of people vulnerable to or living with HIV/AIDS. The successful candidate will engage with governments and business sector for leveraging resources, policies and practices and will actively participate in ActionAid's international campaign against HIV/AIDS.

Candidates will have a thorough understanding of the social, economic and political issues related to HIV/AIDS in Asia. They will have relevant higher education and at least five years of direct experience of HIV/AIDS or of working with people living with HIV/AIDS.

### Partnership Development Coordinator (Ref: 04/2003)

The Partnership Development Coordinator will lead the region in a coordinated effort to generate more resources both from international official funding sources as well as from Trusts and Foundations. The successful candidate will be responsible for developing strategies for increasing volume and value of grants, competitive bids and tenders; will deepen relationships with official funding sources for engagement on policy influencing beyond money and open new relationship and avenues for diversifying income. Strengthening the official fundraising team's capacity will also be an important part of the responsibilities.

Candidates will have a higher degree in social sciences, marketing or economics and minimum of five years relevant working experience in the development sector including knowledge of major official donors and having a proven ability in managing effective working relationships with them and possessing an ability to design proposals and be successful at raising funds.

### General notes

For all of the above positions we are interested in people who are self-motivated, have a capacity for working independently, able to work across distances and committed to working on issues of poverty and rights. They should have excellent interpersonal, networking and communication skills. Fluency in English both written and spoken is essential and knowledge of languages of ActionAid Asian countries would be an asset. Experience of working in multicultural environments both within the region and internationally in the development sector would be highly advantageous. The jobs would involve travel of minimum 30 % within the region and to wider parts of ActionAid.

**Women candidates are particularly encouraged to apply.**

**Please email your application with a recent CV and names of two referees to: [job@actionaidasia.org](mailto:job@actionaidasia.org) by 25<sup>th</sup> February 2003 and mention the vacancy reference number indicated beside each position in the subject of your email application.**

**We will be able to respond to the shortlisted candidates only for the selection process by mid March 2003.**

## Let reporting stand alone

MANJUSHREE THAPA'S article on Nepal (*Himal* January 2003) is not enhanced by the prominent reliance on Amnesty International data. *Himal* readers would have been better served had the magazine let Thapa's reporting stand on its merits without trying to tie it to Amnesty's recent report, which departed from standard practice by not independently verifying the government's figure of 4050 Maoists killed. There is scant evidence to support that figure, and given the penchant for inflated 'body counts' from battlefield reports it is likely that this figure is very wrong.

Amnesty's evidence for its assertion that half of the supposed 4050 killings were illegal is thus on shaky ground, a fact borne out by the lack of evidence in the report. Amnesty presents data to substantiate six extra-judicial killings. How they got from six to 2000 is completely unexplained. They reference no lists of those allegedly illegally killed.

I also question the way Thapa uses data from the Nepali human rights group INSEC, whose data comes mainly from government figures which Thapa herself says are probably exaggerated. It is critical to understanding the conflict to know what the aggregate figures for people killed by the state and by the Maoists represent. All deaths are tragic, but the security forces killing a Maoist combatant cannot be equated with a Maoist killing a member of the security forces or a civilian. To simply ascribe a higher figure of total deaths to the state without describing who those people were does the dead and readers an injustice.

I was particularly surprised not to see any figures of the total deaths of security forces, especially of police, of whom over 1000 died last year. Although I realise the article focused on the suffering of innocents, it is very useful for judging the severity of the conflict to know how successful the insurgents are against the government's forces.

What is happening in Nepal is tragic and almost beyond comprehension, as Manjushree Thapa ably details, but I trust *Himal* to strive for accuracy and not hyperbole.

*Paul Marks*  
Fairfax, Virginia, USA

## Puppet and puppeteer

DEEPAK THAPA has written what is otherwise an excellent obituary of Rishikesh Shaha (*Himal* January 2003), but for calling the late Shaha a "scholar statesman". In my view, Shaha was not a good scholar, even less so a good statesman. But, in my view, Thapa has

followed the beaten path of eulogising rather than critiquing, and has ignored the weaknesses of Shaha as a politician/political scientist.

Consider the following. Looking at the titles of books to Shaha's credit – I have read only one, *Heroes and Builders of Nepal* – one can see that he was more of a political historian or political scientist. Shaha wrote many articles – of which I have read only a few – criticising, say, the panchayat system, but, even according to Thapa, Shaha did not utter a word against the last three Shah rulers.

We all know that in the Panchayat regime, the king ruled through puppets. Shaha criticised the puppets of the system but not the puppeteer. And in *Heroes and Builders of Nepal*, the author eulogises King Mahendra in rather unscholarly terms. King Mahendra could be considered, along with some others, one of the worst of the Shah kings. A scholar who cannot analyse or critique persons in his field of specialisation is not a 'good scholar'.

Shaha was also not a statesman. His close relationship with expatriates or with the Maoist ideologue Baburam Bhattarai in the recent past does not qualify him as such and neither does his prediction that rebellion in Rolpa would not die out. Shaha, whom political scientist LS Baral called one of the triumvirate 'Decemberists' for welcoming King Mahendra's coup in 1960, went on to write the constitution of 1962 – and we all know how good that was. He also held many posts during the Panchayat period. I think, during that period, Shaha was nothing more than a Panchayat system facade concocted by Mahendra to keep up appearances.

After jettisoning the people-elected government, Mahendra needed to show the outside world that there was room for dissent within the (autocratic) Panchayat system. He needed people with international reputations to assist him in this strategy. People such as Shaha, Tulsi Giri and even KI Singh were agreeable enough to go along. Mahendra made these people criticise the government (but praise the king!) so that he could show the world his democratic face. But keep in mind that others who criticised the December coup or the Panchayat regime faced brutal repression. For instance, in 1964 Shaha published an article criticising the government in the two regional papers – *Swatantra Vichar* and *Dainik Nepal*. The government let Shaha off scot-free while the two papers were banned for printing the article.

Shaha, in most aspects of his life, was neither a gemstone (statesman-scholar) nor a rock that blunted the *darbar's tarbar* (sword) but was instead a sharpening stone, allowing the palace to harm democracy and the people of Nepal.

*Avishrant*  
Pokhara

---

Shah was a  
stone on which  
the palace  
sharpened  
its sword

---

# Parallel with America

CONGRATULATIONS ON *Himal* January 2003 on the 'invention' of Asia. I work with the Inuit people in Canada, who have established their own territory – 'Nunavut' – covering one-fifth of the Canadian land-mass. As a European-Canadian, I work as a policy advisor with the Inuit, basically reinforcing their 'hunch' that many of the development ideas of 'white' government and corporations are flawed. There are many parallels between the insights in *Himal* and the observations and experiences of Inuit people in the Canadian Arctic.

Incidentally, as with 'Asia', the history of the concept of 'America' is also questionable. In 1507, a German cartographer decided that since the other continents had been given 'feminine' names, the 'newest' should be named after its male 'discoverer', who he mistakenly identified as Amerigo Vespucci – hence 'Amerigo', now America. As a result, the 640 first nations of Canada find themselves named 'Indians' or native 'Americans' – both mistaken labels attached by Europeans.

*Derek Rasmussen*  
by email



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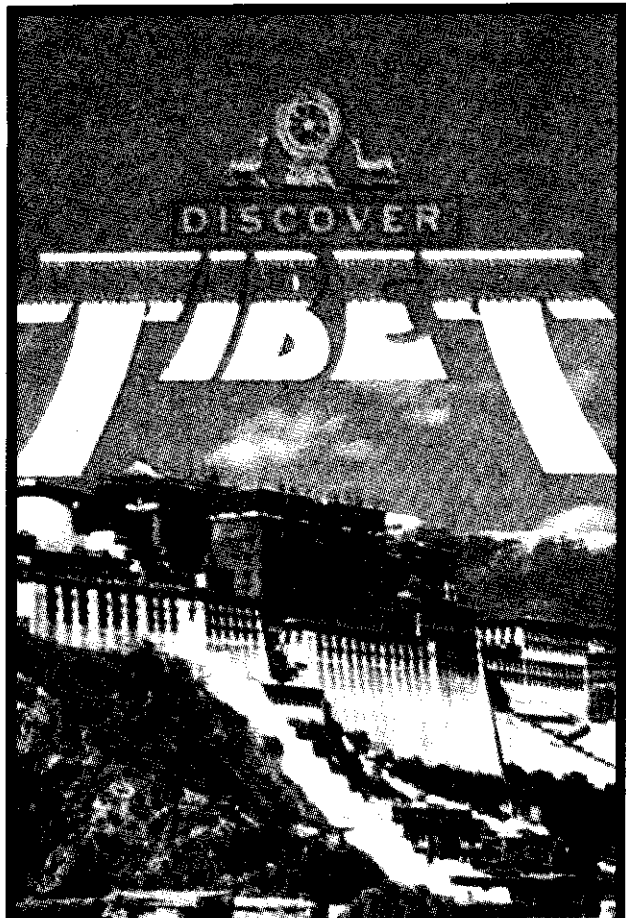
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SRI LANKA

# MAKING, AND KEEPING, PROMISES

Ministers fail to keep promises not due to deliberate ill will but because they do not have the capacity to fulfil them



Mahinda Rajapakse

IT HAS been a consistent feature of the Sri Lankan peace process that important initiatives by the LTTE are downplayed and trivialised by sections of Sinhala nationalist opinion, which could instead, more profitably, seek to hold Jaffna to its word. One of the biggest breakthroughs of the present peace process was the announcement by the LTTE's chief negotiator at the current peace talks, Dr Anton Balasingham, that the LTTE would be prepared to settle for a federal solution. The international media and most analysts outside Colombo viewed this statement as setting the basic parameters within which a negotiated settlement may be found.

In Sri Lanka, the response to Dr Balasingham's pronouncement, made in Oslo in December during the third round of talks, was more qualified. Analysts pointed critically to the text of the official statement, prepared by the Norwegian facilitators, saying that the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government had agreed only to explore a federal solution, which was not equivalent to actually accepting one. The noticeable gap between the LTTE's words and deeds (especially in matters of human rights) makes this a plausible line of argument. LTTE negotiators and the top leadership have repeatedly denied that children are still recruited as soldiers, but they are. They have also verbally accepted that the north and east are constituted by a plural society in which democracy should prevail, but on the ground the Muslims and rival Tamil parties still find themselves suppressed.

This disjunction casts doubt on the credibility of the LTTE and its sincerity in the peace process. Those who go on the basis of the ground situation have reservations about the LTTE's commitment to a negotiated compromise settlement on the lines of generally accepted federal models. The presidential spokesperson's comments that the LTTE has recruited an additional

10,000 cadre since the commencement of the ceasefire agreement a year ago and thereby vastly increased its manpower, coupled with the findings by international monitors of the continuance of child recruitment, give credence to these apprehensions.

Reports from visitors to the north and east confirming child recruitment and of people being intimidated into paying LTTE taxes are gloomy in the extreme. However, those who have face-to-face interactions with the top leadership of the LTTE tend to come away with a different perception. Members of international fact-finding missions and aid donors, as well as organisations working directly with the top leadership of the LTTE, depict a more optimistic situation in which the LTTE is indeed committed to the peace process.

The challenge is to explain this disparity between the ground reality and the impressions given by the LTTE's top leadership. The LTTE's concern is undoubtedly to maintain its monopoly of control in the territories it has acquired. It is also now seeking to extend its influence over the rest of the north and east where the government's security forces are present. The request for international funding for its peace secretariat suggests that while trying to maximise its control on the ground, the LTTE is also seeking to reorient its cadre from war- to peace-time duties. This is likely to be an uphill task for the LTTE, given its serious capacity handicap for such a programme.

International delegations and others visiting the LTTE's Wanni headquarters speak of the communication bottleneck caused by very few personnel having the linguistic and technical wherewithal to engage with outsiders. As an organisation that waged a guerrilla war for over 20 years, the LTTE has only a handful of cadres who are able to speak in English and have human rights and political education. Further, the LTTE's mistrust of outsiders has made it reluctant to bring in even Tamil expatriates as new leaders or advisors, possibly for fear of losing control.

### Capacity shortfall

The challenges that the LTTE faces in transforming politically need to be appreciated at this time. Even if the LTTE leadership has the will, it does not at the moment have the capacity. But it needs to develop its capacity to respect human and political



rights on a priority basis as a foundation for a democratic society. This is a problem that the government also faces in a different area. The lack of visible progress in the rehabilitation and development programme in the north and east is prompting doubts among locals about the government's commitment to uplifting their condition.

The observations made by the parliamentary opposition leader, Mahinda Rajapakse, on returning from Jaffna in late January need to be taken seriously. While it is a damning indictment of Sri Lankan politics that it took until now for a leader of the opposition to visit Sri Lanka's second largest city and meet its people, it is a case of better late than never. Rajapakse spoke of the lack of development and strongly condemned the government. He said that the government had appointed a plethora of ministers and set up many agencies to deal with the rehabilitation and development of the north. But despite several ministers visiting Jaffna amidst great fanfare and making all sorts of promises, there had been little change on the ground.

When the Colombo ministers go to Jaffna and make promises they certainly mean them. They are moved by the immensity of the destruction, the poverty of the people and their hopes for a peaceful and normal future. Their failure to deliver on their promises is not due to deliberate ill will or deception but because they do not possess the material capacity to honour their word. The government, as much as the LTTE, needs to strengthen its capacity for fulfilling its promise of ensuring peace and prosperity for the people of the north and east.

As in every sphere, there is a need here too for accountability. The role of the media, civil society and the international community is to be supportive of requests for capacity building while being watchdogs of the peace process. An offer by the Japanese government to assist the LTTE in setting up a peace secretariat needs to be seen in this light. The day the LTTE begins to demobilise its child soldiers and permits international verification of the demobilisation will be a turning point in the internationally mediated peace-making effort. ▽

— Jehan Perera

INDIA • PAKISTAN

THE N-WORD

2002 ENDED much like it began, with talk of war, possibly war involving nuclear weapons, hanging over the Subcontinent like a thick, blinding fog. Addressing an air force veterans rally in Karachi on 30 December, President General Pervez Musharraf said that at the height of the standoff with India last June, he sent signals to New Delhi that "if Indian troops moved a single step across the international border or the Line of Control, they should not expect a conventional war from Pakistan".

Musharraf's statement, which appeared to imply that he had threatened nuclear war against India, quickly provoked denunciations from New Delhi and clarifications and counter-denunciations from Islamabad. On 3 January, Musharraf insisting that he had been misquoted, stated that "no one in his right state of mind can talk of nuclear war", and clarified that his reference to non-conventional warfare meant guerilla combat in the event of an Indian invasion of Pakistan-administered Kashmir. NC Vij, India's army chief, declined to analyse the semantics of Musharraf's statement, though the defence minister, George Fernandes, replied that "nuclear blackmail" would not succeed and that if Pakistan launched a nuclear strike, "we would suffer a little but there will be no Pakistan left later". In Islamabad on 7 January, the Pakistani information minister, Shiekh Rashid Ahmed, termed Fernandes' rebuttal the "ravings of a crazy man" and said that if Pakistan was attacked, "we have the will to give a crushing reply", yet another ambiguous statement appearing to suggest a willingness to use nuclear weapons in the event of a conventional attack.

This exchange of nuclear-charged words is only the latest episode in a years-long and ongoing death-grip dance of South Asian brinkmanship, in general, and Pakistani ambiguity regarding its nuclear weapons usage policy, in particular. Speaking at the same forum as Fernandes, the US ambassador to India, Richard Haass, called the India-Pakistan relationship "distinctly abnormal" and recalled that the US and the USSR kept essential channels of commun-



Pervez Musharraf

The stated willingness to use nuclear weapons is wrong by any standard – political, social, moral or otherwise

No other region in the world has ever come this close to nuclear confrontation, nor have things remained on the brink for so long



George Fernandes

ication open even during the cold war's most tense moments. And for all of the faults of India's nuclear stance – the first being that it was India that went nuclear first, egging Pakistan to follow suit – at least New Delhi has committed itself to a no-first-use policy and placed its weapons under a civilian-led command structure, things Pakistan has not done. In February 2000, Pakistan announced that its Nuclear Command Authority would be chaired by the head of government – then Musharraf, now PM Jamali – but analysts argue that Jamali is unlikely to exercise authority independent of Musharraf, thus merely veiling the military's control of the weapons. In Pakistan, all roads lead to Gen Musharraf.

Pakistan started a crash uranium enrichment program in 1976, two years after India first conducted its Pokhran tests. In 1985, the two countries agreed not to attack each other's nuclear installations. Pakistan declared a moratorium on the production of highly enriched uranium in 1991, although Pakistan's claimed in a 1992 interview with *The Washington Post* that his country had enough fissile material to produce at least one bomb. India truly let the dogs of nuclear conflagration loose when Atal Behari Vajpayee gave the go-ahead for Pokhran II, and, despite the voices of a few peaceniks, Pakistan immediately reciprocated. South Asia has not been the same since, with two declared nuclear powers constantly at the brink of all-out war, what with the 73-day Kargil war in mid-1999, Musharraf's October 1999 coup, the December 2001 militant attack on the Indian parliament and the extended stand-off on the border with forces at ready.

Confusing and provocative statements from Islamabad have helped to keep the notion in the spotlight. In April 2002, Musharraf told a German magazine that "as a last resort, the atom bomb is also possible", appearing to reaffirm a February 2000 commitment to decide on the use of nuclear weapons "when national integrity is threatened". However, when meeting with other Asian leaders in Almaty in June, Musharraf seemed to offer contradictory statements on the same day, at one point declaring that "any sane individual" would prevent a nuclear war from occurring and at another stating that "the possession of nuclear weapons by any state obviously implies that they will be used under some circumstances". Coupled with

Musharraf's December remarks, it appears that despite assurances to the contrary Pakistan's nuclear posture rests in the whims of one man.

Even beyond its confrontation with India, the telltale smoke vis-à-vis Pakistan's nuclear programme does not inspire confidence. In 2002, allegations arose that Pakistan has been supplying technical assistance to North Korea's nuclear programme since 1997 in return for missile technology, charges Islamabad denies. Further, there are concerns that individuals within the Pakistani nuclear establishment might put their knowledge on the open market. In its 30 December 2002-5 January 2003 edition, the *South Asian Tribune*, a US-based Internet newspaper run by a Pakistani editor-in-exile, reported that at least eight senior and one mid-level nuclear engineers "secretly absconded from Pakistan" between 2000 and 2002, destinations now unknown.

It is important to avoid Musharraf-style ambiguity and Fernandes-style flippancy to make one point perfectly clear: the stated willingness to use nuclear weapons is wrong by any standard – political, social, moral or otherwise. No leader of any government, be it democratic or dictatorial, free or feudal, should under any occasion state, imply or suggest that he or she would use these terrible tools of destruction. Despite Fernandes' disturbingly blasé statement that India "could take a bomb or two", the use of even one nuclear weapon – much less a complete exchange of arsenals – would invite unprecedented human and ecological destruction on the Subcontinent, and likely beyond.

As 2003 begins, we must worry about our collective future and wait to see if brinkmanship and ambiguity remain the order of the day. The loose talk about the use and counter-use of nuclear weapons indicates how far our politicians and politician-generals are from reality. It also indicates how far the public at large is from a true understanding of the fallout of nuclear war, which is what goads the leaders to such craven irresponsibility.

No other region in the world has ever come this close to nuclear confrontation, nor have things remained on the brink for so long. It is time to wake up, not only in New Delhi and Islamabad, but also in Karachi, Lahore, Madras and Bombay. And in Colombo, Dhaka and Kathmandu. ▽

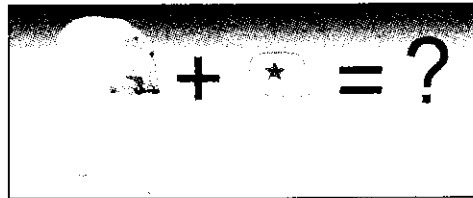


# The king's ceasefire

The royal palace in Kathmandu and the Maoists have agreed to a ceasefire without consulting the political parties. How now to bring them into the upcoming talks, and how does a king deal with rebels who want to abolish monarchy?

by *Puskar Gautam*

**T**he government of Nepal and the Maoist rebels announced a ceasefire on the night of 29 January 2002, the Maoists taking the peace plunge an hour and a half before the state. For Kathmandu valley, still



stunned by the gunning down of a top policeman, his wife and bodyguard only three days earlier, the news was the balm it so needed. Even though some would-be interlocutors greeted the news with scepticism tainted by disappointment ('nobody told us!'), and some political leaders viewed this coming together of two non-democratic forces with extreme caution, the rest of society seemed to accept with enthusiasm what the ceasefire offered. In the immediate offing was an end to the mayhem on the terraces and plains just as it was beginning to make its presence felt in the valley, and there was the implied possibility of a larger peace and, ultimately, a negotiated end to the seven-year war in which nearly 8000 lives have been taken.

This is not the first interlude in Nepal's 'people's war'. In August 2001, the Sher Bahadur Deuba government sent a team without a brief to the negotiating table, where it sat across from a *Maobandi* side intent on buying time to consolidate and expand its campaign. This time around, 17 months later, there are significant differences. Three of the most obvious are the quiet manner in which the groundwork was laid, unique in a polity that is in the habit of advertising its exertions; the implicit participation of a proactive palace; and the weight of a rapidly strengthening army, deployed all over the country (instead of a demoralised and under-equipped police) behind the government. At a time when the international community has been showing a keen interest in the conflict by enthusiastically offering mediating mechanisms and conflict-resolution expertise, some found it pleasant that the ceasefire process was an entirely 'Nepali' affair.

The negotiations required to convert the ceasefire, which is disadvantaged by its democratic shortfall, into a peace process will be tedious and challenging to say the least. The Maoists will likely have to deal with disgruntled elements turning renegade and splintering the movement – a serious problem for the country if it were

to happen – and the state will have to evolve a formula that includes the political parties for the moment out of government and not party to the ceasefire discussions.

## Power vacuum

In July 2001, Sher Bahadur Deuba entered the prime minister's office by sidelining incumbent prime minister (also president of Deuba's party), the old horse in the Nepali Congress, Girija P Koirala. One of the reasons he was able to do so was that the Maoists refused to talk with a government headed by Koirala. Proclaiming a ceasefire even before he had formally taken charge, Deuba paved the way for the Maoists to come above ground. Talks began in the month of August, and three rounds were held before the Maoists unilaterally jettisoned the negotiations in November by unexpectedly striking at an army barracks in Dang, western Nepal. As subsequently acknowledged by the Maoist leadership, the rebels used the peace afforded by the talks to regroup and rearm, and also to grow their roots in new areas such as the tarai.

The Deuba government, stung by the humiliating betrayal, responded by declaring a state of emergency, deploying the army against the Maoists, declaring them terrorists and atavistically placing a price on the heads of the rebel leaders. Contact between the government and the Maoists evaporated, while the people were caught in the tightening pincer of Maoist and army action. As the success rate of Maoist attacks – mainly against government offices in district headquarters – grew, the under-prepared army became increasingly defensive and the government withdrew from many villages, leaving a power vacuum that the insurgents were happy to fill.

The Deuba government was unable to come up with an appropriate response to the Maoist offensive. Human rights activists who offered to act as intermediaries had the confidence of neither the government nor the insurgents, while Deuba himself was willing but unable to initiate talks. The frustration of ineffective action began to tell on the Congress government soon enough. Faced with a Koirala-led offensive, Deuba dis-

solved parliament in May 2002, announced general elections, was unable to make them happen, and then proposed postponing them by up to 14 months. At that point, on 4 October, King Gyanendra – by his own admission more a person of action than his late brother, Birendra – sacked Deuba. He was replaced by Lokendra Bahadur Chand, a Panchayat era holdover and former prime minister, who was handpicked by the palace to head a cabinet of technocrats and politicians, the latter weaned away from their parties.

Meanwhile, the political parties sputtered and shouted, and certainly retained the ability to create trouble for the palace in the long-term, but were unable to spark their followings or the public against the king's action, not least because their hands were tied by the Maoists' gunning for the monarchy. Analysts saw little hope that the Chand cabinet, seemingly lacking political credibility, could untie the Maoist knot. This was the situation when one of the ministers in the king's cabinet is said to have begun secretly developing contacts with the Maoists about two months ago.

Narayan Singh Pun is a former army officer and helicopter pilot-turned-airline proprietor-turned-politician. A member of the community from which the Maoists draw their core strength in central Nepal, the Magar, Pun is a street-smart man who left a Nepali Congress ridden with bitter infighting to start his own Samata Party last year. Having contacted the rebels through their sympathisers in Kathmandu, Pun seems to have taken particular care to ensure that the top rung of the rebel military, represented by Ram Bahadur Thapa (Comrade Badal), was part of the discussions. The ceasefire announcement, when it finally came, had the acquiescence of the topmost leadership of the Maoists. That the Maoists have appointed their senior leaders, including the number two-man and party ideologue, Baburam Bhattarai, and Badal, to the negotiating team, unlike earlier when a flimflam group were representing it, indicates that their intention is to conduct real dialogue this time.

### **Maoist choices**

The power dynamics in Nepali politics have shifted after the royal action of 4 October 2002, with the palace clearly wanting more of a say in national affairs that it believes the political parties grievously neglected. Kathmandu drawing room wisdom would earlier dismiss suggestions, and justifiably so, that the republican Maoists and the palace, the two diametrically opposed parties in the conflict for power, would (or could) engage with each other without the political parties as a buffer. But the recent developments belie that analysis. For reasons that one can only speculate on at the moment, the Maoists decided to recognise the palace as the power centre when they determined to make the move towards talks.

There are several reasons – political and organisational, national and international – why this time the

Maoist call for a ceasefire may just be genuine and not a repeat of the cynical strategic game of the last round. The logistical challenge of managing its wildfire growth, supporting a brigade-strength fighting force on looted cash, the handicap of antiquated weaponry, the steady erosion of support from an intimidated countryside, and the possibility that the law of diminishing returns may have begun to set in with cadres getting restive over the failure in converting night-time strike missions into actual territorial gains – all these would have influenced the decision to engage in serious peace talks.

Also, with the change in the international climate post-11 September of growing impatience with insurgencies from Washington, DC to New Delhi, the Maoists would have realised that it was only a matter of time before they started losing ground in Nepal. Statements made by Maoist leaders after the ceasefire indicate that they had deduced as much. Besides, an experience of the difficulty in planting true-red Marxism on Nepali soil, and the growing capability of the army that had, with international assistance, begun coming into its own for the first time in the war, would have influenced the leadership to cash in its chips while its military momentum was still on, converting success in the field into above-ground legitimacy at the centre.

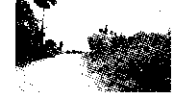
At a time when the perception of rebel success was still strong, the choice before the Maoist leadership was clear. It could either step up the pressure through bombings and assassinations in Kathmandu valley – as seemed to have happened on the morning of 26 January when Krishna Mohan Shrestha, the chief of the Armed Police Force, was killed. Or, it could bargain on the strength of its advances before the revolution went out of control.

With the successes of the insurgency over the last two years, the Maoists were faced with the choice of establishing a 'base area', where they would maintain fighters and protect the citizenry; or, committing themselves to a 'final offensive' and a do-or-die attack on the state. It had already been decided in the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) plenum two years ago that the creation of a base area was not possible. So instead, since last spring, the rebels had been gearing up to execute the second option, which would mean the taking of Kathmandu. Difficulties encountered in attacking the valley however made the future look suddenly uncertain, and the limits to how long the leadership could maintain troop morale on the basis of violent aggression on far-flung outposts began to become clear.

Keeping this in mind, the Maoist leadership seems to have decided on the latter option, no matter that it would now be required to engage with the central object of its seven-year campaign, the crown. In doing so, the leadership seems to have chosen a 'safe landing' over going with the cadres who overwhelmingly would want to continue the fight.

### **What now?**

With the Maoist leadership committing to a ceasefire,



the focus is now on the complexities involved in moving talks ahead. The dismissal of the elected government sublimated the divisions in Nepali politics so that it is now relatively easy to discern three distinct participants. The monarchy, supported by an appointed cabinet, and the *Maobaadi* on the radical left are already at the negotiating table. But the present arrangement leaves out the political parties who, for all their inefficiency (even in protesting their sidelining), are the legitimate parliamentary force. The political parties denounce the monarchy under King Gyanendra for evolving into an extra-constitutional entity, whereas the Maoists are by definition rallied against the constitution – even though there is a whispered suspicion that given a political berth commensurate with their ambitions the leaders will not be unwilling to accept the system essentially as it exists.

Before the unexpected ceasefire declaration of 29 January, there was much speculation, which has now been laid to rest by *fait accompli*, on who would talk to whom first – the king and the parties, the parties and the *Maobaadi*, or the king and the *Maobaadi*. With King Gyanendra unwilling to have much truck with the parties and the latter unable to unite among themselves to force his hand, it is the *Maobaadi* and the king (through his representatives in the cabinet) who have started talking. Nevertheless, in this three-way polarisation of Nepali politics, the proximity or distance of the political parties from the talks, as designed by the king and implemented by Pun, will be the key factor in the peace process. For the moment, the political parties are smarting from having been bypassed.

It need not be entirely impossible but it will be commensurately more difficult for the 'unnatural' discussions between the two extreme positions to yield results for the long term. At some point, presuming that parliamentary democracy is now a given in Nepal, the political parties will have to be brought into the process so that the talks continue to be viable. What mechanism would be best, and what will be adopted, is as yet an open question. But, the initial breakthrough having been achieved, it would be misguided for the king, Pun and the rest of the cabinet to believe that the peace process can proceed far without the political parties.

The Maoists have demanded an all-party round-table conference, and a period of interim government, leading up to the election of a constituent assembly that will reformulate the constitution. This is the Maoists at their most flexible; the long-held demand for a republic, which had so far precluded the possibility of reconciliation, is no longer a precondition to or even a condition in the talks. There are even some indications now that the leadership may be willing to concede to constitutional monarchy. In talking with what is essentially the king's cabinet, the Maoist leadership has tacitly recognised the political authority of the palace.

Through the last 14 months, the Maoists claimed that they were preparing for a constituent assembly,

and that their military activities and attacks were aimed at achieving this objective. However, a constituent assembly, burdened as it is with the flavour of bourgeois rhetoric, cannot be the aim of a movement that initiated a bloody and long war in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat. One assumes therefore that having amassed power through the gun, the Maoist leadership now wants a place within the power structure at the centre. Even as it has decided on its compromise, one that will keep the Maoists ahead even as talks proceed, the challenge will be to take along the rank and file, with whose blood its battles were fuelled.

### Why now?

In the four months that this government has been in power, the rebels conducted fierce and successful attacks on security force positions and on district headquarters, having divided the country into 'east' and 'west' for strategic purposes, with Kathmandu as the centre. In the Nepali month of Mangsir (mid-November to mid-December) last year, the Maoists announced a shift from the position of 'strategic balance' with the state forces to that of 'strategic offence'. As their supreme commander, Pushpa Kamal Dahal (Comrade Prachanda), said in an interview, the *Maobaadi* sought to learn from the mistakes of the Sendero Luminoso in Peru, where "they took too long to move from the strategic balance stage to the final offensive". What was it then that broke their resolve and had them seeking accommodation with the state, when they are seemingly not weakened in any way?

A clear clue to why the Maoists decided to come to the negotiating table lies in the timing. With the political parties out, the Maoists have to deal with a monolithic power centre ungoverned by the exigencies of electoral politics. Also, the international wave of sympathy for all states that are battling insurgencies has meant that the Maoists were faced with a might larger than just the Nepali state. The steadfast support for the state and army from the US, the UK and most importantly India, and oft-repeated reminders from China that it has no support for what it calls 'anti-government forces', must have made their impression on the Maoists. With the dilution of ideological principle on the hard road of reality, a show of strength and/or lasting power on the part of the state seem to have brought the Maoists to the negotiating table.

In particular, it is the position of the Indian government, expressed in the repatriation of Maoists captured in India and the logistical and training support being provided to the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) that would have determined Maoist calculations. Besides the advantage they take of the open border for refuge, logistics and communications, and the assistance they derive from the Maoist groups in India, the action and inaction of the Indian government has enormous influence on the strength of the Maoists in Nepal. That the Maoists realise this is clear from the velvet glove treat-

ment that they have reserved for the Indian state of late even though the foundation of the Maoists' extreme nationalism rests on opposition to the Indian state. This softness obviously has to do with the need to seek refuge in India, particularly after the Nepali army was deployed, knowing that the India had the ability to provide decisive support to the Nepali government. But, when the time came for India to reveal its hand, it showed that it had no inclination to oblige the Maoists. The former foreign minister, Jaswant Singh, described the Maoists as "terrorists" even before the Nepali government did so. The Indian stance would in no small measure have affected the decision to enter into talks, and any evolution in the Indian position will similarly continue to direct the Maoist position in the course of the negotiations.

Having come to the table in the 'strategic offence' phase of a trajectory that started with 'strategic defence' against the state, moving to 'strategic balance' during the 2001 talks, it will be interesting to see how the Maoists manage the many contradictions in their ceasefire initiative. One can presume that the larger proportion of activists and fighters, having been fed on propaganda of all-out war and having achieved success in the field, is against talks, as is the mercurial support group known as the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM). (RIM has taken as much energy from the Nepali Maoists as have the Maoists promoted themselves on the basis of 'international' support provided by RIM.) Now that the Maoists have made their compromise with the state, their ideological purity will be questioned by international supporters who had bandwagoned with them. RIM will now have to scramble together a justification for the sudden lack of revolutionary fervour in the Nepali comrades, who had thus far done them proud. But the Maoists would be more concerned with Nepali realpolitik than faraway friends.

The fact that the insurgents are now willing to talk to the palace and its representatives has to be seen in context. The same Maoists who had criticised the dismissal of the Deuba government as "reactionary", who a year and half ago pronounced that kingship had effectively ended in Nepal with the death of King Birendra and forecast a natural progression towards a republican state, today seem willing to confabulate with King Gyanendra. The political parties, who must be criticised for their lack of enthusiasm for the ceasefire, do then have some bases for their suspicion of this 'unnatural' meeting. They are also worried that between the two unrepresentative parties, the insurgents and the palace, the former may be able to extract concessions that will be to the disadvantage of the parliamentary players who are expected to be included in the talks at some point.

The confidence visible in the palace's dealings of the past weeks comes from its assurance of the public's scepticism of the political parties. It also comes from the current US-led international campaign against

'terrorism', as much as it does from the established resilience of the Nepali nation-state. Undoubtedly, the immediate beneficiary of the ceasefire is King Gyanendra, who started his reign under the cloud of the royal massacre in June 2001, and who has been roundly criticised by the political parties for having bypassed them in appointing the Chand government.

With the ceasefire, the king has greatly gained in credibility for the immediate term. But the monarchy needs to think for the long term, and it will have to work with all the forces that have a stake or interest in the evolving scenario. None should feel excluded, and most importantly not the mainstream political parties, including the (currently divided) Nepali Congress and the (recently reunited) Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist).

Significantly, in the ceasefire statement, Prachanda calls on the Maoist cadre to engage in "peaceful mobilisation". In all earlier instances, including in the statement that was issued for the 2001 ceasefire, he had called for the more ambiguous "effective defence". A party that is given to war, directing its cadre towards peaceful mobilisation, must be seen as having appreciably changed tracks.

### Factors for talks

As insurgencies go in South Asia, the Nepali Maoist war is relatively young. It may have been on for seven years, but it really got going countrywide only in the last three or four. And yet the toll that it has taken – on the psychology of the populace, in the debilitation of the economy and the diversion of political energy in a nascent democracy – has been massive. While the political parties have certainly a lot to answer for in bringing the country to such a pass in the 12 years of democracy, the Maoists are culpable for exploiting the inchoate politics and taking the country down a spiral.

The road ahead is mined with difficulties. To begin with, the Maoists have to convince all above-ground players that they are not going to use the ceasefire period only to regroup, which is a suspicion in some quarters. Meanwhile, the government – the king, Pun and the rest of the Chand cabinet – will have to take the political parties along if they are seeking a long-term resolution. There is much to be disentangled if the talks are to commence towards negotiations on an agreed goal, including on the actual mechanics of electing a constituent assembly if that is what it is to be. For the moment, the ceasefire is built on government concessions of lifting the 'terrorist' label, the international 'red corner' warrants and the price on the heads of the Maoist leaders. The Maoist gamble seems to be that they will have a significant presence in the constituent assembly and therefore will be able to land safely into power in a future central dispensation. If at some point that objective begins to look unachievable, they may restart the fight on the basis of the demand for a constituent assembly. It is indeed not impossible that

the rebels have called for a ceasefire mainly to consolidate their rapid growth. Their record certainly does not militate against this line of argument.

Narayan S Pun told the press, "In many areas there has already been an understanding between the Maoists and the government". If indeed such an understanding exists on matters of principle, it will likely create a real problem at the proposed roundtable conference. The political parties, civil society groups and human rights organisations may well find that their propositions and demands are being overridden because they are outside the pale of the understanding reached between the current negotiating parties.

But before the talks arrive at that stage, there are several other issues to be addressed. To begin with, the king who has preferred to go it alone thus far for reasons of principle and practicality must find a way of accommodating the political parties. The political parties must get over their initial suspicion of the process and play a constructive part in it, and say something other than the various mantras they have been uttering, depending on the party – the reinstatement of parliament, the restoration of the earlier government, and so on. The Maoists will have to deal with the question of weaponry in their hands, the rehabilitation of fighters, and human rights abuse and killing of political

workers. The government will have to answer for extra judicial killings and the death of innocents at the hands of the security forces. It will also need to address the displacement of tens of thousands of citizens. One of the main points of discussion will likely be the RNA, which not only the Maoists but also the major political parties – the Congress and the CPN (UML) – would like to bring under the control of an elected government rather than the palace. Who will participate in the roundtable conference, and as important, who will be in the interim government, will be contentious issues, especially if the Maoists are looking to dominate the interim dispensation.

The announcement of ceasefire is the first glimmer of hope in a long time, and Nepal's spiral into an economic, social and political abyss has been momentarily arrested. It is now time for sober reflection and participation from all sides. If the Maoists could give up on points of principle out of practical considerations, surely the other parties too can reciprocate the flexibility. It may yet be that Nepal will arise out of these years of violence just as quickly as it entered them. Once we get over the shock of the Maoist leadership and (what is effectively) the king talking to each other, we will begin to truly appreciate that in Nepal anything is possible. And that may not be a bad thing.

## Agricultural Services Programme Adviser HMG Nepal Agricultural Perspectives Plan

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# Mechanisms of power sharing

The ceasefire in Sri Lanka must be consolidated further over the next year to allow the government and the Tigers the breathing space to distance themselves from earlier entrenched positions. And the ultimate answer lies in federalism – a proposed structure that was once seen as a harbinger of national break-up but now is seen as a stepping stone to unity within a divided country.

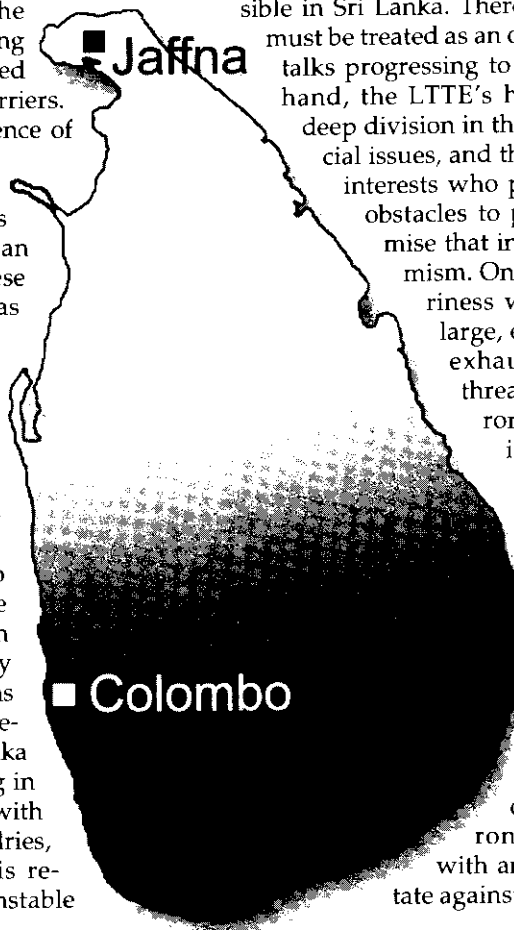
by Jehan Perera

When Sri Lanka surfaces in the international media it is almost invariably in connection with ethnic violence. Such stories have been grim and arresting in the last two decades. There have been mob riots in which the government has been complicitous. There have been dramatic military encounters where on a single day major army bases have fallen and 1000 soldiers have been killed. There have been devastations in the heart of the capital, Colombo, including an attack on the airport that destroyed the country's fleet of international carriers. The bulk, though not all, of the violence of the last 20 years is an outcome of the long war between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), fighting for an independent Tamil homeland. In these two decades, the LTTE has emerged as a powerful, internationally active organisation claiming to be the sole representative of the Tamil people of Sri Lanka. Its leader has cult status and commands an army of over 10,000 soldiers, each of whom has sworn to commit suicide by swallowing cyanide rather than surrender.

However, things are beginning to change after the dramatic ceasefire agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in February 2002 that followed nearly three months of unofficial ceasefire. Increasingly, media coverage has focused on Sri Lanka as a possible model for peace-making in a conflict-ridden region. South Asia, with its nuclear arsenals, geopolitical rivalries, ethnic conflicts and insurgencies, is regarded as being among the most unstable

regions in the world. Consequently, there are many who see the recent developments in Sri Lanka as a possible indication that textbook approaches to peace-making, with third party mediation, can be successful.

All this optimism notwithstanding, it will be premature to regard the Sri Lankan conflict as a closed chapter. The question still remains whether a stable, negotiated peace that entails mutual compromise is possible in Sri Lanka. There are several reasons why this must be treated as an open question despite the peace talks progressing to the fourth round. On the one hand, the LTTE's highly military character, the deep division in the Sinhala polity on several crucial issues, and the presence of vested economic interests who profit from conflict are serious obstacles to political reforms and compromise that induce a sense of prudent pessimism. On the other hand, a general weariness with war among the public at large, economic debilitation, financial exhaustion on both sides and the threat of the US-led war against terrorism inviting itself over to the island, puts pressure on the conflicting parties to compromise and resolve their disputes through political negotiations. Given these two conflicting sets of forces at work, the February 2002 ceasefire agreement, brokered under Norwegian diplomatic auspices, must be seen as a pragmatic response to one set of realities on the ground and in the environment, which has to contend with another set of realities that militate against peace. The negotiations, there-





fore, still hang in delicate balance, and there are good reasons to avoid the belief that peace will be the necessary outcome of the process.

At different points in the last year there have been occasions when the durability of the ceasefire looked to be in some doubt. Demonstrating the fragility of the ceasefire at the initial and hence critical stage, the US embassy in Sri Lanka circulated a statement by its ambassador, Ashley Wills, just a month after hostilities had been officially and mutually called to a halt. Issued on 11 March 2002 the statement said,

We have heard credible reports that the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) are engaged in activities that could jeopardize the recent indefinite ceasefire accord reached with the Sri Lankan government. These reports recount increased LTTE recruitment in Sri Lanka's north and east, including of children, as well as kidnapping and extortion, especially of Muslims. To be fair, we understand that incidents of recruitment, kidnapping and extortion have apparently decreased in recent days, a trend that we hope will continue. There also have been credible reports of LTTE resupply operations since the ceasefire. Continued smuggling of weapons by the LTTE could undermine the trust needed to move from a cessation of hostilities to a lasting peace.

While Tamil politicians and media reacted negatively to the US statement, it is likely that sections among the Tamil community felt otherwise. There is no doubt that the offences identified by the US ambassador have been taking place, with even independent human rights organisations like Amnesty International calling on the LTTE to refrain from such activities. It is not only the Muslims who have been feeling the burden of the LTTE's heavy taxation, but also Tamils in areas newly accessible to the LTTE on account of the ceasefire agreement. Despite the hostile reaction of a section of the mainstream Tamil public, the LTTE itself was very moderate in its immediate response. The LTTE's chief negotiator, Dr Anton Balasingham, pledged that the LTTE was committed to the peace process. Subsequently, it was reported that the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran was himself very concerned about the allegations and would take action against any LTTE violations of the ceasefire agreement. These are promising signs that the LTTE is making the transition to a political organisation that is prepared to deal with the rest of the world on the basis of give and take and accountability in accordance with international norms of human rights.

But setting aside such grounds for a cautious optimism, there are still pending issues that provoke concern. The reference in the US statement to the Muslims brings to the fore a submerged aspect of Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, which represents just one of the many unresolved issues that will entail a great deal of effort in ensuring a dispensation that not only satisfies the



*Tamil children in the Wann.*

Sinhala and the Tamil leaderships, but at the same time does not compromise the interests of other minorities in the country. The Muslims, despite being mainly Tamil speaking, nevertheless consider themselves to be a distinct ethnic community. Although they constitute a significant portion of the Sri Lankan population, they are thinly dispersed throughout the country, which has weakened their bargaining strength for regional autonomy, unlike the Tamils who are regionally concentrated in the north and east. But the Muslims are a majority in significant pockets of the east. Along with the Tamils, they have been victims of government-sponsored land settlement schemes that brought in Sinhala into areas of the east where they once dominated.

However, they have also suffered grievously at the hands of the LTTE, the most striking occasion being when nearly 100,000 Muslims were expelled from Jaffna and other parts of the north in 1990 with just two hours' notice. They were forced to leave without time to pick up their belongings, even jewellery. During the period of armed conflict they were reluctant to voice their sentiments, but now with the advent of the ceasefire and increased international attention, they have been demanding the same rights and privileges that are to be accorded to the Tamils. To what extent the peace process succeeds will depend on its capacity to withstand and substantively accommodate such entirely justified demands that deviate from the original disputes at stake.

Clearly, there is more to the solution than just the interests of the two parties who are negotiating. Therefore, the negotiating parties will actually need to address issues much wider in scope than merely a Sinhala-Tamil agreement. Since the issue will ultimately be multipartite and the negotiations are for all practical purposes bipartite, the credibility of the peace process presupposes the need to forge a minimum consensual agreement between the constituencies whose interests are explicitly or by default being represented and bargained at the negotiations. This is manifestly not the

case on either side of the negotiating fence and this puts pressure on the negotiators from the respective ethnic constituencies that they claim to represent.

Part of the problem of working out a 'clean' ethnic solution is that the ethnic constituencies are themselves not always tidily demarcated. To compound matters, there have been changes in the pattern of ethnic demographics during the period of conflict. In terms of aggregative statistics, Sri Lanka's ethnic plurality has the appearance of a neat configuration into which the country's 18 million people are arranged. The Sinhala form the main ethnic group with 74 percent of the population. The majority of the Sinhala are Buddhists by religion and mainly concentrated in the south, west and central parts of the country. At the start of the conflict, the Sri Lankan Tamils at 12 percent of the population made up the second largest ethnic group. They are in a majority in the northeast of the country. The Muslims form the third major ethnic group with eight percent of the population and a relative concentration in the east. The Up Country Tamils, who are of recent Indian origins, form the fourth major community with about five percent of the population. They live in the central hills of the country and have not been involved in the separatist conflict. Most of the Tamils are Hindu by religion. While a minority of both Sinhala and Tamils, together making up about seven percent of the population are Christians, they are not considered to be a separate ethnic group.

### Externalities of war

No census was conducted for a 20-year period, owing to the conflict in the country. The census count that was eventually carried out in 2001 did not cover most of the northeast province, which is contested territory and claimed by Tamil nationalists as the "traditional Tamil homeland". The new census and estimates for the northeast suggest that spatially the ethnic distribution is more complex than often presumed. For one, the estimates indicate that the Tamil population has dropped to a little under 11 percent of the population in the intervening period since the last census in 1981. But, by far the most striking point highlighted by the census is the ethnic intermingling that has been going on among the Sri Lankan population. Colombo city, located in the southwest, registered a Sinhala population of only 41 percent in the 2001 census. In the country's capital, Tamil speakers constitute the ethnic majority.

It is not difficult to see how a long drawn-out conflict can bring about significant changes in ethnic demographics, both over time and across regions. The war that began in 1983 has caused around 65,000 deaths and major damage to personal and public property with the total economic loss between 1983-98 estimated at 1.27 times the GDP as at 1998. Destruction on

such a scale inevitably sparks off major changes in population patterns. Over the last two decades, a total of some one million persons have been uprooted and displaced internally. In the corresponding period, another half a million people have left the country to claim refugee status abroad. The resultant demographic variation represents one of the paradoxes of ethnic conflict. War introduces externalities over the long run that change some of the objective coordinates of the original situation.

Such changes in the demographic coordinates pose two related problems. On the one hand, they scramble the issue of ethnic homelands based on demographic majorities. On the other hand, they unleash renewed disputes between sections on both sides about the relative changes in ethnic compositions and the presumed causes thereof. That the demographic issue continues to fester in the political sphere is evident from the four-party Tamil Alliance manifesto of late 2001. The manifesto made a reference to the discrepancies in the "natural increase of Sinhala population country-wide" and in the eastern province, which attracted a forceful response by commentators in the Sri Lankan media. Disputes on the politics of ethnic profiles and data could provide ammunition to conflict enthusiasts to erode support for a peace process that is ultimately hostage to the ethnic question.

Ethnic war based on foundational objectives and counter-objectives has its own self-driven logic, and once it has begun it can scarcely be arrested by citing changing population statistics that can undermine at least some of the original rationale of the conflict. Because such conflicts are almost entirely absorbed in a contested history of ethnic rights and wrongs, evolving census figures are not particularly relevant to the war. But they could become extremely important in peace. When the guns go silent, unstated and disregarded premises of ethnic pluralism usually come to the surface to demand their share of attention. As a result, if the question of a durable peace is to be addressed an environment of accommodation will be necessary in order to resolve the ethnic anomalies to general satisfaction.

It is unfortunate that such an environment does not seem to be emerging. If anything, a persistence of the historical attitudes that gave rise to the original problem can be detected among crucial segments of the body politic, even as a demonstrably growing sentiment for a just peace is becoming evident in civil society. A comparison between the political attitudes prevalent before the war began and those that are also being voiced today shows just how the persistence of unyielding ethnic nationalism poses a threat to peace.



Balasingham



Prabakaran



## Packaged devolution

Sri Lanka has had a relatively long tradition of the modern system of political participation, going back to the British colonial period. The country was one of the first in the world to enjoy universal suffrage in 1931. But the inability of the political elites belonging to the different ethnic groups to share power equitably among themselves led to a series of broken agreements and to acute mistrust between leaders of these communities. The difficulty of protecting minority interests in a parliamentary system in which majority-minority relations are strained is exemplified by Sri Lanka's modern political history.

In Sri Lanka, the centralised state inherited by the newly independent country in 1948 effectively transferred political power into the hands of the Sinhala majority. This power was immediately used to restrict the membership of the polity by denying citizenship rights to the 'Indian Tamil' or Up Country Tamil population and by seeking to correct "historical wrongs" done to the majority. This followed a pattern in which the politicisation of ethnicity has occurred in contemporary plural societies, and the claims to group entitlements in current mass politics provide the initial basis for collective identity, mobilisation and action.

The skewed distribution of political power in parliament also led to the emergence and accentuation of economic disparities between the Sinhala- and Tamil-majority parts of the country. While social welfare benefits such as health and education were relatively equitably distributed throughout the country, the same did not hold true for large-scale economic investments. With few exceptions, these prized projects, which provided opportunities for political patronage and development, were located in the Sinhala majority parts of the country. Ruling party politicians were in constant tussle to secure these projects for their own electorates. As the Tamils from the north in particular were rarely represented in the higher rungs of the government, their case was lost by default. The deprivation of the Tamil-majority areas has continued in aggravated form due to the war of the past two decades. A recent National Peace Council study shows that the output of the north-east is a mere 60 percent of what it used to be in 1983, when the war commenced.

Several serious efforts made by government to work out a solution with the Tamil political leaderships failed due to the inability to obtain the support of the ruling party let alone the opposition. The most outstanding instance was the agreement reached in 1957 between the prime minister at that time, SWRD Bandaranaike, and the leader to the largest Tamil par-

ty, SJV Chelvanayakan. The prime minister unilaterally abrogated the agreement when it proved generally unpopular among the Sinhala. Buddhist monks even demonstrated in large numbers against the agreement, which offered autonomy to the Tamil areas. A similar agreement arrived at in 1965 by Prime Minister Dudley Senanayake suffered the same fate, this time due to strong internal divisions within the ruling party itself. The salient feature of both these agreements was the provision of a degree of autonomy to the northern and eastern provinces and to permit them to merge or work together if they so desired. The issue of self-rule, regional autonomy and merger of the two provinces remain the key issues dividing Sinhala and Tamil sentiment to this day.

Efforts to arrive at a constitutional solution after the civil war commenced proved to be ineffective precisely because they were formulated without adequate heed to the roots of the problem. The 13th amendment to the constitution, which gave effect to the devolution provisions of the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord of July 1987, sought to devolve power to provincial councils throughout Sri Lanka. It contained three lists, which enumerated areas of power devolved to the provinces, retained at the centre, and those concurrently exercised but which were ultimately controlled by parliament at the centre. However, continued centralisation of power was represented by the executive presidency. According to the commentator, Rohan Edrisinghe,

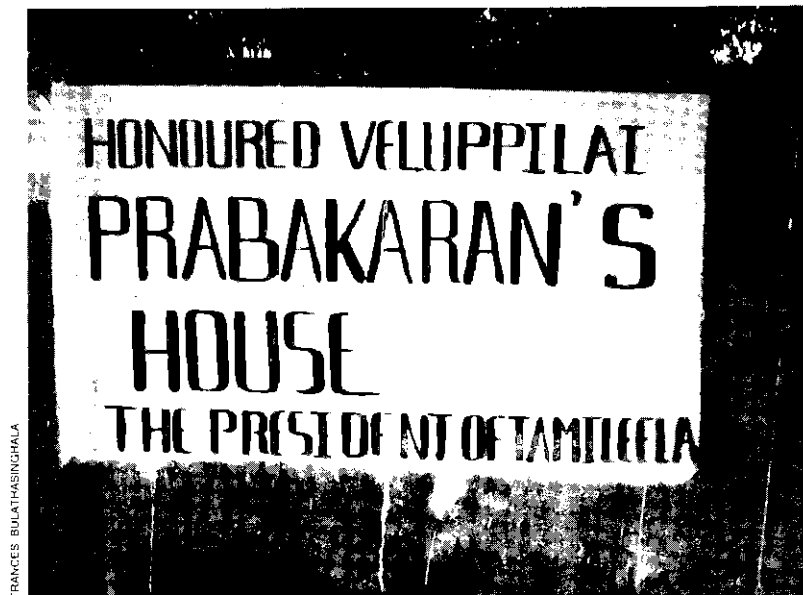


*Bandaranaike, Senanayake, Kumaratunga, Wickremesinghe*

Perhaps the greatest obstacle to practical devolution was the first phrase of the Reserved List, which provided for 'National Policy on all Subjects and Functions' to be determined by Parliament. This phrase completely undermined powers apparently devolved to the provinces. Since the inauguration of the 13th Amendment, Parliament has used this rubric often to encroach into the provincial sphere.

So far the most radical proposals for ending the ethnic conflict through a constitutional arrangement has been the "Devolution Package" of August 1995, proposed by the government as a draft document. This sought to redefine "the constitutional foundation of a plural society". The draft proposed that the provincial councils of the 13th Amendment be renamed as regional councils with added powers. According to Edrisinghe,

...the deletion of Articles 2 and 76 of the constitution, which entrenched the unitary character of Sri Lanka, removed an unnecessary obstacle to substantial devolution. The abolition of the Concurrent List



was another positive feature, as were other attempts to remove ambiguity in the division of powers. These included the clarification of the role of provincial governors and the awarding of greater revenue raising powers to the regional council.

However, a major weakness in the proposed regional councils was the power of the executive president to dissolve a council in case of emergency. Further, its framers failed to respond to the larger issues, such as those of self-determination and nationhood, and in obtaining the concurrence of the LTTE, which predictably rejected the devolution package as being insufficient.

### People and parties

The unwillingness to part with the surplus of power at the centre continues to be a problem. Consequently, despite the progress in the negotiations since the election of a new government, in December 2001, there remain concerns about the sustainability of the peace process. Sections of the opposition are vigorously opposing the ceasefire agreement on various grounds. Among others, it is seen as an unconstitutional measure, as a "sell-out" by the government and as the prelude to a renewed LTTE military campaign for separation. Spearheading the opposition to the ceasefire agreement is the Janata Vimukthi Peramunna (JVP), a Marxist-oriented political party that attempted to violently overthrow the government in 1971 and again in 1988-89. On both occasions, the JVP was militarily suppressed at the cost of enormous loss of lives, estimated at around 15,000 and 30,000 respectively.

The JVP's position draws upon a perception shared by many Sinhala that the devolution of power is a means of dividing the country along ethnic lines. The fears of the division of the country in the minds of a sizeable proportion of the Sinhala constitute a major obstacle to

a negotiated solution with the LTTE. Clearly, the preferred option for this section of the population is a military solution that will completely eliminate the LTTE and thereby end the threat to the country's unity.

If the fear of ethnic erosion of national unity is an ideological impediment to a solution, the use of ethnic conflict as an element in political competition between mainstream political parties constitutes a more myopic instrumental obstacle to peace. As a result the country has witnessed constant rivalry between the government and opposition parties on the issue of ethnic concessions. As the commentator Godfrey Goonatileke points out,

A clear lesson emerging from past failures is that no effort at resolving the conflict will succeed unless there is a broad-based

consensus within each community, Sinhala and Tamil, around a solution that is perceived by both as equitable. The internal power struggles within both the communities – Sinhala and Tamil – have continuously thwarted such a process of consensus building. The negotiations took place in a changing configuration of political power with the constant prospect of changes of government, in which the ethnic issue was perceived as being a crucial factor. The history of negotiations up to 1990 shows that each of the two major Sinhala-dominated political parties, SLEP and UNP, have endeavoured to reach a political settlement when they have been in power and have opposed or thwarted a settlement when they are in opposition. The party in power then opts for an easy way out of the dilemma by withdrawing its proposal. It justifies its action on the ground that they cannot obtain the support of the people. (*Negotiations for the Resolution of the Ethnic Conflict*)

Gunatileke continues, "The other feature in the Sinhala-Tamil relations was the incapacity or unwillingness of the Sinhala leadership to resist the well organised, highly vocal pressure groups within their own constituency. This became a recurring characteristic of Sinhala-Tamil negotiations". Commenting on SWRD Bandaranaike's early and aborted attempt at reconciliation, the same author observes,

...his convictions were not deep enough to oppose the Sinhala leaders who would not concede that the Tamils had genuine grievances or that their aspirations for a share of power were reasonable. Above all, the Tamil issue seemed to be at the periphery of the political agenda, and largely for demographic reasons the dissatisfaction of the



Tamils seemed manageable. What pre-occupied Bandaranaike and other Sinhala leaders was the socio-economic socialist agenda and its impact upon the population as a whole.

For many years now, community leaders and political analysts have been calling for a consensus between the two major political parties for a solution to the long ethnic conflict to emerge. But in doing so, they may have glossed over the political realities that have kept the two dominant parties apart on the issue. The hard fact is that the Sinhala community, which by far forms the largest segment of the electorate, is still more or less evenly divided on the question of political reforms that could lead to a political settlement of the ethnic conflict. It is a justifiable surmise that the perceived sentiment of a significant section of the electorate enables parties to adopt it as a platform for mutual recrimination and political jostling. Conversely, the hardline rhetoric of party politics reproduces and crystallises ethnic antipathies and dilutes the national capacity for conceding regional autonomy by creating sharply divided opinion among the Sinhala majority.

A public opinion poll commissioned by the National Peace Council in 1999 and carried out by Research International showed that up to 48 percent of the Sinhala polled did not favour using the government's devolution package in negotiations with the LTTE, with only 41 percent in favour. Although 48 percent of Sinhala were in favour of government-LTTE negotiations, an equal number were not in favour. As many as 37 percent favoured an outright military solution. (National Peace Council, *What the People think about the Ethnic Conflict-Results of Opinion Polls*, Colombo, 2000). Some changes in favour of peace are discernible at the popular level. More recent opinion polls carried out show that upwards of 80 percent of those surveyed approve of the present ceasefire and believe that peace talks are the way to resolve the conflict (*Social Indicator*, 2002). However, there does not seem to be a corresponding change of attitude among the parliamentary opposition in the country. To the extent that they have the capacity to influence the general public, particularly at difficult points that inevitably must arise in the negotiation process, not all of those who support the ceasefire need necessarily remain loyal to the ideals of a negotiated settlement involving significant concessions. In fact, a sizeable proportion of those polled have also expressed their disquiet about the concessions being made on the ground. At the present moment, those who are willing to accept a political solution and compromise enjoy the upper hand. And this only demon-

strates that the hard reality of a Sinhala population that is not united in meeting Tamil negotiating positions cannot be glossed over.

Against this uncertain and contingent nature of popular support for negotiations, there has been one heartening trend. It has long been believed that at various levels the defence establishment has been a beneficiary of the ethnic conflict and the associated war. A very noticeable aspect of the present situation is that these vested interests have not been able to pose any sort of open challenge to the ongoing ceasefire agreement. The military appears, for the present, to be cooperating with the government in an arrangement that could partially undermine the expanded role it had come to acquire in national life. This would suggest that the strength of its vested interest in the continuation of the war has been overestimated. Certainly the conditions of war have permitted rent-seeking behaviour at all levels of the military, such as at checkpoints

where an unofficial tax can be extracted from traders and civilians. Massive military procurements have led to allegations of the role of commissions in determining the type and quantum of such purchases. The potential for economically profiting from the war will be affected by a return to normalcy. Yet, the military has been cooperating with the new government. It would appear that it is unable to resist the political will and determination on the part of the government to engage in non-violent conflict resolution.

But if the military's conduct so far has been a positive factor, there remain other problems, particularly on the other side of the battlefield.

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**Because such conflicts are almost entirely absorbed in a contested history of ethnic rights and wrongs, evolving census figures are not particularly relevant to the war. But they could become extremely important in peace.**

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From its inception the LTTE has had an ideological commitment to an independent state of Tamil Eelam. As the organisation's letterhead unequivocally asserts, "The thirst of the Tigers is Tamil Eelam". Motivated by this vision of independence, several thousand Tamil youths have joined the LTTE cadre and have died in combat or as suicide bombers participating in assassination attempts. Every LTTE cadre has a cyanide capsule around his or her neck, which he or she is expected to swallow if captured. The LTTE has killed the leadership of every other Tamil political party, including other guerilla groups, and many leading members of the Sri Lankan government. For such an autocratic, ruthless and committed organisation to join the democratic mainstream within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, in which there is a Sinhala majority, and be subjected to the checks and balances of democracy is difficult to envisage at this time.

The LTTE has had only one leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, who has achieved cult status within the or-

ganisation and is believed by many to be a virtual superman. Since its inception in the early 1970s, the LTTE has been a highly centralised and militarised organisation without an effective political wing. There are fears about the capacity of the LTTE to demobilise itself and of the difficulties that its cadres are likely to encounter in adjusting to a non-military lifestyle in conformity with democratic practices. At present, due to the Norwegian-facilitated peace process, an LTTE political wing appears to be emerging, but unlike the Sinn Fein-IRA arrangement in Northern Ireland, the LTTE's political wing is completely under the domination of the military leadership, and its undisputed leader is Velupillai Prabhakaran. Further, the LTTE leader has an Indian arrest warrant against him due to the Indian judiciary's ruling that his organisation was responsible for the assassination of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. These circumstances will make it more difficult for the LTTE to enter the mainstream of civil and political life.

### No knockout

Despite such daunting obstacles, the two parties to the negotiations have gone ahead with the peace agenda, establishing new precedents and introducing new principles of conflict resolution compared to what the island has witnessed in the past. The current government's strategy is a complete shift from that of the previous government's stance, which was to confront the LTTE at every level. The Wickremesinghe administration's strategy appears to be based on an assessment of the Chandrika Kumaratunga government's failure to make any headway through confrontation. After the collapse of the peace talks with the LTTE at the very beginning of its term of office in April 1995, Kumaratunga declared a full scale war for peace. The two-pronged military and political strategy was intended to weaken and sideline the LTTE. But both types of confrontation failed, as the military and political stalemate continued, broken by occasional advances and reverses, even as the government's financial position reached critical levels.

Initially, the retaking of Jaffna by the Sri Lanka Army through Operation Riviresa in November 1995 seemed to indicate that the military strategy of fullscale confrontation would succeed. But thereafter poorly executed military campaigns, such as the two-and-a-half-year Operation Jayasikuru to retake the A9 main road to Jaffna, failed at very high cost. Instead of being militarily weakened, the LTTE emerged militarily energised from these major confrontations. The former government's political initiative against the LTTE in the form of the devolution package, which offered much hope in its initial manifestation of August 1995, could also not be sustained. The government had to confront continuous political opposition to its devolution package, even incurring the wrath of religious prelates. Ultimately, the government's bid to transmute the dev-

olution package into constitutional law proved unsuccessful. In a replay of the partisan politics that have dogged all political efforts down the decades to end the ethnic conflict through negotiations, the opposition led by Ranil Wickremesinghe simply refused to cooperate.

The pattern reversed when Wickremesinghe assumed prime ministerial office, with the difference that his government has gone further down the road of negotiations and concessions than all previous governments. It would appear that his government has absorbed two important lessons from the failure of the former government's methods. The first is that high profile head-on confrontation will not bring a solution to the ethnic conflict. There is not much going for this strategy since the LTTE thrives on such confrontation. The rebel group is astute enough to ensure that the costs of any confrontational situation are piled onto the Tamil civilian population, thereby reinforcing in them the already deep-seated alienation from the Sri Lankan government, which is made to appear to be the source of their problems. The government has now evolved new methods of political and conflict management. Thus, the government has decided that political and structural reforms might have to be ushered in *de facto* rather than *de jure*, to be acquiesced in by the general population with whom as little information as possible is shared. The alternative of explaining everything in detail to the people in order to get them to vote in favour of the settlement is likely to be muddied in too much controversy. There is deep-rooted resistance in the Sinhala community to fundamental constitutional reform that would lead to power-sharing across the ethnic and regional lines.

The second lesson evidently learnt by the Wickremesinghe government is that all outstanding problems cannot be resolved in one go, but require a stage by stage approach. The two-pronged approach of the former government aimed at knock-out victories, such as the military reconquest of Jaffna, and the devolution package aimed at winning over the Tamil constituency. But even when the government made limited military advances, the LTTE's resilience ensured that the government could not convert its military advances, as in Jaffna, into comprehensive victory. It is likely that even if the devolution package had been passed with the bipartisan support of the opposition, its implementation would have been impossible due to LTTE resistance. The successful introduction, let alone implementation of the political package, required as a precondition the military defeat of the organisation. Having witnessed, and contributed to, the failure of the former government's confrontational strategy, the new government appears to have opted for a non-confrontational strategy for the time being at least.

### Another year of ceasefire

The inability of the Sri Lankan state to wrest back control over considerable areas of the country over the past 15



years is a key feature of the current situation. A viable strategy for the government would be to accept the situation of dual military power, so long as there is no major fighting between the two armies. However, recognising the fact that the LTTE is unlikely to be content with having its political power restricted to the areas currently under its direct military control, the organisation will have to be given a greater scope for such power in northeast areas under government control as well.

It is likely that both the government and the LTTE will see this arrangement as one that can be extended indefinitely. In such a situation, major military contests between the two sides will come to an end. With the onset of peace there is likely to be enhanced economic growth and activity leading to incremental political changes that introduce more democratic practices as business prospers. But such an arrangement, however pragmatic it might seem at present, raises its own set of problems. One question is whether the LTTE will be satisfied with ruling the northeast by proxy. The other is the uncertainty about how long the Sri Lankan government will wish to continue a dispensation in which it effectively cedes sovereignty over a part of its territory.

The alternative course of straightforward political negotiations between the government and LTTE leading to a new constitutional order and permanent political settlement is superficially more attractive, but is unlikely to be feasible for some key reasons. The first is the dim likelihood of the government being able to obtain the unified support of the opposition for this purpose. The Sri Lankan constitution requires a parliamentary majority of two-thirds for any constitutional amendment to be passed. This must then be followed by a referendum in which the people have to give their consent to changes in any entrenched constitutional provision.

Changes in the political structure that satisfy the LTTE and Tamil aspirations will undoubtedly require the abrogation of Article 2 of the constitution, which specifies that the state shall be unitary. This automatically implies that, constitutionally at least, far-reaching devolution of powers is not possible so long as this provision is in existence. Article 2, being an entrenched provision, requires mandatory popular ratification through a referendum for it to be removed. However, the unvarying pattern of the past is that the political parties in opposition do not lend their support to the parties in government when it comes to addressing the ethnic conflict. Instead, they use the platform of anticipated political reform to oppose the government on the grounds that the country's unity is being endangered.

For its part, the LTTE at present appears to be satisfied with the government's willingness not to push it

too soon into discussing the political issues and appears to be cooperating with the government. However, the danger exists of the government permitting the ceasefire to continue indefinitely without addressing the hard political issues that underlie the ethnic conflict. The government must be prepared to acknowledge these hard issues and make a commitment that it is prepared to deal with them after a stable ceasefire has been reached. Clearly, what is appropriate at this time is not a full-fledged negotiation on political issues. The time is still premature for such a political solution. What the LTTE wants, and will ask for, at this time is too much for the government to concede. These would include an autonomous arrangement that includes the Thimphu principles of Tamil nationhood, self-determination and homelands. Likewise, what the government will want of the LTTE is too much for the LTTE to concede at this time, particularly the decommissioning of arms.

While the gap between the government and the LTTE on the political issues is too wide to be bridged in the immediate time frame, there is a likelihood that a successful ceasefire that lasts a further year, and is accompanied by rapid economic growth, would serve as a confidence-building measure. It could make the gap between the government's position and that of the LTTE more bridgeable in the years ahead. The prospect of resolving the hard political issues by negotiating a durable and just political solution could also become the motivation to maintain the ceasefire.

The building blocks of a negotiated solution would be certain non-negotiables of the two sides. On the government side, it would be the unity and territorial integrity of the country. On the LTTE side, it would be the Thimphu principles, which lay claim to the Tamils being a nation, with a homeland and the right of self-determination. The LTTE would also wish to keep its arms for the foreseeable future. The constitutional and political arrangements suggested by these determinants would be a variant of federalism and confederalism. Asymmetric federalism, which provides the Tamil-dominated region more powers than are given to other regions of the country, was suggested by Ranil Wickremesinghe when he was leader of the opposition. It is likely that the devolution of powers to the Tamil-dominated region would be more substantial in areas that have been contested ones. These include education, land, industry and security. Provision will also have to be made for the protection of the rights of the Tamil-speaking Muslim minority and Sinhala in the north and east that will come under Tamil-majority rule. Further, given the ethnic mix outside of the north-east, and the large numbers of Tamils and Muslims outside of the north and east, mechanisms to ensure power-sharing at the centre and the rights of ethnic minorities

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**The pattern is that the political parties in opposition do not lend their support to the parties in government when it comes to the ethnic conflict**

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countrywide would also need to be evolved and put in place.

Where questions of political power and constitutional reform are concerned, there is likely to be a high degree of divergence and dispute regarding the way forward to a mutually acceptable solution. There will undoubtedly be differences between the government, the opposition and the LTTE. These differences pertaining to issues of governance will be reflected among the people at large. A more democratic and consultative type of decision-making will be required at this later stage than the new government currently appears to be contemplating. Civil society organisations need to be preparing the people for the restructuring of the polity in the longer term. The international community will have to play an important and effective role. The past experience with the LTTE has been one of disengagement once discussions reach substantive issues. This is on account of the wide gap between the LTTE demands and what Sri Lankan governments have hitherto been prepared to offer. The success of the peace talks will depend largely on international pressure to keep the government and the LTTE at the negotiating table, and compel them towards compromise.

The breakthrough in Oslo in November 2002 was in keeping with the record set by the government and the LTTE following the general election of December 2001. The statement issued by the Norwegian facilitators at the close of the third session of peace talks in Oslo said,

Responding to a proposal by the leadership of the LTTE, the parties agreed to explore a solution founded on the principle of internal self-determination in areas of historical habitation of the Tamil-speaking people based on a federal structure within a united Sri Lanka. The parties acknowledged that the solution has to be acceptable to all communities.

Just as the lifting of the security barriers in Colombo in February caught most people by surprise, so did the latest announcement regarding the acceptability of a federal model of government by the two parties. Until that announcement the LTTE had never categorically stated what type of concrete political solution it would be prepared to accept.

### **Same side of the table**

For the past several years, the LTTE had been saying it was prepared to accept a viable alternative to Tamil Eelam. However, the precise nature of the alternative was left unstated. The furthest it would go was to say that this viable alternative should be in accordance with the principles worked out jointly by all Tamil parties

participating at the Thimphu peace talks in 1985. Since the relevant principles pertained to nationhood, self-determination and traditional homelands, successive governments and Sinhala nationalists in general construed it to mean nothing short of independence. However, in the context of the mutual inability of the government and the LTTE to militarily defeat each other in the territory demarcated as the traditional homeland, some analysts believed that the LTTE would settle for nothing less than confederation. In broad terms, a confederation is a political system in which two or more separate states, with their own prime ministers, parliaments and armies, are loosely tied to each other for specific purposes. The Commonwealth of Independent States, which was formed in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, would be one example.

During the years of war, sections of Tamil opinion held fast to the confederal model. This may have included the LTTE as well, to the extent that those who were fighting a war could think in terms of constitutional concepts. But inasmuch as the present peace process has opened the closed roads of the north and east, so has it opened the Tamil nationalist movement to the mainstream currents of international thinking on governance in multi-ethnic societies. It is likely that in the engagement and dialogue taking place due to the peace process, the reality of federalism as the only viable alternative made its presence felt. However, the difficulties likely to be faced by the LTTE leadership in accepting a federal

model need to be appreciated. After all, federalism was the slogan of half a century ago. In a sense, the acceptance of a federal model is to go back in order to go forward to the future. Sections of Tamil nationalist opinion residing abroad and in Colombo, away from the battlegrounds of the northeast, may prefer a harder bargaining position. This is in addition to the fact the LTTE military cadre, inculcated with a deep yearning for an independent state of Tamil Eelam, will have to reorient themselves to accept the lesser objective of federalism.

In such circumstances, it is possible that the LTTE negotiators will be charged with not bargaining hard enough in much the same way that the government negotiators are being criticised by sections of the political opposition. In effect, both sides may end up being accused, by their respective constituencies, of conceding too much. The answer to the charge is that the two sides are not negotiating in a spirit of bargaining. Those who pride themselves on being hard bargainers are often too insensitive to realise that their so-called success is at the cost of long-term relationship building. They might get themselves a good bargain on one occasion, but the relationship is unlikely to survive. Usually hard

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## **The peace process has exposed the Tamil nationalist movement to the mainstream currents of international thinking on governance in multi-ethnic societies**

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bargaining is most effective in a one-off negotiation, such as when bargaining on the street with a pavement hawker. However, when it comes to long-term reiterative relationships, those who engage in hard bargaining are likely to fail. Sustaining durable relationships requires a different type of negotiations in which the interests of each side are met in a fair and reasonable manner. It seems that the government and the LTTE negotiators have engaged in such interest-based negotiations with one another. They have not tried to defeat each other at the negotiating table, but have instead sought to engage in joint problem solving. In short, they appear to have sat together on the same side of the table to solve a common problem that was ruining the country and its entire people.

Federalism is a standard constitutional system that exists in many countries of the world. It is particularly effective in permitting power sharing between ethnic communities in multi-ethnic societies. Federalism permits national minorities who are regional majorities to enjoy the right of self-determination and thereby wield political power at the regional level. But 50 years ago, when the Tamil-dominated Federal Party launched its campaign for a federal state in the north and east of Sri Lanka, Sinhala nationalists opposed it as a stepping stone to a separate state.

Federalism was so bitterly opposed by Sinhala nationalists that it became a pejorative term in mainstream politics. But after two decades of war, the reality of virtual separation has dawned upon many people. Federalism has now become a stepping stone to reuniting a divided country and opening up the possibility of bringing long-term peace to all. Shortly before the Oslo peace talks in October 2002, the Presidential Secretariat issued a statement in which President Chandrika Kumaratunga said that "the PA was the only political party to spell out its devolution of power proposal as a draft constitution in 1997 and still upheld the devolution of power along a federalist or Indian model within a united Sri Lanka". (*Daily Mirror*, 30 October 2002). If this statement is to be taken at face value, it points to a welcome departure from the past, since the three major political formations connected with the Sri Lankan conflict are all agreed on the issue. What is more important, the term 'federalism' will have lost its derogatory meaning in the heart of the Sinhala political mainstream. But if this is to be more than a fond delusion, political parties will need to set aside their personal and programmatic rivalries on this issue and find a means to collaborate to make a permanent and just peace a reality for all communities of Sri Lanka. ▽

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# Dateline Jaffna

Sri Lanka's 14 months of ceasefire have brought monumental changes in the lives of Tamils in the north and east. Challenges remain – both at the political level as well as at ground-level reality – but the foundation for a sustainable peace on the island has been laid. Some impressions of what Jaffna's people want and what the future is likely to hold.

*text and photos by Frances Bulathasinghala*

25-year-old Selva joined the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) seven years ago after her parents were shot dead in front of her eyes in Jaffna. She is taking me to an LTTE 'girls hostel' through darkness punctuated by only the feeble rays of a kerosene lamp. The hostel is located in the LTTE economic centre at Vatakatchy in the Killinochchi region in Wannu. This is territory where the LTTE has run a de facto army for 19 years.

The walk through the centre to the girls hostel is a winding journey through demolished buildings standing deathly white in the dark. On reaching the hostel, a worn building with peeling walls and a thatched roof, Selva arranges some meagre bedding on a hard wooden bed. There are three rooms in the hostel in which they sleep on mats on the floor. The beds have apparently been brought in specifically to accommodate the four female journalists, myself included, who are visiting the premises.

The war in Sri Lanka, which began in 1983, was brought to a truce at the close of 2001. Since that time, both the government and the LTTE have been preparing themselves, and 'their' people, for life on a peaceful island. When asked if she has any plans for the future if ongoing peace talks succeed, Selva laughs. "I'll be with the movement, it is good this way", she says with steel in her voice.

The LTTE's armed struggle – along with political developments on the island and the forced changes in life – have fundamentally altered many aspects of Tamil society, not the least of which being a radical transformation of many Tamil women. While upper-class Sinhala women in southern Sri Lanka were largely emancipated along Western lines during the colonial era, traditional social expectations and obligations bound female Tamils. Fighting the war, which claimed an estimated 65,000 civilian lives, female LTTE cadres were instructed to embrace androgyny and develop a stoic disposition. Undoubtedly, the inscription of women into the LTTE's fighting force has had an impact on tradi-

tional gender roles in Tamil society. There have also developed two defining ideals of womanhood – the militant mother and the armed virgin. The question now is how these transformed women, and the millions of other lives shaped by the island's strife in myriad ways, will react to and participate in a revived body politic. With the holding of the ceasefire for more than one year now, a return to 'normalcy' in the island's northern and eastern Tamil-majority areas seems to be on the horizon.

The politics around Jaffna, Sri Lanka's second largest city, and the hub of its northern peninsula of the same name, have changed impressively over the past 14 months. The cessation of hostilities from 24 December 2001, the lifting of the embargo in January 2002, the formalising of the ceasefire in February, the prime minister's visit in March and the establishment of LTTE political offices in the north and east have been the bases for the present sustained rapprochement after two decades of war.

Still, much remains to be seen. Economically, the peninsula received a sorely missed lifeline when the government reopened the A9 highway to the south. And, negotiations between the LTTE and Prime

Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's government have progressed beyond initial meetings. There is hope in the air that the ceasefire may evolve into a lasting peace, and Jaffna's people will have to reconcile their personal histories of suffering with their hopes for a better future. For the moment, however, the area is waking from its years of violence-inflicted isolation and slowly engaging with the rest of the island and the outside world.

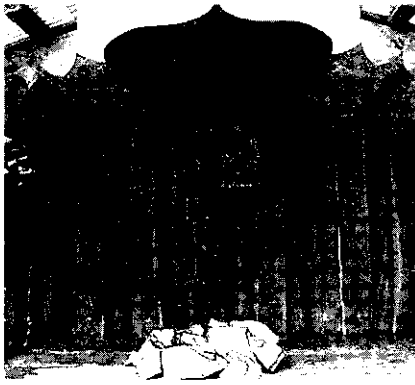
## Opening doors

Of all the changes of the last year, perhaps the most widely appreciated on the peninsula was the opening of the Jaffna-Kandy A9 highway to civilian traffic last March. It brought new opportunities for farmers in the north, hitherto burdened with tonnes of produce, too

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There is hope that 'normalcy' and 'Jaffna' will soon cease to be mutually exclusive

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Home of the LTTE: A martyr's shrine, a signboard, and a receipt.

much for the limited home market. The lack of a land link and sparse opportunity for sea transport had prevented the sale of Jaffna's produce to the south.

To Srinan, who earns his living off grapes, a lucrative crop, the peace talks have meant that he may one day earn enough money to live as comfortably as his brother in Wellawatte, a Colombo suburb where many Tamils live. "In Jaffna, I sell a kilo for 50 rupees; that is the market price here. In Colombo, I know that I could get a higher rate", he says.

Ganeshan Lingam, a 40-year-old father of three sons and resident of Manipai, Jaffna, shares Srinan's enthusiasm. Working at a grocery store, Ganeshan barely manages on his monthly wages of 1500 rupees (USD 15.5). "In the past, I always thought that my dream of sending my children to a Colombo school, to make them doctors or lawyers, would be a dream. Today, I know that there is a chance that I could do this. Peace talks mean big shots from Colombo will want to set up business here and recruit us for better salaries".

That sentiment appears to be shared by many. Commercial links are now being established at the institutional level between Colombo and Jaffna with a focus on employment-generation. Projects in agro-based industries, hotels, fisheries, information technology, education, tyre-retreading and automobile maintenance, among others, are on the drawing board. Indeed, for the first time in 20 years, there is hope that 'normalcy' and 'Jaffna' will soon cease to be mutually exclusive.

The prices of most items in Jaffna, especially of fuel – once the rarest of commodities – have come down from wartime highs, and the flow of goods to the north is now much smoother. But movement remains difficult. There are reports of travellers facing impediments to crossing any substantial distance in the north and east since the LTTE does not allow state-run buses into the territories it controls. There are also reports of the LTTE continuing to 'tax' goods coming into Jaffna, whether for commercial or personal use. This appears also to be the case with commercial fishing, which has nonetheless made a partial comeback in the last year, even with government naval patrol boats ploughing the coastal waters.

But there is little doubt that Jaffna is healing. The

government, which controls most of the peninsula, has provided access to most of it, barring 'high security zones', to LTTE cadre, provided that they enter without arms. The LTTE has approved an NGO proposal to bring southern university students north to teach the Sinhala language to Tamil youngsters, even guaranteeing the safety of the visitors, who are to be based in Jaffna for a periods of six months. The Jaffna Teaching Hospital for the first time in 10 years has incubators, a windfall born of the peace talks when, in March 2002, the US government donated three incubators, neonatal resuscitators, electronic patient monitors, a diathermy machine and an operating theatre lamp.

The LTTE is also keen on using the cessation of hostilities to develop the Wannu region. Computers and other technological items are at the top of the shopping list, which includes typewriters, generators and sewing machines. "We will begin with the purchase of around five computers, which we hope to buy with funds from the Tamil rehabilitation organisation", says Ramu Sinnappa, an ex-schoolmaster known as 'Sinnappa master' in the LTTE fraternity. According to him, the computers are for a youth institute in Killinochchi, which will have a vocational training programme.

The mood in Jaffna is that there is only one way ahead. "The failing of talks is something that we do not even dare to think. It is we who have had to live with the bomber jets over us", says S Sabarathnam, the secretary of the Thenmarachchi Welfare Association, a community development organisation financially sustained by expatriate Tamils through the Tamil Rehabilitation and Resettlement Organisation.

### Survivors

Fleeing the gunfire in Jaffna in 1995, the only possession 50-year-old Murugesu took with him was his old coal iron. Today, having restarted his laundry business in a small *cadjan* room in Yogapuram in the Malawi area of Wannu, he earns over 150 rupees on a good day. Wielding his 10-kilo iron over the clothes of those fortunate enough to have attire worth ironing in war-plagued Wannu, Murugesu narrates the story of how he and his family struggled to survive after gunfire rained down on them on 30 December 1995 when they fled Vatta-

kotte, their hometown, and took refuge in the nearest shelter – the camp for displaced people in Chavakachcheri, Thenmarachchi division.

“For one year I did not get to make any money. We survived on the charity of our friends and relations, also displaced and living with us at the Chavakachcheri school, but who had salvaged enough material possessions and finances to provide us with sporadic assistance. One year later we came to the Wannu region with the thousands of displaced people who left their own camps to make new lives for themselves in LTTE-controlled areas”.

Murugesu’s story is that of a man who had learned to survive hunger while retaining enough will and desire to live. “I managed to find 800 rupees to buy cadjan leaves to construct a makeshift laundry with extreme difficulty. Even after I constructed the place, I did not get any business for a long period, as the area was flooded with displaced people who kept arriving from refugee camps in Jaffna with barely anything other than the clothes on their bodies. Any ironing I was lucky enough to get, I had to price very low”. Murugesu says that the most notable numbers of IDPs in the Wannu region are from Mulativu, Killinochchi and Madhu. Adds Murugesu, “The entire Wannu area is a refugee camp. There is a population of just above 400,000 and all of them are categorised as internally displaced and forced to move from area to area, blowing with the winds of war”.

“Today I am just one of the few here that has been lucky enough to get back on his feet. I keep my laundry open from 7 am to 6 pm and, sometimes if there is work, I extend my hours. Thanks to the fact that most of the displaced people who have made the area their surrogate home, are now stable, I earn a sufficient amount of money. My children go to the Yogapuram Maha Vidyalaya nearby. We who have suffered the brunt of the war, have great hopes of the peace process”, says Murugesu as he puts the last piece of charcoal and coconut shell into the iron, readying himself to labour over another lot of crumpled cottons.

Also in LTTE-controlled territory is an area called Yogapuram. In a cadjan-built eight-by-eight hut, a replica of thousands of others clustered throughout the region hidden in the Wannu wilderness, 35-year-old Sivaneswari, who arrived with her family seven years ago from Jaffna, is cooking a meagre meal for her two sons and her husband, a bicycle repairman. Although the attention of an outsider is immediately caught by the extremely large gaps in the cadjan and palmyra roof of her house, to her it is obviously a way of life to have the rain pour in and the sun blaze through, having lived under such a roof for a large part of the seven years that she has been living as a refugee. Sivaneswari says she hopes for peace mainly so that her children get a chance to study beyond class seven, which is the upper limit of their present school.

For the 90 percent of Jaffna’s population displaced

from homes and eking out survival in hundreds of camps around the peninsula, the developments of the last year mean one thing – that they will be able to go back to their towns and make homes again. Some will be building anew amidst rubble. But for others, such as those whose houses in Mirusuvil the Sri Lankan military will be restituting to the owners, it will be easier for at least the shell of the structure will be intact.

### Jaffna blushes

Resettlement is among the most urgent concerns of the peace process. According to the United States Committee for Refugees, at the end of 2001, there were 800,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sri Lanka, and 144,000 Sri Lankan refugees in neighbouring India. Efforts to diffuse this crisis that only deepened as the war progressed have now gathered momentum. The emphasis given to rehabilitation in the recent talks between the government and the LTTE have encouraged the hopes of thousands of war destitute. The two parties have presented a united front at international fundraising efforts, and Japan, Sri Lanka’s biggest aid donor, has committed 35 million rupees (USD 360,000) for the joint government-LTTE secretariat at Killinochchi, formally called the Secretariat of the Sub-Committee on Immediate Humanitarian and Rehabilitation Needs in the North and East.

“Now we can sleep in peace. We do not hear the war rockets anymore. All these years no one knew the suffering that we underwent. Since the war began no government minister has come into this territory until now. Within the past two months so many ministers have visited the peninsula”, says the elated Bishop of Jaffna, Rev Thomas Saundranayagam. The reverend, highly influential in Jaffna and a well-known sympathiser of the LTTE cause, is a trusted confidante of the minister of rehabilitation and refugees, Dr Jayalath Jayawardena, the foremost peace advocate in the Ranil Wickremesinghe government. Once hounded by the People’s Alliance (PA) regime, now in opposition, for being an alleged supporter of the Tigers, Jayawardena visited LTTE areas regularly over the past 10 years. Today he enjoys the gratitude of the Tamil masses, both in the LTTE-controlled Wannu and government-controlled Jaffna, who see him as the key instrument of peace in the United National Front (UNF) government. “I am the happiest man today. Peace was my dream and today it is a reality. I was once accused, harassed and humiliated”, says Jayawardena, who returned to the country on 26 January 2003 after a tour of Europe studying federal systems, the proposed political structure on which current negotiations rest.

While Jaffna blushes with attention from the mass media and politicians, its populace sees the memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE, which has now held together longer than any previous accord, as a document of hope for a future without war. The overall opinion in



Jaffna seems to be, at least on the surface, that the LTTE is its representative. However, it is now slowly becoming discernible that almost a year after the LTTE set up its political offices in Jaffna and other areas of the north and east, many are becoming weary of its manner of controlling the Tamil populace. At present though, the five major Tamil parties in parliament, including the Tamil United Liberation Front (one of the oldest Tamil parties), back the UNF coalition and are largely disinclined to oppose the LTTE.

### Democratic deficit

The Norwegian-facilitated peace talks have received wide praise from the international community. Even in Sri Lanka, while people realise that there is a long way to go yet, the talks have been welcomed with enthusiasm in most quarters. The steps taken over the year have enforced the impression that both sides are now willing to go further on the road to peace than ever before. The LTTE gave up its demand for independence, settling instead for autonomy, and the UNF government has visibly committed itself to help the LTTE become a 'mainstream' civilian entity. The Norwegians, meanwhile, have gone out of their way to assist the LTTE – the task being to turn an organisation geared for war into one peacefully engaged in democracy.

Still, many outstanding issues persist, including the LTTE's reported continuing recruitment of children, suppression of Tamil Muslims, lack of respect for civil rights and the democratic deficit in the north and east. The Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP), in electoral alliance with the PA in the 2001 elections, has consistently asserted that it is facing LTTE-backed intimidation in the north and east. Meanwhile, the Muslim community has made some headway in moving beyond the violence unleashed against it in Jaffna in 1990. The Sri Lanka Muslim Congress leader, Rauf Hakeem, who met Vellupillai Prabhakaran last year and who has been a regular participant at the four rounds of peace talks, has appealed to Tamil Muslims to consider resettling in the north and east. The Muslim community is concerned though that one of its foremost spokespersons, Dr SHM Hasbullah, who was to have taken part in a recent meeting at Killinochchi on the resettlement issue, was prevented from doing so by the LTTE, which has allegedly also rejected a Japanese proposal that Dr Hasbullah be allowed to formulate a plan for the resettlement of Muslims.

From several quarters then, the pressure is mounting on the prime minister, Ranil Wickremesinghe, at the head of a United National Party (UNP)-led UNF gov-

ernment, to bring to book alleged ceasefire violations by the LTTE. Wickremesinghe, who entered office on 9 December 2001, is seen as the man who brought peace, but he is in an unenviable position given that the government, battling economic crisis, cannot afford to rub the rather sensitive coat of the Tigers the wrong way. The Norwegians, for their part, have invoked the wrath of Sinhala parties such as the Jana Vimukti Peramuna (JVP) for alleged overindulgence of the LTTE. The furore over the shipment of radio equipment to Wannai by the Norwegian embassy in December 2002 led to calls for the expulsion of the ambassador. There are also some Sinhala who see a de jure federal structure as an attempt at a de facto division of the state.

For its part, the UNF government views reconciliation with the LTTE as possible, and has stated that "the LTTE will have to go along with the law of the country". Wickremesinghe has attempted to buoy the peace efforts by making sure that the Sri Lankan military is

fully aware of its obligations under the ceasefire, and that it does not provoke discord by passing along adverse reports of LTTE behaviour to the media. In specific, the prime minister is reported to have cautioned members of the armed forces against drawing attention to the LTTE's recruitment of child soldiers. Apparently concerned about divided loyalties, the prime minister has also called on servicemen to resign if they cannot reconcile their com-



mitments to the government with personal support for the JVP or PA.

Just as the government in Colombo faces challenges in adjusting to the new situation, so too must Tamil leaders re-evaluate strategies and the way of life. The LTTE, for instance, will at some point have to reconcile its hybrid system of justice – a legal code blending Sri Lankan and Thesawalame Tamil law – with that of the Sri Lankan government. The LTTE legal system is interesting in its own right, given that it jettisons those parts of Thesawalame law that it sees as oppressive of women or promoting the caste system, and blended in are modifications of Sri Lankan law. Of note, the LTTE has made sex outside marriage illegal.

The 'court of Thamileelam', as the hall of justice at Killinochchi is called, is announced by the fang-bared Tiger, the omnipresent emblem on all prominent buildings in LTTE-controlled areas. The Wannai-based judicial arm of the LTTE is founded on a firm belief in discipline and order. "It is through capital punishment that we maintain such discipline", the LTTE administrative head of the Wannai region, V Puvanhan, once declared in a press interview. In the Wannai, it is well known that the

law does not spare the guilty, even those in high positions, especially in the crime of rape. The LTTE says its laws, taught at the LTTE 'law college' in Malawi, are in accordance with international humanitarian standards. Interestingly, none of its 150 lawyers charge clients – they draw a monthly salary of 3000 rupees from the LTTE.

Reconciling the judicial systems of the LTTE and that of the rest of Sri Lanka will be tricky. "The aspect of the judiciary is the most intricate and the most important with relation to the working out of modalities for political responsibility to be thrust upon the LTTE through the interim administration. This responsibility will clearly have to begin with the LTTE accepting the constitution of the government", says Mr Wicknarajah, the former chief justice of Jaffna. He adds that integration of the legal systems will have to follow the initial rounds of peace talks and eventually conform to a model protecting Sri Lanka's territorial integrity.

The complexities regarding the legal system, to be

worked out for the new dispensation, are only an example of the many challenges that will have to be negotiated on a one-on-one basis. These challenges faced by the government in Colombo and the LTTE's leadership are not insurmountable. But neither is sustained peace a guarantee. Rather, leaders on both sides – as well as their respective constituencies – will have to adapt to the evolving situation as necessary and steer it in a mutually beneficial direction.

"The MoU is not peace. One year has passed and the cessation of hostilities has lasted. Yet there are so many things to be discussed. The hope that we have, that both parties will not resort to war, rests on the fact that the international community has become strongly involved in the peace process", says Saroja Sivachandran, a human rights activist providing legal aid to women through her organisation – the Centre for Women and Development in Jaffna. While the debate with regard to the process rages on, Jaffna hopes that this reconciliation will be final. ▽

# The pathology of military democracy

## Manufacturing a government in Sindh

The recent formation of a government in Sindh involved hectic manipulations by Islamabad and low connivance at the provincial level. Out of the ensuing muddle of volatile and unstable alliances emerged a 31-year-old chief minister with little clout, a 38-year-old governor who just returned to Pakistan after a decade-long absence, and a political house of cards that could collapse at any moment.

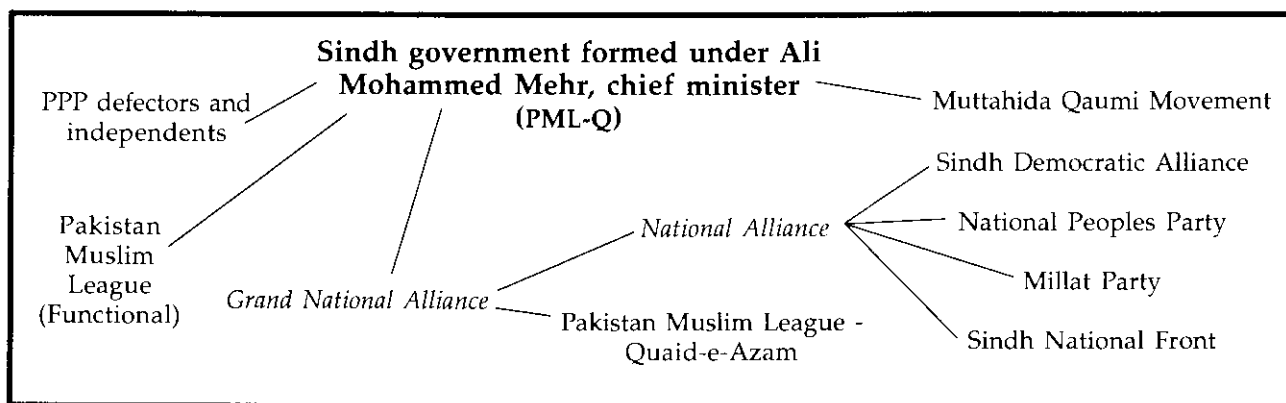
by *Hasan Mansoor*

President General Pervez Musharraf's military-led regime had to go to extraordinary lengths before and after the 10 October 2002 elections to place Sindh under its control. With the help of top leaders from the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid-e-Azam) (PML-Q) in Islamabad, including Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali and senior intelligence officials, the difficulties were surmounted and a provincial set-up extremely favourable to Musharraf eventually emerged. Even after taking 67 of the provincial assembly's 168 seats, the Pakistan People's Party (Parliamentarians) (PPP-P), the single largest group in the house, had to be content with sitting on the opposition benches in the company of the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal, an alliance of six religious parties.

Well before the general elections, the military regime had initiated the process of forming client parties and

coalitions in Sindh. Some of these are the provincial offspring of national parties that were born with military assistance. Others were manufactured locally by Islamabad's factotums and their underlings. The PML-Q is an instance of the former species. The PML-Q, otherwise known as the 'king's party', emerged in the wake of deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's exile to Saudi Arabia in 2000 through a deal that is yet to be made public. The majority of PML (Nawaz) politicians left the party and formed the Quaid-e-Azam league, which openly supported the bloodless military coup of General Musharraf and received political largesse in return. This national symbiosis naturally extends to the provinces as well and therefore Sindh has its own branch of the king's party.

Since the PML(Q) could not on its own deliver Sindh to the military regime, special arrangements had to be



made at the provincial level. As a first step, Islamabad helped to orchestrate the rise of political parties to counter the influence of the Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan People's Party, (whose parliamentary wing is called Pakistan People's Party - Parliamentarians) in its stronghold. The most significant of these creations was the Sindh Democratic Alliance (SDA). Bureaucrat-turned-politician Imtiaz Shaikh formed the SDA in mid-2001 after resigning from a senior government post. In launching the party, he secured the support of a clique of feudal lords and bureaucrats on a common anti-PPP stance. The group initially called itself an alliance of politicians and included the National People's Party (NPP) led by Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, a feudal baron and veteran politician. Imtiaz Shaikh, who in the early 1990s was the right-hand man of the late chief minister, Jam Sadiq Ali, whose tenure was characterised by political victimisation and fiscal misappropriation, undertook a massive propaganda campaign to prepare the ground for transforming this loose alliance into a political party. Irfanullah Marwat – the son-in-law of former president Ghulam Ishaq Khan, an advisor to the Jam Sadiq government, and an accused in the alleged rape of two PPP workers – also joined the SDA. Ironically, one of the two PPP workers who accused Marwat of rape, Raheela Tiwana, subsequently shifted political allegiance and eventually joined the SDA before going on to gain a ministerial post in the provincial government. Such are the dynamics of military-inspired party formation in Sindh.

The SDA, which had been consolidating its base for more than a year prior to the October election, was recognised as a political party only three months before the general elections. Among other reasons, this ensured that the party was held on a tight leash through the period that it was taking shape. In the meantime, the SDA and five 'mini' political parties – the NPP, the Millat Party (led by former president, Farooq Leghari, who had dismissed Benazir Bhutto's government in November 1996), the Sindh National Front (led by Bhut-

to's estranged uncle, Mumtaz Bhutto), the Balochistan National Movement (BNM) and Pakistan Awami Tehrik of Allama Tahirul Qadri – came together to contest the elections under the banner of the National Alliance (NA). (The BNM and the Pakistan Awami Tehrik subsequently broke away and contested the elections separately.) NPP president Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi, despite being in London after practically retiring from politics, became its chairman. Former cricketer, Imran Khan – now heading his own party, the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf – had been a vocal supporter of General Musharraf. Though he then went on to part ways with Musharraf over the President-General's dubious 30 April referendum, he was nevertheless thought to be a part of the NA.

Given that it was made up of small parties with no grassroots networks to speak of, Islamabad felt that the NA would not be strong enough on its own to serve the centre's agenda. Hence, the NA was expanded into the Grand National Alliance (GNA) with the inclusion

of the PML-Q. The difference between the two alliances is that the NA was an electoral alliance like the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), but the GNA is a looser arrangement in which the PML-Q could still contest elections on its own and later draw in partners on its own conditions.

Even after this consolidation Sindh still remained a riddle, since without the support of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), a party of the Urdu-speakers dominant in Sindh's urban centres, it would be difficult to gain electoral control of the province. The military regime had already established a working relationship with the London-based, self-exiled MQM leader, Altaf Hussain, who had supported Musharraf during the April referendum, though many MQM cadre abstained from the voting after two former MQM parliamentarians, Nishat Mallick and Mustapha Kamal Rizvi, were murdered in Karachi. The final element of the military's electoral strategy was to clinch the support of the MQM. Hussain was promised the lion's share in a future provincial set-up, including a Sindhi governor

**The Sindh campaign was generally agreed to be among the most unimpressive in the history of elections in Pakistan**

## Sindh's new government

Ishratul Ibad, governor (MQM)  
Ali Mohammed Mehr, chief minister (PML-Q)

### Ministers

Syed Sardar Ahmad (MQM)  
Shoaib Bokhari (MQM)  
Raouf Siddiqui (MQM)  
Muhammad Adil Shaikh (MQM)  
Yaqub Ilyas Maseeh (MQM)  
Shabbir Ahmad Qaimkhani (MQM)  
Muhammad Hussain (MQM)  
Altaf Unnar (PML-Q)  
Saeeda Malik (PML-Q)  
Syed Sadruddin Shah Rashdi (PML-Q)  
Chaudhry Iftikhar Malik (PML-Q)  
Arbab Rahim (NA)  
Irfan Marwat (NA)  
Arif Mustafa Jatoti (NA)  
Manzoor Panhwar (PPP-Patriot)

### Advisors

Aftab Ahmad Shaikh (MQM)  
Aijaz Shah Shirazi (PML-Q)

of his choice. The MQM – tired of struggling with its own militant cadre for many years – decided not to miss the train. With this, Islamabad's strategy fell into place.

### Thwarting the PPP

In late June 2002, four SDA leaders were inducted into the provincial cabinet under former governor, Mohammadman Soomro. The SDA had achieved an almost ideal atmosphere in which to contest the 10 October general elections – four of its leaders held posts in the provincial cabinet and KB Rind, brother of leading SDA figure Asghar Rind, had been appointed chief secretary of Sindh. "The chief secretary's appointment and large scale transfers and postings of bureaucrats in various government departments were a part of the regime's game plan to provide a congenial atmosphere to help the newly-surfaced party give a tough time to the PPP", explains a senior bureaucrat. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the activities of the SDA ministers soon after assuming office. They ensured the transfer of many District Coordination Officers (DCOs) and other senior officials, particularly from places where PPP leaders were mayors. A virtual war started between the minister and the *nazims* (mayors) that lasted until the elections.

The military government introduced a controversial Legal Framework Order (LFO) and Benazir Bhutto-specific election laws that prevented her from contesting elections. Interestingly, Maulana Azam Tariq of the banned Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, despite facing more serious charges and several convictions, was allowed

to contest election from inside prison. Further, the MQM and pro-government parties were allowed to conduct election rallies, while the PPP was forbidden from holding large public meetings. The campaign was generally agreed to be among the most unimpressive in Pakistan's electoral history. During the polling, many opposition parties' polling agents were ejected from polling stations. In Sindh's Khairpur and Thatta districts, there were some polling stations where turnout exceeded the total number of registered voters. Independent newspapers published photographs showing workers from pro-government parties and election staff stuffing ballot boxes with fake votes.

In Karachi, the MMA shocked the MQM in many constituencies in the early phase of polling with impressive turnouts. But the MQM approached the powers-that-be and got polling times extended by three to four hours and 'saved' most of its seats. "We had swept Karachi in the night, but when we woke up next day we saw that the losers had defeated us overnight", Jamaat-e-Islami secretary general Syed Munawwar Hasan said. This pattern of ad hoc extension of deadlines was to be repeated later during the period that the government was being formed.

Election results put the PPP out in front with 67 seats in the provincial house. The MQM bagged 41, the PML-Q 15, the National Alliance 14, the PML (Functional or Pagaro faction) 13, the MMA 12, the Mohajir Qaumi Movement 1, while independents garnered five seats. With 10 seats, the relative strength of the MMA has increased, marking the first time a religious party has been represented in the provincial house since 1985. The PML(F) or Functional Muslim League (FML), led by Pir Pagaro, spiritual leader of Hurs, was able to build on its base in Sanghar and Khairpur districts to finish near the middle of the pack.

In the wake of the 10 October elections, no party, including the PPP(P), was in a position to form a government on its own. However, the PPP(P) had almost cobbled together a working coalition on the eve of the provincial assembly's scheduled opening on 28 November. Pir Pagaro rejected the NA's candidate and early front-runner for chief minister, Arbab Ghulam Rahim, and announced his support for the PPP on 27 November. That same day, the MMA's leadership also intimated its support for a PPP-led government. However, also on 27 November, Arbab Rahim, after receiving a call from Islamabad, held a press conference at his residence and "requested" the president to postpone the opening session indefinitely because there was a "deadlock" in Sindh. Only an hour after that 'request' the session was postponed for an indefinite period. "This was the cruelest example of how to deprive people of their mandate", lamented PPP Sindh president Nisar Khuhro.

### The 'rescue mission' arrives

Perhaps in an attempt to break the 'deadlock', the pres-



ident called for the Sindh Assembly to open on 12 December. At that time, a dozen aspirants drawn from the PPP, the NA, the PML(Q), the FML and the MQM were in the running to become chief minister. At first, the GNA – the partnership between the PML-Q and the NA – nominated Arbab Rahim, but Ghous Bux Mehr and Liaquat Jatoi of the PML-Q, who had been appointed as federal ministers, rejected Arbab's nomination by the GNA. Ghous preferred Ali Mohammad Mehr, the eventual winner, while Liaquat supported his own younger brother, Sadaqat Jatoi. Former president Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi then secured NA backing for the nomination of his son, Arif Jatoi, as an alternative to Arbab. However, Arbab's supporters within the SDA and PML-Q rejected all three proposed replacement candidates and wanted either Nadir Akmal Khan Leghari of the Millat Party or Ali Bux (alias Pappu Shah) of the PML-Q as the candidate if Arbab was dropped. Pir Pagaro proposed Muzaffar Hussain Shah as his candidate and rejected Arbab, though he indicated he would consider withdrawing Shah if the PML(F) formed a government with the PPP(P). The MQM, in turn, proposed to the GNA that its nominee, Syed Sardar Ahmed, a former bureaucrat, be fielded as joint candidate for the top slot. Pir Pagaro agreed but other possible coalition partners refused.

Dozens of meetings among various political parties to sort out the alliances failed to produce an agreement, and Islamabad stepped in to settle arrangements. The 'rescue mission' started with the arrival of PML(Q) leader, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, and the principal secretary to President Musharraf, Tariq Aziz, on 10 December in Karachi. They contacted the MQM leadership and Pir Pagaro, PML(F) leader. Shujaat Hussain told journalists after his arrival that he had come "to perform his party obligations". His intervention came at the moment when the GNA local leadership had failed to convince the MQM to withdraw its demand for the chief minister's post. The situation was serious for the PML(Q) leadership because Pagaro, whose party holds 13 seats in the provincial assembly, had supported the MQM candidate as well.

Political circles buzzed with gossip of Tariq Aziz's meetings with Pagaro and the MQM. The MQM leadership stated several times that it had supported the Jamali government in Islamabad on assurances from General Musharraf that some MQM demands, in particular allowing the opening of party offices in the so-called 'no-go' areas (localities of Karachi's eastern and central districts dominated by the MQM's breakaway militant faction, known as the Mohajir Qaumi Movement or Haqiqi). After a two-hour-long meeting, Shujaat Hussain got the MQM to withdraw its candidate from the list of chief ministerial aspirants and promised to give a governor of its choice in the province. Accordingly, Ishratul Ibad, proclaimed offender with a reward of three million rupees on his head, was offered the governorship, overruling the objections of the intelligence agencies.



Governor Ishratul Ibad, Chief Minister Ali Mohammed Mehr

### A youthful line-up

**SINDH IS** now headed by a 38-year-old MQM governor, Ishratul Ibad, and a 31-year-old PML-Q chief minister, Ali Mohammed Mehr. Ibad was in self-exile for over a decade after being driven out in an anti-militant campaign launched on 19 June 1992. Like MQM party chief Altaf Hussain, Ibad faced dozens of charges for serious crimes that the state withdrew before he returned the country and took oath as its youngest governor on 27 December. Interestingly, a case of extortion against him was still in court after he became the governor. The state withdrew it after a court served him summons. (Prosecutors say the government was not aware of the case.) He has pledged to abide by the MQM agenda of securing relief for suspected militants.

Ali Mohammed Mehr, Sindh's youthful new chief minister, comes from a well-established Sindh political family. Mehr's relatives include the late Ghulam Mohammed Mehr, who earned a reputation for switching loyalties to curry favour with Ayub Khan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Zia-ul-Haq and Nawaz Sharif, and the late Sardar Ghulam Mohammed Mehr, a tribal chief and powerful political figure. The Mehrs are reported to be extremely wealthy, and Ali is said to have flirted with the idea of an alliance with the PPP(P) just days before the October election. Despite his youth, Ali has a decade of political experience, having been elected on a PPP ticket in 1993 to the national assembly and re-elected four years later.

But the MQM's withdrawal from the fray further highlighted differences within the GNA, and Arbab Ghulam Rahim was anxious to exploit them and come out on top. He was considered a close friend of Tariq Aziz and political circles speculated the Aziz might offer his support to an Arbab candidacy. The struggle took on a new dimension on 11 December with the arrival in Karachi of Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali. Despite persistently denying that he was involved in

the province's political negotiations, he openly assisted his party leader and the president's top aide to form a dispensation in Sindh favourable to Islamabad. Jamali held a meeting with Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain at the state guesthouse on the day of his arrival, just 24 hours before the first assembly session was set to begin. NA leader Ghulam Mustafa Jatoi made contact with the PPP(P) the same day hoping to advance his son's candidature.

A meeting among GNA parties and the PML(F) lasted until the early hours of 12 December and produced a seemingly miraculous outcome. During the meeting, all aspirants were successfully 'tamed' and 31-year-old Ali Mohammad Mehr of the PML(Q) emerged as the consensus candidate. After settling that, the rescue team, now assisted by two senior officials of the country's premier intelligence agency, the ISI, turned its attention to the PPP(P). The first parliamentarian in this party of Parliamentarians who "decided according to his conscience" to strengthen the pro-regime PML(Q) setup in Sindh was Razzaq Mehr, who announced his support on 12 December. The next day, a MMA female member, Sakina Bano, and the PPP(P)'s Manzoor Panhwar, Mehbub Bijarani and Naseer Khoso defected to the PML(Q) after a meeting with the federal interior minister, Faisal Saleh Hayat, himself a well-known defector from the PPP. The MMA leadership said Sakina Bano defected because her husband, an engineer in the Pakistan Telecommunication Company, had been threatened. The MMA's Abid Sunderani and the PPP(P)'s Manzoor Shah were the final targets of Islamabad's political fabricators. With that settled, the finishing touch was administered with the offer of 12 portfolios to the MQM, including that of home, which is typically held by the chief minister. Additionally, the MQM received assurances that one of its ministers would be the senior minister, and the departments of finance, excise and taxation, local government, industries and planning and development were promised to the MQM.

## The distribution of power

Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Tariq Aziz and Jamali had also developed a formula, obviously without consulting the future chief minister, in which the NA would get three ministerial posts and one advisor's post, the PML(F) would take two ministerial posts, and the PML(Q) would keep four ministerial and one advisory posts. Under the plan, the PML(F) and the NA were given the posts of speaker and deputy speaker, respectively. After the plan was finalised, the NA not only refrained from nominating a candidate for the deputy speaker's post but also did not inform the treasury benches of this until the deadline for the filing of nominations. Since the ruling alliance was not in a position to field a candidate at that late stage, the way was clear for the joint nominee of the PPP(P) and MMA to capture

the post unopposed. It was at this stage that old tricks were pulled out of the bag. The governor intervened on the request of the treasury benches and extended the deadline for filing nominations, thereby enabling an SDA member, Raheela Tiwana, to occupy the post. For the Patriots, the formal self-designation of defectors from the PPP(P), the deal they struck did not turn out to be as lucrative as it had been in Islamabad when Jamali was cobbling together a ruling coalition at the national level. They were promised three departments. So far only one of the three has been awarded. For the moment, they will have to be content with administering the livestock portfolio.

During the entire process of putting a government together, the role of the chief minister, Mehr, appears to have been minimal. "Consulting the chief minister on the formation of that Sindh cabinet is not an issue", said a close aide of Shujaat Hussain in Karachi. He added, "The formula according to which parties have been promised portfolios had already been decided at a meeting held before the inaugural session of the Sindh Assembly". With or without the chief minister's influence, differences of opinion on the formula continued

to make headlines throughout December. The NA demanded the finance department but the MQM refused to hand it over. The NA's demand for the revenue department also proved to be futile, as it had been promised to the PML(Q)'s parliamentary leader, Altaf Unnar, in accordance with the formula.

Frustrated, the NA requested the speaker to allocate separate seat arrangements for it

in the provincial assembly and threatened to quit the coalition. Against that backdrop, Musharraf, who was in the provincial capital at the time, held meetings with the governor and the chief minister. On the following day, 2 January, the provincial information department received notice at 2.30 pm that the provincial cabinet would be sworn in after one hour. After the swearing-in ceremony, the chief minister did not hesitate to say that President Musharraf had "guided" him and his party to form and run the government. But, during the introductory meeting of the ministers with the governor and the chief minister, held at the governor's house, NA leaders quickly demonstrated their displeasure with the distribution of portfolios. They demanded control of the education and revenue departments, threatening to withdraw support to the government if their claims were not met. At several NA parliamentary meetings, discussions centred on whether to follow through on the threat and join the opposition PPP and MMA ranks.

As a result, on 3 January, Tariq Aziz again arrived from Islamabad, held meetings with all the coalition partners at the chief minister's house and decided to adjust the formula. The education department, which the SDA, as a part of the NA, had wanted entrusted to its president, Imtiaz Shaikh, was given to the SDA's

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**"The MQM  
is virtually  
running the  
government"**

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Irfanullah Marwat. By that point, Marwat and the rest of the SDA party leadership had virtually parted ways. Shaikh became an advisor without a portfolio while the revenue department was given to the PML(Q)'s Altaf Unnar. During these negotiations, the chief minister was present in meetings but apparently played no role in decision-making. "He [Mehr] said to me that he was bound to follow what his party leadership and top people in Islamabad had devised in a formula before the formation of his government", said a PML(Q) leader speaking on the condition of anonymity.

### Winners and losers

Most analysts agree that the MQM, as a party, and Irfanullah Marwat, as an individual, played the government-formation game well. But many believe that the nerve-shattering, prolonged power game in Sindh is not over yet. Despite being the single largest party in the provincial assembly, the PPP has definitely lost out by failing to make it to power. Inside the multi-party coalition, the NA – and the SDA, in particular – consider themselves to have fallen short. In the elections, SDA president Imtiaz Shaikh, who was being projected as the frontrunner for the chief minister's post, lost in Shikarpur district to the PPP(P)'s Agha Tariq, thanks to Shaikh's 'ally', PML(Q) provincial president, Ghous Bux Mehr, who openly backed the PPP(P) candidate. That was the first shock for the SDA. The SDA's Arbab Ghulam Rahim was then briefly promoted as a prospective chief minister until Pir Pagaro dismissed that idea by leveling a racist barb at Arbab, allegedly referring to him as a "black crow". He went on to say that he would even prefer to support his *bete noire*, the PPP(P), in order to defeat Arbab. This came as the second shock for the SDA. The party then promoted Jatoti's son, Arif Mustafa, as the NA nominee for the top slot, only to be outmaneuvered again, this time by Ghous Bux Mehr when the MQM announced its backing for the tribal lord Ali Mohammad Mehr.

All this stung the leadership of the NA, especially the SDA members. Nonetheless, an uneasy calm between the NA and its coalition partners has held thus far, though SDA minister Arbab Ghulam Rahim, immediately upon taking oath, said that the NA had not given up its request to the speaker to be allotted separate seats. "We are National Alliance ministers and that significance we will maintain at all forums", Arbab said. After the distribution of portfolios, the SDA, in practical terms, has lost its position of power. Excluding Marwat, who broke with the SDA leadership, it has one minister and one advisor. There is general consensus that the MQM has had the last laugh. In addition to placing its convener, 38-year-old Ishratul Ibad, as the provincial governor, it acquired control over many plush ministries and, best of all, served up a chief minister with no political profile. "The MQM has bargained better than in it has in the past", a PML(Q) leader admitted. "It is virtually running the government".

### Sindhi speakers lose out

FOR THE first time ever, the representation of Sindhi speakers in the provincial cabinet falls short of a majority. None of the seven MQM ministers, including Shabbir Kaimi, who won on a Mirpurkhas seat, speaks Sindhi. One MQM minister, Yaqoob Ilyas Masih, who holds the portfolio of culture and minorities, is a Punjabi speaker. Aftab Shaikh, the adviser for finance and the MQM's deputy convener, speaks Urdu. Three of the eight PML(Q)-NA-PML(F) ministers are non-Sindhi-speaking – Irfanullah Marwat from Karachi (Pushto-speaking), and Chaudhry Iftakhar from Sanghar and Saeeda Malik from Karachi (Punjabi-speaking). The Sindhi-speaking ministers from PML(Q)-National Alliance-PML(F) are Arbab Ghulam Rahim (Thar), Sadrudin Rashdi (Khairpur), Arif Jatoti (Nausheroferoze), Manzoor Panhwar (Jacobabad) and Altaf Unnar (Larkana). Two advisers, Aijaz Shirazi of Thatta and Imtiaz Shaikh, also speak Sindhi.

### Democracy, Sindh style

In the by-election held on 15 January, Ali Nawaz Khan Mehr, the youngest brother of chief minister Ali Mohammad Mehr, contested from Ghotki district seat and won more than 176,000 votes out of 285,000 cast – swamping his PPP(P) opponent, Abdul Latif Shah, who polled 3000 votes. During the election, all union councils had been asked to use their resources generously to mobilise voters, prompting Abdul Latif Shah to practically withdraw from the contest in protest. A similarly ludicrous situation involved Imtiaz Shaikh, who bagged a surprising 93,000 votes. Shaikh had secured little over 16,000 votes in October from his native district Shikarpur, in his loss to the PPP(P)'s Tariq Pathan, who got 19,000 votes. "This over-enthusiasm by those more loyal than the king has exposed how the manipulations were designed", Benazir Bhutto spokesman Farhatullah Babar says. "This has really helped us to show how our people are cheated".

Similar reports of massive landslide results were reported in other contests involving PPP(P) candidates. In Khairpur district, where three of the party's workers were killed in a clash, reports suggest that the PPP(P) candidate was prevented from running an open campaign. Here the PML(F)'s Syed Javed Ali Shah secured more than 128,000 votes and defeated the PPP(P) candidate by a margin of 100,000 votes. Other accounts along these lines have also surfaced in some PML(Q) and NA victories over PPP(P) candidates. The by-elections results have raised many eyebrows since all government-backed candidates won with thumping majorities and the turnout far surpassed that witnessed during the general elections. PPP(P) spokesman Taj Haider commented on the results with unconcealed scepticism, saying, "Again, the people of Sindh were robbed of their chance to get their representatives to the assembly". ▽

# Celluloid combustion

At half past noon on 8 January, the originals of *Raja Harishchandra*, *Battleship Potemkin* and *Achhut Kanya* were lost in a nitrate oxide-fuelled inferno in Pune.

by *Binitesh Baruri*

If you were to take a tour of the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) campus in Pune, this was the building you would most likely have missed. In the heart of the campus, nestled among the eucalypti, it seemed to be abandoned, seemingly forgotten. Well, not anymore after it literally exploded into the news in early January this year. Now, that building cannot be found even if you went looking for it.

On 8 January, students were milling about just near this unassuming building, busy with year-end project submissions. The production department was taking its usual early lunch. All seemed to be as usual when suddenly smoke and strange orange fumes began emanating from the building. Everybody guessed what was up, and people started running away from the structure, warning others on the way. It was only a matter of moments before the orange fumes, all of a sudden, combusted. The ground shook with the explosion. A cloud of smoke and dust rose from the building and angry flames leapt out of its two ventilator shafts. The gases trapped inside the structure under extreme pressure started to billow out of the shafts and the blaze looked like it was coming from a flamethrower, reaching out as far as 20 metres. The trees on the north side and the production department protected Studio 1 to some extent. But within a few minutes the production department was charred, as were four scooters parked in the vicinity. On the south side, the flames reached the TV building, crossing a lawn and a fountain that now have ceased to exist. All the trees around the structure are gone too. Had it not been for the trees, the damage would have been even more extensive. The fire tenders, seven in all, arrived within 10 minutes and actually did a good job of containing the fire. But by then, a heritage had been lost.

No one really knows what caused the fire. Did the cooling system malfunction, was it poor maintenance, or was it an electrical short circuit as the authorities claim? A maintenance crew had actually been sighted coming out of the building that very morning. Now that

the damage has been done, the speculation is merely academic and technical. What we can say for sure, however, is that about 3000 cans of film were destroyed, and of these at least 250 films were original prints. The originals included such masterpieces as Eisenstein's 1925 classic, *Battleship Potemkin*; *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), India's first indigenous silent feature film; *Ayodhyecha Raja* (1932), the first Marathi talkie; *Ballet Mechanique* (1924) by the French Dadaist painter, Fernand Léger; the speeches by Gandhi and Nehru at the 1942 session of the All India Congress Committee; and footage from the last world war. Among other

prominent losses were some of the great films produced under the Bombay Talkies banner: *Achhut Kanya*, *Bhabhi*, *Durga*, *Kangan*, *Izzat*, *Navjeevan* and *Kismet*; and films such as *Amrit Manthan*, *Sant Tukaram*, Dada Saheb Phalke's *Kalia Mardan* and Sohrab Modi's *Pukar*. Also lost was original film footage from the freedom struggle – of Gandhi in Delhi, Jinnah with C Rajagopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel, and Subhas Bose.

The building, a nameless nondescript structure in the heart of India's premier film training institute, was where the National Film Archives of India (NFAI) housed some of its collection, the rest of which is across the road from FTII, on the NFAI premises. FTII occupies grounds that once belonged to Prabhat Studios where many regional language movies were filmed. It is therefore ironic that most of the films lost that afternoon were regional films, which had been archived on the FTII campus.

## Bureaucratic negligence

Back in May 1897, two years after the motion picture era was famously born in the darkened basement of a café with the screening of the Lumiere train sequence, in Paris, nitrate film passing through a projector caught alight and 180 people died in the ensuing fire. Most of the prints that were lost in the fire at FTII were from the pre-1930 silent era, when filmmaking was still in its infancy and cellulose nitrate film of the kind that caught fire in Paris was the order of the day, popular among

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**Destroyed originals include India's first indigenous silent feature film, first Marathi talkie, and 1942 speeches by Gandhi and Nehru**

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professional filmmakers due to its high silver content that created very luminous black and white images and also because it wore well, making it suitable for repeated theatrical screenings.

However, nitrate is chemically unstable and highly flammable. What happens is that due to cellulose nitrate decomposition, the film shrinks, and breaks down, giving off nitric oxide, yellow and soft gelatine, nitrogen dioxide and other gases that yellow the film base. The silver image oxidises and the film base cockles, becoming brittle and rather sticky, and finally, disintegrates completely. In conditions of heightened temperatures and humidity, the process speeds up considerably, and as it deteriorates, the sealed can containing the film converts into a pressure cooker. The captive gases start heating up, proceeding towards combustion and even explosion. Nitrate burns over 20 times as fast as wood, can reach burning temperatures of up to 1700 degrees celsius, and contains enough oxygen to keep burning even under water.

Cellulose nitrate film retired from film cameras in the early 1950s, when cellulose diacetate and triacetate films replaced it all over the world. Yet, each nation with a history of filmmaking over 50 years old has its own share of nitrate base films. Many of these have already ceased to exist due to their relatively easy combustibility and high instability.

But the chemical propensities of nitrate do not necessarily mean the films from another era will end up creating a conflagration of the kind that happened at the FTII. Kept in the correct conditions, and handled with expertise, nitrate films can survive. The NFAI has had in its possession a 'nitrate vault' for some time now – which is, or at least should be, several vaults since heaping too many films together creates pressure that would trigger decomposition. Due to bureaucratic tangles though, the vault has yet not been pressed into service and some of India's oldest films have paid the penalty for one of India's oldest problems. The destruction of films that need not have perished should be a warning to those to whose care they have been entrusted that there is an immediate need not only to preserve old films in their original through appropriate methods but also to ensure that copies are duplicated and kept at different locations, so that entire archives are not wiped out.

It may be true, and a consolation to many, that copies had been made of about 80 percent of the films lost to the fire, though exactly which have been lost for good is yet to be discovered. It is also fact that these films were just one segment of the NFAI collection of over 10,000 films from India and abroad. Nevertheless, copies are but copies and definitely poorer than the original in quality despite our best technological resources and efforts. Therefore, while it is imperative that copying proceeds on a systematic basis, it is also necessary to keep in mind the need to preserve the original prints as heritage artifacts.



*Clockwise from bottom left: Battleship Potemkin, Achhut Kanya, Ayodhyecha Raja, Raja Harishchandra.*

Each original lost is like losing a treasure house of information and knowledge for film buffs and film students alike. One could go on citing names of classics lost, and counting the number of films now forever gone; however, name or number is hardly the point. The point is that even one insignificant seeming original lost is a reference point lost. For a film student, one of the greatest learning experiences lies in viewing old masterpieces. Besides, an art that cannot inspect its own internal history is severely handicapped.

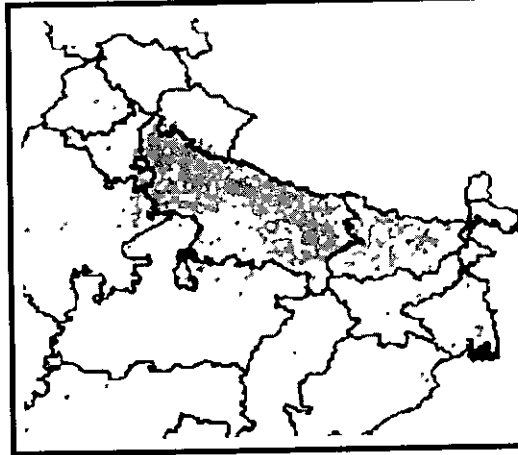
It has been a little over a century since the art of the motion picture came into existence. In that century, cinema has risen to a position of unchallenged preeminence as an aid to memory that besides being a novel form of self-expression also provides a form of representation to collective ideals. And no matter how much one undermines the status of the medium among the arts, it remains true that it is the single largest influence on people in the world today through the instrument of the television or the theatre. In such circumstances, when so much care is taken to preserve many other forms of exclusive art, the one medium that directly communicates to the mass of people ought to be getting more archival attention than it has been given.

Since film is the newest form of aesthetic expression, it is also the only art form whose historical lineage can be studied from its very beginnings and whose internal development can be more or less comprehensively recovered. And yet, a large number of films that are important aesthetically as well as historically from the first days of filmmaking, seem to be fast disappearing from the world due to either negligence or poor maintenance or indifference. The fire at FTII is only the latest such occurrence. Film is a fragile medium, and not just metaphorically. It needs preservation. But can a Subcontinent that is notorious for letting the sources of its own history fall into disrepair at least now wake up to the urgency of the task? △

**Uttar Pradesh, the state of polio**

THE INDIAN state of Uttar Pradesh (UP) accounts for 68 percent of polio cases reported worldwide. According to data from the National Polio Surveillance Project (NPSP), India – accurate, it claims, till 25 January 2003 – 1218 of the 1556 cases of polio in India are located in UP. A very distant second is Bihar, which has 119 cases. The numbers are alarming, and there is danger that if things continue the way they are in UP, India's polio eradication programme will end up as yet another shamefully unfulfilled five-year plan.

Despite a whopping USD 96 million donated annually by various international organisations and multinational corporations for New Delhi's polio eradication programme, and the union health minister, CP Thakur's vow to make the nation polio-free by 2005 (the previous minister, Shatrughan Sinha,



**Reported polio cases in India as of 25 January 2003 (1556 total)**

Uttar Pradesh, 1218; Bihar, 119; West Bengal, 45; Haryana, 34; Rajasthan, 30; Delhi, 25; Gujarat, 24; Madhya Pradesh, 20; Uttaranchal, 14; Jharkhand, 12; Maharashtra, 6; Orissa, 4; Punjab, 2; Chandigarh, 1; Chhattisgarh, 1; Jammu & Kashmir, 1.

wanted to attack the virus "on a war footing"), India is one of only 20 countries still afflicted by the virus; the others are either in South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan) or Africa.

In UP, where over 66 percent of the reported cases are Muslims, polio survives to afflict another generation due to suspicion, illiteracy and misinformation. In Rampur, western UP, 26-year-old Rustam Suleimani pedals a rickshaw

in spite of polio, with whatever strength his only good leg affords him so as to earn the month's 1000 rupees necessary to feed his wife and infant child. He will probably take his child to the pulse-polio programme but his neighbours are unmotivated by his state.

The mistrust towards the ruling Hindu nationalist BJP government and the follies of the Congress before it have meant that many members of the minority Muslim commu-

**Homeward bound**

THE KHYBER Pass, the mountainous gateway linking Peshawar, Pakistan, and Jalalabad, Afghanistan, is a portal through which millions of migrants and soldiers have passed for thousands of years. In the past few decades, it has principally had an eastbound flow, with Afghan refugees pouring into Pakistan's North West Frontier Province to wait out the violence and upheaval across the border. The past year, however, has witnessed a massive reversal, with Afghans representing the largest resettlement of humans since 1971 when two million people moved to Pakistan after the Bangladesh war.

Afghans began leaving their country in droves after the 1979 Soviet invasion, and lingering instability and conflict through the 1990s provoked even more emigration. In the autumn of 2001, during the demise of the Taliban, American bombing led thousands more to seek ref-

uge in neighbouring countries. At the close of 2001, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) counted 4.1 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran (Islamabad and Teheran put the number at 5.6 million), in addition to a combined 50,000 in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. But the actual refugee population is considerably higher, given that many Afghans have migrated through extra-legal channels to overseas destinations. The EU, for instance, estimates that it is home to 400,000 Afghan refugees, many of whom are there illegally. The enormity of the Afghan refugee community can be seen in the fact that while Pakistan and Iran are home to millions of Afghan refugees, only three other countries – Germany, Tanzania and the US – host refugee populations in excess of 500,000.

But the human flow has begun to reverse. Since the fall of the Taliban and the cessation of (most) American bombing, an estimated

two million Afghans have returned to their country, principally from Pakistan. Returns from Iran have been significantly lower, in large part because Afghans there tend to be settled in urban areas and enjoy a greater degree of independence, unlike in Pakistan where most refugees live in camps. Nonetheless, UNHCR, in cooperation with the Iranian government, is keen to return Afghans and launched a repatriation programme in April 2002. As of last October, about 300,000 Afghans had departed from Iran for their homeland.

The human rights community is concerned about the wisdom of so many repatriations so soon. Last summer, after more than 1 million Afghans had already returned, Human Rights Watch cast doubt on official encouragement of repatriation, citing persisting instability in the home country. Amnesty International has criticised a EU plan to repatriate 1500 Afghans every month, possibly even through forc-

nity of UP believe that the drugs will render their children sterile. This fear comes from memories of Sanjay Gandhi's sterilisation drive during the emergency of the late 1970s and the vicious 'hum paanch humaare pachchees' ('we five, our 25') rhetoric of the Hindu right, the mathematically flawed logic of which insinuates that a highly procreant Muslim population will swamp Hindu India.

Suspicion of the government has remained embedded in the rural Muslim psyche, and they have been reluctant to participate in the 'pulse polio immunisation programme' despite the encouragement of Imam Bukhari of the Delhi Jama Masjid. The people are often so frightened and unwilling to trust that they answer social workers from behind closed doors saying they will not, at any cost, allow their children to be given the vaccines.

India has nine polio laboratories and 8500 reporting units, according to the NPSP. Yet, this large network has not been able to check the resur-

ed repatriation, on the grounds that the plan "does not include appropriate safeguards regarding the security of returnees".

Irrespective of concerns about legal protection and security in Afghanistan, the massive wave of repatriation is already a reality. What is also a fact is the continuing climate of uncertainty in the country. Among other problems, returnees cite sporadic warfare, the absence of institutionalised human rights, unemployment and a dearth of af-

gence of poliovirus in India's north. Health officials are 'hopeful' that there will be a dip in the number of polio cases among children – below-fives are most prone to infection – despite the lack of medication, as a result of immunity developed through mild exposure. But mass vaccination remains, as always, essential for eradicating the virus.

In a state with a population of 116 million where most homes do not have electricity, and most people neither proper housing nor sanitation (which facilitates faecal-oral transmission), one wonders exactly what hope there is that the state (leave alone the country!) will be rid of the virus come 2005. Misinformation and nonchalance are as rampant in offices of government as on the street. The spirit is flagging. Says OP Vaish, chairman of Rotary International's National Polioplus Committee in India: "The union health minister knows next to nothing about the programme – my blood boils at the indifference". ▽

fordable housing.

In late January, reports surfaced that Padsha Khan Zadran, a pro-American, anti-Hamid Karzai local military commander in Paktia and Khost, might be willing to reach a power-sharing arrangement with the Kabul government, paving the way for the extension of a unified political structure into parts of eastern Afghanistan. But the operational authority of Karzai's interim government throughout Afghanistan remains wanting, and Kabul complains that it has received little of the USD 4.5 billion thus far promised for development and reconstruction. Just as they fled without help during times of conflict and crisis, it seems the returning Afghans will have to make do by relying principally on themselves. ▽

## Talking at the border

*Michael Shank is a theatre artist who served as a conference facilitator at Focus on South Asia, a 'youth peace conference' organised by the Youth Initiative for Peace in Lahore in mid-December 2002. The conference was attended by 35 girls and boys from all the member countries of SAARC except India, because of visa complications. Here, Shank describes a visit to the Wagah-Attari border from the Pakistani side:*

**WE VISITED** the border between Pakistan and India on the last day of the conference; a border heavily guarded by each country. In fact, every day at 1600 hours the Pakistan and Indian military 'face-off' in a show of bravado, might and resistance. Thousands of people apparently flock to the border each day to chant, cheer, yell, hold candles, weep and wave as the military stomps, frowns and celebrates the divisiveness the border has created.

We were advised to keep a low profile at the border. Our conference hosts (the human rights commission of Pakistan and two powerful women's rights organisations in Lahore) had asked us to refrain from singing, performing street theatre or chanting freedom poetry because they were already banned from the border due to similar expression and were fearful that if we became loud and unruly, our association with them might provoke more restrictive action from the government against them.

We agreed to this request. Oddly though, after we arrived at the border and witnessed the angry nationalistic chants and slogans we were overwhelmed with silence and tears. Our willingness to keep a low profile aptly suited our quieter, visceral reaction to the militaristic fervour so pervasive at the border. The contrast was almost too much to bear. The entire week leading up to the border visit had been spent with passionate and dedicated peace workers (including organisers and participants) and now we were surrounded by the hatred of government



propaganda that was dividing people with a shared history; people that enjoyed similar music, savoured similar food, delighted in similar dance and paraded on similar landscape.

Approaching the white line that divided the two countries I stopped to wave at the Indians standing far on the other side. Pakistan officials quickly ushered me down the path, not wanting me to offer such friendliness during their show of guarded nationalism.

A reporter from Geo, a new private TV channel, showed up at the border to broadcast our visit. They asked if I would be willing to speak. What was I to say? There I stood, donning the local Punjabi clothing of a *salwar kameez*, at the border between Pakistan and India where nationalism and machismo run high. "What do you suggest we do about this border conflict?"

I thought awhile. I thought about the food I had eaten that week – remarkably similar to my experiences with Indian food. I remembered the music of the *tabla* player and the singer and the dancing that reminded me of Indian friends. Such seemingly common interests were divided by a barbed-wire fence, a fence that had thoughtlessly cut through houses and property 55 years ago dividing relatives and families. 55 years later relatives are still not permitted to speak with each other at the border. And, as I found out, even waving is discouraged.

I answered the reporter with the only suggestion I could muster – that amidst this militaristic zeal we should take the risk of conversing with each other Here At The Border. Why not provide Indians and Pakistanis the opportunity to communicate at the border? I was not suggesting that the governments lift the travel ban between the countries, nor was I suggesting that Pakistanis be able to cross over to Indian land or that the government allow Indians to traverse the big white line to

enter Pakistan's territory. (Though I think all of us believe these desperately need to happen.) I was merely suggesting that we take a small risk and transcend boundaries by talking across borders and hopefully, in the communicating of a common and shared love for music,



dance and food, a better place and a better way could exist.

I realised that a handshake, a

smile or 'Assalaamu aleikum, tum kaise ho?' was not dealing with the issue of nuclear weapons, terrorism or, in this case, the controversial issue of Kashmir. But good communication does imply that both sides are speaking truthfully and respectfully while (hopefully) attempting to understand the other side's perspective. No longer is the simple recommendation that we Talk With Each Other an easy task but it is still a necessary and a very accomplishable one. Allowing Indians and Pakistanis to talk across the border at Attari/Wagah would definitely be something that could be done for peace. △

*Michael Shank, Seattle, USA*

### Calling all poets (in A'mrica)

**OVERSEAS SOUTH** Asian novelists are numerous and well known. But can you name a South Asian poet residing on foreign shores? That formidable task might become a little easier after the release of *Writing the Lines of Our Hands*, an anthology of South Asian-American poetry scheduled to be published in early 2004. Three South Asian expat literateurs – Neela Banerjee, Summi Kaipa and Pireeni Sundaralingam – have teamed up with a California publisher to bring out the work. Subcontinental poets permanently resident in the United States are encouraged to send in their work, be it "slam, sonnet, limerick or lyric poetry", before the 15 March deadline.

The publisher, Creative Arts Book Company, has a history of bringing out the work of distinguished poets, including Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Allen Ginsberg and Gertrude Stein. So perhaps this is the big break that will allow poets to challenge the dominance of the Salman Rushdies and Michael Ondaatjes of the South Asian expat literary universe. The editors specifically encourage writers from the Subcon's smaller states to submit

pieces, perhaps paving the way for distinctive Maldivian-, Bhutanese- and Nepali-American genres.

A hint of what is to come might be found in the work of Kaipa, who also edits *Interlope*, a journal of Asian-American poetics. At the moment living "among the minor rock stars of San Francisco on Albion Street, currently known for its sweet, ever-wafting aroma of piss", Kaipa has already published several collections of poetry, including *The Epics*, a reflection on ancient Hindu texts as seen through contemporary eyes. As Kaipa describes her work:

The epic begins in small proportions but quickly escalates. All this is written with witness – time pretends to reside over this, or our narrator, Vyasa, says he does. Nearing the end of the world, we are looking at an upcoming conflagration that may arrive as a computer virus. Please excuse my gratuitous anachronism. As in Hinduism, when the eight planets align, the apocalypse is said to arrive but doesn't. Someone purposefully avoids me because of the intelligent company I keep, or *Barbarella* is the greatest movie ever made. The leading antagonist in



## Behind closed doors

**THE VILLAGE** of Kalyani Koppal in Karnataka's Mandya district is well known for two reasons. It is located in the home district of the state's chief minister, SM Krishna. And it has no adolescent girls.

The village, one of the poorest in the district, lacks basic facilities such as health care, roads or buses. This is why it banishes its teenaged girls to big cities to work as domestic labourers, or worse, as prostitutes. "At least she will get three meals instead of eating fried mud in the village", is how Raje Gowde justifies sending his 14-year-old daughter Rajamma to Bangalore to work as a domestic servant in a doctor's household.



Banerjee, Kaipa, Sundaralingam

the story is Duryodhana, who is envious of Krishna's kinship to his cousins. Most of us can sympathize with blood relations. My brother, Sami, is looking for a high-paying job in the computer industry and my cousins are in medical school. Am I concerned that I will be rich? No. Someone's child, unborn, is already burping the alphabet. These are auspicious times – the Pandavas and the Kauravas and their epic pettiness will destroy our Bharat petticoats. All this is new to me and all this has occurred before in 88,000 lines of metered verse. Brahmin lineages continue as reminders of the reincarnative possibilities while saris are the Indian way of preserving a curvaceous figure. Our instinctual language, Sanskrit, though dead, will go on. We Indians are old souls. I am a journalist.

For more information on the project, access [www.writingthelines.com](http://www.writingthelines.com)

▷

But Rajamma's story is a chilling account of physical abuse and mental anguish at the hands of insensitive employers who burdened her with all manner of physical chores and exploited her services as an *ayah* (nursemaid) to their one-year-old child. "I found the work physically impossible to cope with and my employers, fearing I would run away, locked me up whenever they went out", she explains. On one such occasion, Rajamma's clothes caught on fire but her screams went unanswered. "I had to quell the fire on my own. The incident shook me up completely", she recalls.

One day after her desperate hopes of escape had faded, her mother and uncle came to visit. Shocked at Rajamma's stories, her mother informed the employers that the girl would be coming home. In response, the doctor called the police and accused Rajamma of theft. "Terrified by the turn of events, my mother and uncle agreed to the demand of the couple to leave them only after they agreed not to come and see me ever again", Rajamma says.

Overwork, lack of proper food and inhuman treatment transformed the girl into a ghost-like figure. But fortunately her plight caught the attention of a Mysore-based NGO, *Odanadi Seva Samsthe*, which assists commercial sex workers and children in distressed circumstances. Tragically, however, despite being rescued from the doctor's home, Rajamma could not return to her village. When Odanadi activists visited Kalyani Koppal a week after her release, they discovered that she was employed as a maid in a different household in Bangalore.

"When we questioned Rajamma's father, he confessed that dire poverty had forced him to send his minor daughter for housework to a stranger's house", says Odanadi co-founder Stanly. According to him, false charges of theft cases often keep girls bonded to their masters.

Exploitative conditions in cities are compounded by poverty in Kalyani Koppal. Due to its aridity and lack of irrigation, the village's agricultural output is negligible. Villagers complain that government officials never visit the village and that the postman is probably the only outsider who comes twice a week. In a village of 800-odd residents, over 60 percent of the children have migrated to Bangalore; the residual female population a mix of old women, widows and infant girls, says Stanly.

One girl who has returned to the village is Nethra, aged 16, who came home to Kalyani Koppal after suffering sexual abuse. Sent at the age of 10 to work as a domestic labourer in Bangalore, Nethra remained there for four years, drawing an annual salary of INR 2000 and a pair of old dresses. At age 15, her employers sent her home when they learned of the sexual abuse committed by their adult son.

"He was forcing me to have sex with him, and when his parents realised what was happening they threw me out", she recalls. Nethra returned to her village, but stark poverty compelled her to return once more to the city in search of work. "I foolishly believed that I could make a decent living in the city, but I soon discovered that sexual harassment was part and parcel of every job I took", she says bitterly. Lonely and helpless, people assumed her to be a prostitute, and she gradually became one.

In response to these cases and others like them, Odanadi activists want the state government to take a proactive role in the rescue and rehabilitation of girls forced into domestic labour or prostitution. Development in the village of Kalyani Koppal and others like it must be taken up on a priority basis, they stress.

Nitin Jugran Bahuguna, Mysore  
(First published in *Grassroots*)

To submit briefs from unreported parts, write to [editors@himalmag.com](mailto:editors@himalmag.com)

# The sustainability of hunger

Talk of a government out of touch with people's needs. India is following Argentina's example in promoting food exports even as its millions go hungry. While the masses in both countries face dire poverty, the rulers remain unconnected and unmoved.

by *Devinder Sharma*

On 4 December 2002, India's finance minister, Jaswant Singh, presented his government's mid-term review in parliament, emphasising a need to boost private investment in agriculture to thereby encourage commodity exports. What he forgot to mention was that by taking this path India had decided to follow Argentina's model of economic growth, which in reality expands the profits of a few agribusiness enterprises at the cost of growing hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

Argentina, the world's fourth largest exporter of food, faces an unprecedented socio-economic crisis. As the vast, fertile country continues to increase exports of meat, wheat, corn and soya, a catastrophe has hit the underprivileged in the countryside. Hunger multiplies and images of stunted, emaciated children scandalise Argentines, whose country was long known as the grain store of the world.

Hunger also continues to grow in India, which has one-third of the world's estimated 860 million people who go to bed hungry, and that too in times of plenty. In fact, hunger and poverty have proved to be robustly sustainable. Amidst reports of gnawing hunger and starvation deaths in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, India continues to make room for exporting surplus foodgrain. That an estimated 320 million people desperately need food despite the more than 60 million tonnes stocked in the open has failed to evoke any kind of political response.

Once perceived by neo-classical pundits as representing a glorious model of economic growth, an unprecedented humanitarian crisis now confronts Argentina. In India too, with the increased domination of market forces in the food sector, and reduced public policy intervention for food security, food prices have increased to impact on the mass population. Meanwhile, Jaswant Singh has promised to further cut subsidies and reduce the government's intervention in foodgrain procurement.

On the external front, Indian foodgrain exports have increased by 10 percent every year since 1991. Between April and August 2002, the export of wheat grew by 32

percent and that of rice by 75 percent, as compared to corresponding months in the previous year. Agriculture and allied products grew by an impressive 8.2 percent in the same period. However, other traditional exports such as plantation crops (tea and spices) and edible oils face international competition as imports grow with the lowering of import duties and the removal of quantitative restrictions. Instead of imposing duties that minimise the impact of cheap imports, the government has provided INR five billion to bail out the plantation sector. In other words, while small producers are driven out by cheaper imports, major producers have their losses written-off.

## Full of hunger

While people die of hunger, the government sits atop a mountain of foodgrains. In 2001, starvation deaths were reported in over 13 states, even while the storage facilities of the Food Corporation of India were full of grain, some of it rotting and rat-infested. When export markets could not be found for this surplus, a proposal was even made to dump it into the sea to create storage space for the next crop. In 2002, reports of hunger and starvation deaths regularly poured in from Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, two of the country's progressive and economically fast-growing states.

A November 2002 report that appeared in *The Guardian* quotes the Centre for Child Nutrition Studies, which advises the World Health Organisation, as saying that 20 percent of children in Argentina are suffering from malnutrition. Dr Oscar Hillal, the deputy director of the children's hospital in the province of Tucuman, said, "This is not Africa, this is Argentina, where there are 50 million cattle and 39 million people - but where we have a government which is totally out of touch with the people's needs".

Reports filed from Argentina tell of widespread malnutrition throughout the country. The national charity Red Solidaria reported that in 2002 an average of 60 children a month were being taken to hospitals with severe malnutrition, and 400 were being treated as outpatients. Five non-governmental organisations

from Tucumán province recently filed a legal suit against Tucumán's governor, Julio Miranda, for "wilful neglect" of the children who have died of malnutrition in his province, where 64 percent of people live in extreme poverty. They accused him of diverting national funding for social programmes into "clientelism and corruption".

In April 2001, public interest litigation was initiated by NGOs in the Supreme Court of India asking that the state be made responsible for preventing scarcity and to immediately provide relief when scarcity arises: in essence, the petition focuses on every citizen's fundamental right to food. A bench comprising Justice BN Kripal and KG Balakrishnan directed the government to "devise a scheme where no person goes hungry when the granaries are full and lots [is] being wasted due to non-availability of storage space". In response to the attorney general's plea that devising such a scheme would require at least two weeks, the court allocated an appropriate timeframe. It has also sought affidavits from the state governments of Orissa, Rajasthan, Chattisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh detailing their response to the situation of scarcity amidst plenty.

A year and a half later, starvation deaths were reported from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, even while exports of wheat and rice had grown. Malnutrition continues to multiply, more so among children and women. And a day after Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's mid-November announcement that 1.3 million tonnes of foodgrain costing INR 15 billion had been distributed in the country under various drought relief programmes, a damning survey conducted in Madhya Pradesh, in central India, found 6785 children in 43 blocks of Shivpuri district severely malnourished – an average of 160 per block. Yet, all that the prime minister did was to call an all-party meeting to discuss the drought and hunger crisis.

Elsewhere, it is the same story of desperation and apathy, of people left to fend for themselves in the face of drought and desperate to get out in search of menial jobs. Recently, when the Puri-Okha Express to Gujarat stopped in the Berhampur railway station, Orissa, *The Indian Express* reported that the platform erupted in chaos. More than a thousand young people, fighting to clamber on to leave Berhampur for Surat, Gujarat, were ready to kill or be killed for space in the two general compartments of the train. Many were ready to travel all the way to Surat or Bombay – across the breadth the country – hanging on the doorway. Those who could not board broke the train's windowpanes in frustration. This is not an atypical scenario, and many Indian

railway stations present similarly desperate situations.

### A sick society

Far away in Argentina, some 450,000 jobs have been lost since October 2001, leaving one in every five persons unemployed, one in four destitute, and one in two living in poverty. Salaries have lost 70 percent of their value and the economy is shrinking at a rate of 14 percent, while inflation is running at 40 percent. While the prices of non-essential goods, such as clothes, have held steady, the price of wheat climbed by 166 percent in the first six months of 2002 alone.

The country's crisis has devastated its people. In April 2002, Norma Gonzalez, a desperate 59-year-old middle-class woman, tried to immolate herself in front of a bank teller. In Misiones province, which borders Tucumán in the north, nearly 50 child starvation deaths were reported in 2002. Media reports from throughout the country tell off the gruesome and the desperate: overturned trucks of cattle being slaughtered by mobs of slum-dwellers, infant starvation because mothers' breasts have gone dry, the descent into poverty of another 11,000 people each day, according to the government's own numbers.

For the political masters of both the countries, aided and abetted by a chosen breed of economists, agricultural exports remain the only path to speedy growth. Tonnes of paper have already been wasted on theories, reports and studies detailing the virtues of ex-

port-oriented growth that can help eradicate poverty and hunger. It is not therefore unusual to find economists like Jagdish Bhagwati and Meghnad Desai, living in liberalised economies and singing in chorus to the tunes of free trade. What they propose is withdrawing state support to agriculture as quickly as possible, leaving farmers at the mercy of market forces.

In an astonishingly honest admission, Argentina's production minister, Anibal Fernandez, attributed the starvation-related child deaths to "a sick society and a ruling class that are sons of bitches, all of them, myself included. If not, this would not be happening. It is a chronic and cumulative problem. It has been going on for many years and everyone has been turning a blind eye".

One wonders, how many of the heads of state of WTO-member countries will stand up to measure Argentina's Anibal Fernandez. Accepting the fault is the first step toward rectifying the policy blunders. Hoping against hope is what optimism is all about in the days of corporate control and market economy where the poor and hungry are nothing more than an unfortunate statistic that comes in the way of development. ▽



*Look familiar? Argentine children in search of a meal.*

# AIDS and India

## Funding its way to the forefront

by *Rajeshwari Menon*

Not very long back, a strange controversy engulfed the Indian health ministry prior to and during the Microsoft magnate's visit to the Subcontinent. The subject was HIV/AIDS and apparently Gates had alluded to a CIA report in one of his widely circulated write-ups on the magnitude and the trajectory of the infection. Two reports, one of the National Intelligence Council (NIC), a United States government organisation, and the other by a private institution, partly funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, had predicted a large number of HIV/AIDS cases in some developing countries, including India and China. Gates had extensively quoted from the former report, which was titled 'The next wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India and China'. The next wave countries, the report noted, were likely to seek greater technical assistance from the US in tracking and combating the disease. For many it did not seem an irony that despite being a self-sufficient democracy and a sovereign state, India had in the new millennium to take counsel from corporate heads on how to manage and prioritise its health sector.

The NIC report also suggested that if an effective vaccine were to be developed in the coming years, Western governments and pharmaceutical companies would come under intense pressure to make it widely available. The two reports projected India as one of the biggest pockets of the infection by the year 2010; the NIC report put the number at 20 to 25 million HIV cases, the highest estimate for any country. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led government, which otherwise goes completely ballistic with jingoistic fervour on issues of cultural nationalism, found nothing amiss in these prognostications as long as they had not entered the public domain of discussion. Once they became known (much credit for this goes to a non-governmental organisation called the Joint Action Council), it became difficult to obfuscate the implications of such intelligence reports for any sovereign state. The union health ministry, under the charismatic Bollywood actor Shatrughan Sinha (who was recently relieved from his cabinet responsibility), issued a denial regarding the 2010 projections.

But interestingly, the prognosis of the NIC and similar such reports have been taken very seriously by the Global Fund for AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a multilateral public-private partnership, and coincidentally, the United States recently assumed the chair of the Global Fund board. This fund has committed USD 866 million over the next two years in the form of grants to

60 countries, India included, and a major part of the funding will go to non-government organisations, leaving elected governments very much without control. The Indian government has of course welcomed this largesse – national pride can be set aside – and is willing to play second fiddle, or what is called in sanitised terms – a complementary role. Currently, India spends USD 300 million on the National AIDS Control Programme, with help from a World Bank loan of USD 191 million. Multilateral and bilateral development agencies support the HIV/AIDS response at state and central levels.

### Threats from the second wave

But what is left unsaid is that even if the Indian cases constitute 10 percent of the global HIV burden and are deemed to merit global sympathy and largesse, the government's national health policy recognises a totally different list of priorities for the health sector. And AIDS is only one of those concerns, though most of the time it seems to be getting all the attention. If tuberculosis (TB) has attracted attention, it is mostly because of its association with AIDS. Another aspect is that since there has been a resurgence of communicable diseases even in the developed world, the global concern should reflect as much. The developing countries are after all seen as pockets of disease. Therefore, if HIV/AIDS has become a national security threat to the US, as per a paper (jointly funded by the Gates' foundation and the Catherine Marron Foundation) prepared by a Task Force of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies – a Washington, DC-based organisation – then it becomes a global threat. The paper is called 'The Destabilizing Impacts of HIV/AIDS – First wave hits eastern and southern Africa, Second wave threatens India, China, Russia, Ethiopia, Nigeria'.

But as the developed world, and in particular the US should know, HIV/AIDS is not India's only priority. In GDP terms, health expenditure in the country (already one of the lowest in the world) has declined from 1.3 percent in 1990 to 0.9 percent in 1999. While central budgetary allocation has remained stagnant at 1.3 percent of total outlay, the budgetary allocation to health in state budgets (which account for over 70 percent of total health care expenditure of the country) has fallen in this period from 7.0 percent to 5.5 percent. This is a direct consequence of the squeeze imposed on the finances of the states by the economic liberalisation policies. In reaction to this, desperate state governments are queuing up in front of the World Bank to receive

bank-aided projects. This is proving even more disastrous as these projects impose strict conditionalities such as cost recovery.

The National Health Policy (NHP), drawn last year, admits that the morbidity and mortality levels in the country are still unacceptably high. But unfortunately, it pins the blame on the public health sector. "These unsatisfactory health indices are, in turn, an indication of the limited success of the public health system in meeting the preventive and curative requirements of the general population", it notes.

Out of the communicable diseases which have persisted over time, the incidence of malaria staged a resurgence in the 1980s before stabilising at a fairly high prevalence level during the 1990s. Over the years, an increasing level of insecticide-resistance has developed in the malarial vectors in many parts of the country, while the incidence of the more deadly *P-Falciparum* malaria has risen to about 50 percent in the country as a whole. In respect of TB, the public health scenario has not shown any significant decline in the pool of infection amongst the community, and there has been a distressing trend in the increase of drug resistance to the type of infection prevailing in the country. A new and extremely virulent communicable disease – HIV/AIDS – has emerged on the health scene since the declaration of the NHP-1983. As there is no existing therapeutic cure or vaccine for this infection, the disease constitutes a serious threat, not merely to public health but to economic development in the country. The common water-borne infections – Gastroenteritis, Cholera, and some forms of Hepatitis – continue to contribute to a high level of morbidity in the population, even though the mortality rate may have been somewhat moderated (NHP – 2002).

While HIV/AIDS is seen as a threat to economic development, it is incomprehensible as to why the other communicable diseases, which have claimed many more lives till date, do not seem to be a threat to economic growth. The current annual per capita public health expenditure in the country is no more than INR 200. Given these statistics, it is no surprise that the reach and quality of public health services has been below the desirable standard. In the constitutional structure, public health is the responsibility of the states. In such a framework, it has been the expectation that the principal contribution for the funding of public health services will be from the resources of the states, with some supplementary input from the centre.

### Budgeting cares

Against this backdrop, the contribution of central resources to the overall public health funding has been limited to about 15 percent. The fiscal resources of the state governments are known to be very inelastic. This

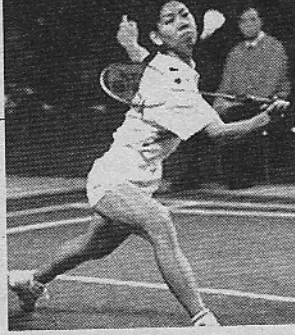
is reflected in the declining percentage of state resources allocated to the health sector out of the state budget. If the decentralised public health services in the country are to improve significantly, there is a need for the injection of substantial resources into the health sector from the central government budget. This approach is a necessity – despite the formal constitutional provision with regard to public health – if the state public health services, which are a major component of the initiatives in the social sector, are not to become entirely moribund, states the NHP 2002.

The technical network available in the country for disease surveillance is extremely rudimentary and to the extent that the system exists, it extends only up to the district level. The NHP admits that disease statistics do not flow through an integrated network from the decentralised public health facilities to the state/central government health administration. Such an arrangement only provides belated information, which, at best, serves a limited statistical purpose. The absence of an efficient disease surveillance network is a major handicap in providing a prompt and cost-effective health care system.

Evidently, public health infrastructure and preventive care as a whole need to get a big boost in terms of investment. But if there is any disease prevention mechanism visible, it is in the arena of HIV/AIDS. Last year, the then union minister for health and family welfare, CP Thakur, stated that the government had given priority to National AIDS Control Programme, as is evident from the fact that it receives the highest budgetary allocation of all health programmes. This has been done to contain the spread of HIV/AIDS infection which undermines social and economic development throughout the world and affects all levels of society, said the minister. Addressing a consultative committee meeting of the ministry, Thakur said that the sentinel surveillance data clearly indicates that even though the number of AIDS patients are still growing, the rate at which the infection is spreading was showing a declining trend in the last three years. There was a gradual decrease in the new infections. The minister also added that another major thrust during the 10<sup>th</sup> plan period would be on the elimination of *kala-azar* and filariasis. However, no generous budgetary allocation was made similar to that of AIDS.

The 1983 NHP had envisaged health for all by 2000. That has not happened obviously. In fact, more than 1000 people have died this winter of poverty in the cold wave; several mysterious deaths occurred in Saharanpur late last year – viral encephalitis was suspected though, for several weeks, doctors remained clueless; and plague broke out in parts of Himachal Pradesh in March 2002 triggering widespread panic. Undoubtedly, the public health priorities have to be decided by governments alone. And there are no global takers for these diseases – the disease of hunger and consequent ill health. ▽

**THE REPRESSED** South Asian libido's love affair with the female form (especially the leggy athletic variety) has long been an open secret. But for some reason, the game of tennis has assumed a preeminent role in this ongoing psychological drama. A highly unscientific and notably arbitrary survey of major Indian dailies reveals that Anna Kournikova, the Russian starlet who is also reported to play tennis on occasion, receives more photo slots in daily papers than, well, anyone else. Even Sonia Gandhi. Unfortunately for Miss Anna and the Subcontinent's super-continental size visual appetite, the Russian vixen, who has never won a major tournament, was knocked out of the recently concluded Australian Open in just the second round. This obsession with Miss Anna looks especially strange when one considers that almost no one in our penurious land actually plays the country club sport of tennis. Now badminton, that's another racquet sport and it is quite popular in the Subcon. Perhaps the best way to promote it is to insist on short skirts without bloomers to show – you said it not I – legs...

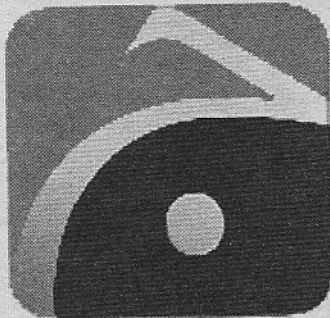


against half-an-hour of grilling on TV". (For more on Geo, see *Himal*, September 2002.)

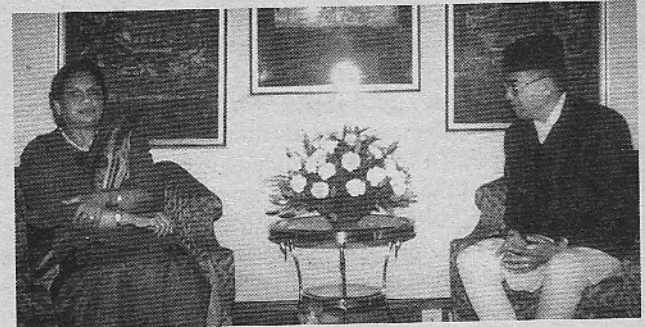
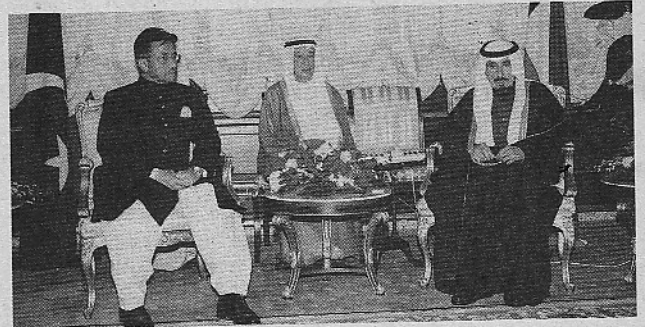
**ANYONE IN** search of back problems or a blunt object should immediately consult the recently published *Eleventh SAARC Summit* report. With 1069 pages of glossy paper, the three-kilogram tome is chockfull with photos of South Asian heads of state with famous global personalities and less-than-light reading on country leaders. To gain a glimpse of how each of SAARC's seven members sees itself, browse the lengthy country profiles. First comes Bangladesh, "your investment destination", where bureaucrats never smile though a few philosophically hold pens; in the following section on Bhutan, a few smirks appear, though we mostly find very serious people dutifully working for Gross National Happiness. Next comes India, where Atalji's lips hint at some combination of pleasure and discomfort, and 16 pages are devoted to promoting sparsely populated Arunachal Pradesh

while north India fails to receive mention. One cannot be sure what to make of the Maldives, given that it ap-

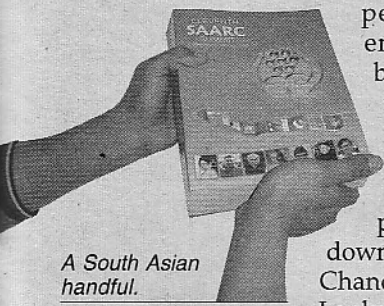
**PAKISTAN RECENTLY** got its first all-news television channel, Geo, which has pulled in viewers thus far by, among other things, covering a shoot-out in Karachi live and offering critical analysis of Islamabad government policies. Geo is building on the success of other private channels in Pakistan, such as ARY and Indus Vision, the second of which was the first entertainment channel to successfully challenge the domination of India-based television giants such as Zee and Sony. Geo has assembled an impressive lineup of reporters and analysts and secured major advertisers for its most popular slots. The long-term impact of Geo – and other news channels in the works – remains to be seen, though Pakistanis can look forward to more lively debates and a competitive television news environment. As one *Dawn* columnist summed it up, "Pakistanis have



been desperate for TV news and are enjoying watching politicians squirm on live TV. Years of exposing wrongdoings in print seem inconsequential when pitted



*Musharraf enthalls one of his many visitors (top); Deuba strikes out with Kumaratunga (middle); 'Maldivians' suit up for another day on the atoll.*



A South Asian handful.

appears to be a land filled entirely with bikini-clad blonde women, though that is still better than the following section on Nepal, which includes a picture of former PM Deuba appearing to be getting turned down for a date by an unamused Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka. Given a certain person's

importance to the Pakistani polity, it is not surprising that the president-General's photo gallery is the most extensive, though nothing can compare to the 86-page Sri Lankan section, where a minimum of nine different people are seen smiling, a formidable grin-to-page ratio. Place your orders now for the indefinitely postponed 12<sup>th</sup> summit report...

IN MID-January, hundreds of NRIs congregated in New Delhi for Pravasi Bharatiya Divas to rekindle their on-again, off-again affair with India and hear nice things said about themselves by senior politicians and media outlets. Atal Behari Vajpayee set the ball rolling by offering dual-citizenship to former Indians living in the West (their miserly cousins in Asia and Africa did not get the offer), but *India Today* took the cake for bowing down to the all-mighty overseas lobby by devoting a 62-page section to 'The Global Indian: Doing Us Proud'.

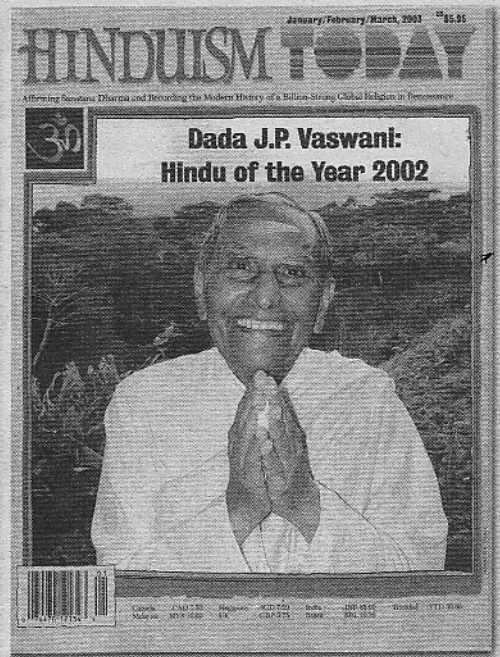
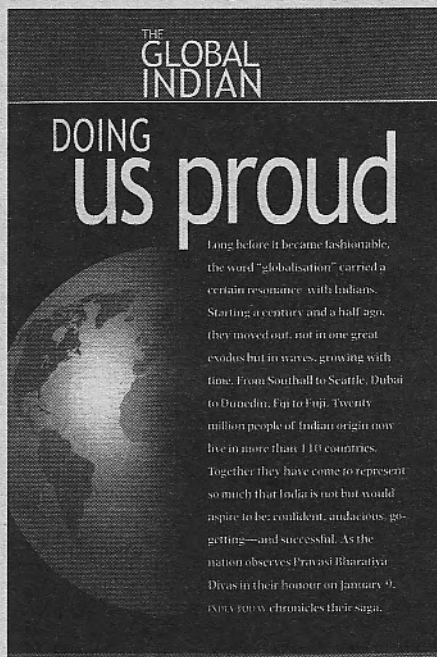
One cannot be sure, though the presence of a US flag on the magazine's cover and the opening of the 'Global Indian' section with a shot of a glimmering north Atlantic begs the question of whether "us" referred to India or the US. Either way, there does not seem to be much pride in Indians in India, especially when an article inside informs that NRIs "have come to represent so much that India is not but would aspire to be: confident, audacious, go-getting – and successful". Gee, thanks, retorts the muffled chorus of a billion-plus.

A HEALTHY self-esteem is one thing, but self-promotion has a tendency to get out of hand in the region from Balochistan to Assam, and the 'proprietors' of non-governmental organisations are more prone to this than others. For instance, take the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary profile of the Pakistani labour rights group, PILER. Contained in

its 29 pages of glossy artpaper are a grand total of six photos of the PILER campus versus 17 of the executive director, Karamat Ali – one picture of PILER's boss for nearly every year of the organisation's existence. Now, Chhetria Patrakar could stand maybe a dozen photos of someone greeting guests, giving speeches and marching at rallies. But why would anyone want to see Mr Ali checking the time on his watch?



**HINDUISM TODAY**, a publication with which many *Himal* readers may be unfamiliar, is a Hawaii-based quarterly magazine that provides news on Hinduism and the global Hindu community. It tries desperately to be everything to everyone, trying to present Hinduism (as if such a thing were



possible) to getting-along-in-age motel owners in Arkansas and Ivy Leaguers in Boston. But in its very *Newsweek*-inspired design format, the publication has happily managed to steer clear of the *Hindutva* agenda. Its current issue names the peaceable Dada JP Vaswani, leader of Pune's *Sadhu Vaswani Mission*, as its 'Hindu of the Year 2002'. What a relief to see a Subcon religious figure celebrated for following the path of peace rather than making headlines for behaviour less than divine.

— Chhetria Patrakar

# Indian feminism and the patriarchy of caste

Indian feminism has tended to represent the interests and concerns of upper-caste women rather than reflect the experiences of Indian women *en masse*. By recognising this fact, and by fostering alternative ideas of femininity and caste relations, Indian feminism can more effectively challenge historically-entrenched and varied patriarchies.

by Anupama Rao

There are many Castes which allow inter-dining. But it is a common experience that inter-dining has not succeeded in killing the spirit of Caste and the consciousness of Caste. I am convinced that the real remedy is inter-marriage. Fusion of blood alone can create the feeling of being kith and kin and unless this feeling of kinship, of being kindred, becomes paramount the separatist feeling – the feeling of being aliens – created by Caste will not vanish. Among the Hindus inter-marriage must necessarily be a factor of greater force in social life than it need be in the life of the non-Hindus. Where society is already well-knit by other ties, marriage is an ordinary incident of life. But where society [is] cut asunder, marriage as a binding force becomes a matter of urgent necessity. *The real remedy for breaking Caste is inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of Caste.* [emphasis in the original]  
BR Ambedkar, *Annihilation of Caste*

Recent critiques of Indian feminism have highlighted the fact that feminism tends not to embrace all women, but is exclusionary. Generated in the main by dalit feminists' critiques of how practices of caste respectability and caste privilege produce significant inequalities amongst women, such debates have exploded the concept of gender upon which feminist analysis rests and have brought to the surface internal tensions in feminist practice. For instance, in writing about the formation of the National Federation of Dalit Women, the political scientist Gopal Guru argued that dalit women experience two distinct forms of patriarchal control: a dominant form of brahminical patriarchy that rests on conceptions of caste purity, as well as patriarchal control within the dalit community by men who see 'their' women as sexual property. Thus, feminist critiques of gender domination and sexual control were themselves criticised as both casteist and monolithic. It is crucial for Indian feminism to engage with debates on caste. Both caste and gender are in-

involved in formations of intimacy and desire, among other things, and indicate how the political life of a citizen depends on deeply personal issues of the body and its expression. Furthermore, arguments that gender is regulated by caste – that gender is in fact *unthinkable* without addressing questions of caste exploitation and upper-caste privilege – point to the political possibilities of bringing radical anti-caste struggles together with feminist critiques of gender oppression. This is a significant opportunity for understanding brahminical male privilege as a thoroughly 'modern' form of power through which the postcolonial Indian state operates, and for bringing together powerful critiques of caste and gender that have historically been separated and disconnected from each other.

The formation of the All India Dalit Women's Forum in 1994, the National Federation of Dalit Women and Dalit Solidarity in 1995, the emergence of various regional dalit women's groups, and the All India Democratic Women's Association's Convention Against Untouchability and Dalit Women's Oppression held in December 1998, all illustrate critiques of Indian feminism by seeking to link caste relations to gender exploitation. More recently *the dalit* carried a special issue on 'Dalit Feminisms' (March-April 2002) where the contributors explored caste-specific patriarchal arrangements in order to test standard assumptions about gender and sexuality. African-American feminists have delved into the reliance of racial regimes on the sexual violation of women as being critically important for reproducing white supremacy. Similarly, dalit feminists too have focused on sexual violence as important to the reproduction of the brahminical order. Rape, the stripping and parading of women, and other gendered forms of humiliation by upper-caste men are significant because they are gendered practices of violence through which untouchability is perpetuated. In fact sexual violence and the hyper-exploitation of dalit women's la-



bour are two of the most important issues around which feminists' awareness of caste has been mobilised.

Both forms of exploitation rely on the ways in which the caste order legitimates intimate access to dalit women. Dalit women's performance of defiling labour is legitimated by ideas of pollution and stigma that reproduce the inhuman conditions under which struggles for survival take place. The issue of sexual access has become symbolically volatile in at least two ways. One is the struggle by dalit women to publicise their experiences of sexual violence before national and international fora. Thus, the 'Public Hearing on Atrocities Against Dalits with Specific Reference to Dalit Women' organised in March 1994 by Women's Voice and the Asian Women's Human Rights Council, the 'National Public Hearing on Atrocities Against Dalits in India' held in Madurai in 1999, Human Rights Watch's report *Broken People*, documents of the National Campaign for Dalit Human Rights, as well as the National Federation of Dalit Women's *NGO Declaration on Gender and Racism*, have all testified to dalit women's experience of sexual violence as a critical aspect of caste hegemony. Meanwhile, there is long-standing evidence of brutal violence against dalit men who transgress caste codes to show their desire for upper-caste women. Incidents that drew national attention, such as the massacre of dalits in Karamchedu (Andhra Pradesh) in August 1991, which was attributed to the alleged eve-teasing of a Reddy girl by a dalit boy, or the accounts of the lynching of men and women who engage in inter-caste marriage or relationships reveal how integral politically volatile issues of sexual violence and

sexual access are to protecting the caste order. Alternatively, acts such as the eve-teasing of upper-caste women by dalit men as an assertion of masculinity and upward mobility partake of the broader consolidation of caste masculinities. Such consolidations are premised on enactments of sexual violence that legitimate claims to women as sexual property. The consolidation of caste hegemony – especially political and economic dominance – through the policing of intimate sexual relationships between castes shows how fundamental sexual control and desire are to the caste order. Gender relationships within and between caste communities function as a nodal point through which caste supremacy is contested and reproduced.

### Political presents

Clearly such issues have gained visibility in the post-Mandal context where both caste and feminist politics have changed. Growing tensions between dalits, backward castes and other backward castes (OBCs), debates within feminist groups about the focus on legal reform

and the state, and the growing evidence of women's active participation in *Hindutva*-sponsored violence are just a few indicators of the broader political transformations underway since the late 1980s.

The 1980s saw an unprecedented assault on key institutions and ideologies of the modernising Nehruvian state, including constitutional secularism, reservations and welfare measures. Mainly, the transformations in political culture over the past two decades have involved a shift in the relationship between the Indian state and its minorities. If earlier, the postcolonial state simultaneously promoted 'tolerance' between religious communities and tried to reform caste from within Hinduism in a Gandhian fashion, the last two decades have seen some of the crises that resulted from this contradictory set of strategies. These include the Shah Bano case, the *mandir-masjid* controversy, and the debates over the 'uniform civil code' that challenged constitutionally-defined secularism to expose the unavailability of older models of tolerance. The rhetoric of tolerance is by itself inadequate for maintaining civic relations between majority and minority communities, as advocates of constitutional secularism are increasingly dubbed internal enemies of the Indian (Hindu) nation, while *Hindutva* claims to speak on behalf of an unrecognised demographic majority.

While this has clear implications for religious minorities (chiefly Muslims, and now increasingly, Christians), who have experienced organised violence by the Hindu majority, the Mandal-masjid years have also seen renewed attempts by the Hindu right to woo OBCs, as well as dalits and adivasis, as part of a reconstituted Hindu public. Arguments about the

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violent and masculinist character of *Hindutva* seldom notice the simultaneous political assertion of dalit-bahujans. Both of these events have been enabled by a new and distinct phase in the career of Indian democracy. The rise of *Hindutva* and a post-Mandal caste politics are shaped by the distinct character of neoliberalism in India, where the state must continue to assert a protective relationship to its largely poor population while withdrawing from its welfare role in practice. These changes are marked by a renewed focus on identity, whether it be the question 'who is a Hindu' that has occupied social and political reformers from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, or the recent attempts by scholars such as Kancha Ilaiah to make use of the category of the dalit-bahujan to designate a political community united by histories of suffering and exploitation as well as a culture of protest against brahminism. Much as Jotiba Phule made use of the term *shudratishudra* in his writings to include all those who did not belong to the exploitative communities of *shetjis* and *bhatjis*, the category of the dalit-bahujan indicates a demographic ma-

majority, a stigmatised community that has borne the brunt of the pernicious ideologies of caste. Ironically, the consolidation of a Hindu community with the rise of Hindu nationalism is paralleled by aggressive demands for equality and social justice by historically downtrodden castes.

Caste assertion both within the domain of parliamentary politics and struggles for recognition without illustrate how central caste is to India's political modernity. Historians have suggested that caste, like religious identity, constituted a peculiarly modern form of 'difference'. Caste came to be reified during the colonial period as an essential characteristic of Indian society, as an indicator of the importance of 'hierarchy' (rather than inequality) in India's social and political life. Arguments about the 'colonial construction' of caste have shown that caste has a history, that caste has always been related to political power and to the frameworks through which the British colonial state understood native society. But such critiques have also been criticised for missing the radical critiques of Hinduism and caste relations (eg by Phule, Ambedkar or Periyar) which asserted that colonialism had provided new avenues for the expression of brahminical power; that the brahminical order and colonial rule were in fact complicit in further entrenching the caste order. Instead, radical thinkers such as Ambedkar, Periyar and Phule held caste Hindus responsible for the ritual stigmatisation and political disenfranchisement that characterised caste exploitation. In the Ambedkarite vision, for example, such critiques of caste demanded that caste exploitation be recognised as a form of civic and political inequality requiring redress. The demand that historic discrimination be redressed, that the state engage in a politics of restitution, meant that practices of equalisation were significant.

Historically, the postcolonial state has addressed this demand by understanding caste as a form of socio-economic 'backwardness' to be addressed by reservations. But Ambedkar's demands were of much more revolutionary import. He demanded that caste disabilities which were largely social or religio-ritual in nature be regarded as the perpetration of political inequality. Ambedkar's ceaseless struggle to politicise everyday caste relations inaugurated the birth of the dalit citizen as a rights-bearing subject. It is the urgency of this political demand that we must distinguish from standard arguments by political scientists who argue that caste's post-colonial transformations have involved its further politicisation through vote bank politics. Such arguments about caste's essential destructiveness for the conduct of modern politics renders 'caste politics' the preserve and practice of the lower castes, allowing the upper castes freedom from the burdens of caste identity.

The political compromise of the Nehruvian years saw caste as a social evil, one slated to wither away through a process of modernisation. However, the post-Mandal conjuncture suggested that caste itself had mutated and changed, that it was integral to conceptions of citizenship and personhood. Broadly, post-Mandal assertions about historic discrimination and struggles for social justice have focused on: a) the demand for recognising caste as a critical component of studies of political modernity, and reservations as a mechanism of social justice rather than a further stigmatisation of lower-castes beneficiaries, as occurred during the Mandal debates; b) the more recent demand for reservation for women and for dalit-bahujan women, politicising differences amongst women; and c) a turn towards transnational discourses of human rights

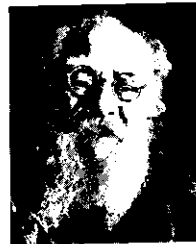
that increasingly equate caste discrimination with broader histories of racism as happened at Durban during the World Conference Against Racism. Thus, broadly speaking, we might say that debates about caste and gender are addressed to two audiences. One is a global public where issues of caste and gender discrimination have allowed a comparison of pernicious cultural practices. Within the nation-state, the demand has been to expand the presence of previously marginalised or unrecognised groups in existing forms of political participation. In both spheres, dalit-bahujan feminists have struggled to connect the intimate experience of sexual violation and vulnerability with more public forms of caste exploitation and domination.

If these critiques of gender and sexuality have not typically found a place in Indian feminism's self-representation until quite recently, might it be that mainstream feminism is another face of brahminism that replicates

upper-caste privilege while claiming to represent women as a political constituency? By contrast, caste critiques from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, for instance, show a sustained engagement with the centrality of caste in regulating sexual behavior. Contemporary feminist politics can thus be clarified through a critical understanding of the history of caste narratives and caste struggle. What might such histories tell us about the limits of both mainstream feminism and dalit (male) activism?

### Brahminical feminism

Indian feminism's history can be traced through a movement-centric analysis of struggles against sexual violence within and without the home, legal rights and protection for women as a particularly vulnerable political community, and a broader struggle to redefine matters of intimacy as public issues of political import, ie, the personal as political. This history has been the target of critique, especially by dalit feminists who have



Early critics of caste and patriarchy: Phule and Periyar.

criticised the narrow conception of sexual violence and of rights, since they do not address forms of caste privilege that allow upper-caste men to claim sexual access to dalit women, or the conditions of labouring women who are not restricted to the domestic sphere.

It is also possible to explore debates about social reform during the 19<sup>th</sup> century as attempts to modernise gender relations within the upper-caste family. Historically, social reform in colonial India modernised gendered relations in the upper-caste family while often dispossessing lower-caste women of their rights to property and inheritance in attempts to homogenise caste and community-specific laws regarding such practices. This made forms of modernity available to upper-caste women while allowing them to claim that caste was the burden of other struggles for rights and recognition. Nationalism served to further occlude the extent to which the 'woman's question' had been the upper-caste woman's question.

Beginning with the debates about the abolition of *sati* in 1829, the reformers' attention to practices such as widow remarriage and the age of consent focused solely on upper-caste women and their lives. This was accompanied by the quieter transformation of the domestic sphere through women's education and the percolation of a new sensibility about women's duty and responsibility within the home. A broader historical perspective on the ambivalent effects of colonial modernity on women's lives is useful because it suggests that the refusal to include caste as a critical aspect of gender relations has a longer history than might be imagined.

Colonised elites experienced colonial modernity as both profoundly empowering and disabling in its demand that the 'traditional' past be jettisoned *in toto* in favour of a global(ising) language of modernity. Colonial modernity produced 'the new woman' as critical to a reformulated patriarchy. This was a patriarchy that, as the historian Tanika Sarkar has argued, was premised on a discourse of rights and the juridical language of 'consent' that was unavailable even to the colonised elites. Yet this language of gendered intimacy as a realm of the consensual rather than the coercive, laid claim to a political imagination far removed from the racialised structures of rule Indians experienced in their daily lives.

Or we find in Partha Chatterjee's justly famous essay, 'Nationalist Resolution of the Woman's Question' that gender (and the domain of the intimate) offered a means for working through the contradictions of colonial modernity. Women (especially women from the middle-classes) came to be embodied with a set of 'traditional' expectations about good behavior, respectability and comportment that they carried within them, which allowed them to negotiate the tortuous thickets

of the public world. This 'compact' between the nation and its men about the role of women in public life achieved during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, came at the cost of excluding a whole set of issues from the agenda of social reform, and it allowed some women to be modern at the expense of others. The ambiguous legacy of colonial modernity was that it came to be restricted to upper-caste women. Caste and gender were the two issues internal to Hindu custom and society that had to be reformed in order for upper-caste male reformers and nationalists to claim a moral-ethical space for anti-colonial nationalism. Though the 'woman's question' as articulated by upper-caste reformers consistently elided issues of caste, radical assaults on caste ideology consistently focused on how caste regulations governed women's behavior.

Rosalind O'Hanlon, whose work has focused on the emergence of radical low-caste critiques of caste exploitation, has argued that an emergent colonial public sphere in fact produced new kinds of caste domination during the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This political critique of the 'modernity' of brahminism is especially evident in Phule's writings. Phule's awareness of the debilitating codes of conduct that disciplined upper-caste women was integral to his critique of caste relations in colonial society. He opened a school for untouchable girls in 1848 and a home for upper-caste widows punished for illicit sexual relations. His challenge to upper-caste men through

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**Upper-caste ideas of sexual purity kept caste-Hindu widows within their homes and offered them questionable forms of 'protection'**

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a critique of their treatment of women, as well as his empathetic identification with oppressed brahmin and upper-caste women, are important. The description of his home is significant, "The enclosed copy of printed notices were [*sic*] then pasted on the walls of the corners of streets, where the Brahmins reside. From its commencement up to the present time, thirty-five pregnant widows came to this house...". In fact, Phule argued that upper-caste women faced the impossible burden of maintaining caste purity in their person. Thus 'softer' forms of gendered domination that upper-caste women faced were no less oppressive than the expropriation of manual and sexual labour experienced by lower-caste women.

A female activist of Phule's organisation, the Satyashodak Samaj, Tarabai Shinde, in 1882 wrote the revolutionary *Stri-Purush Tulana* (A Comparison Between Women and Men). This tract was written after an upper-caste widow, Vijayalakshmi, had been convicted of infanticide. As with Phule's attention to his widows' home, unfortunate incidents of widows being impregnated by relatives within the family either by force or through consensual relations, were frequent and drew attention to the demand that upper-caste widows not remarry. *Stri-Purush Tulana* was a critique of gender relations as well

as of caste, both of which disempowered women. This serves to mark Shinde's polemic as one of the first *feminist* critiques of caste. Nevertheless, it was one that anti-colonial nationalists ignored.

It is no coincidence that descriptions of upper-caste restrictions on widow remarriage and the ensuing torment of widows within families inaugurate Shinde's account of the effects of caste and gender ideologies. Widows were at once the target of lower caste satire against the upper-caste family sphere, visible symbols of the necessity of social reform for upper-caste reformers, and proof of the correctness of religious strictures against remarriage for conservatives. The enforcement of widowhood showed how caste morality was regulated through gender. Widows became the object of upper- and lower-caste reformers' concern over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because widows' maintenance of *caste purity* was really at issue.

The maintenance of caste boundaries was the crucial factor in the ideology of widowhood. Though the widow might be rendered socially and sexually 'dead' – tonsuring her head, forcing her to wear a white or red sari, depriving her of jewellery, demanding that she restrict her passions by controlling her intake of food and spice – she still generated anxiety because she was sexually knowledgeable. Such anxiety supported attempts to restrict the freedom of widows within the joint-family household, and sanctioned the drudgery of widows whose work, though it was essential to the household, was consistently marginalised. The historian Uma Chakravarty writes, "The widow's institutionalised marginality, a liminal state between being physically alive and being socially dead, was the ultimate cultural outcome of the deprivation of her sexuality as well as her personhood". As well, the extraction of the labour of widows by the families who maintained them enabled *other* women's freedom from toil within the family. Though widows were outside the ideologies of marriage and domesticity, they served as a reminder that coercive conceptions of protection and affection were only ever episodically available to women – that these were contingent on the husband's physical presence. Thus, upper-caste ideologies of sexual purity kept caste-Hindu widows within their homes and offered them questionable forms of 'protection' whose other face was the violence of upper-caste ideologies of respectability.

The centrality of caste ideology in regulating sexual behavior was also commented upon by BR Ambedkar and EV Ramaswamy Naicker (Periyar), both of whom spoke from *outside* Indian nationalism's discursive frame.

In the heyday of dalit mobilisation during the 1920s and 1930s, Ambedkar wrote that intermarriage was the most important way of annihilating caste, since it alone acknowledged the relationship between the maintenance of caste purity and the control of women's sexuality. This emphasis on the sexual underpinnings of caste society is important, but what is more significant is Ambedkar's acknowledgment of *desire* between

castes. For him, breaking the caste rules of kinship alone would undo untouchability. If inter-caste marriages were to take place as acts of choice – which they would have to, since caste ideologies did not permit them (the suggestion was that such unions went against nature) – such choice raised the possibility that men and women of different castes might desire each other. For Ambedkar, inter-caste marriage was to be differentiated from the prevalent forms of illicit union (sexual violation, really) that dalit activists had virulently campaigned against. For example, Ambedkar included inter-caste marriage in the Hindu Code Bill as *Hindu* marriage rather than as civil marriage registered under the Special Marriages Act.

The woman's question was also central to Periyar's Self-Respect Movement, begun in 1925. Periyar had been a staunch Congressite and a supporter of the Congress until 1925 when he broke away to launch the Self-Respect Movement (SRM), or *Suyamariyadai Iyakkam*. The very term 'self respect' indicates the utopian vision of a casteless and perhaps atheist society based on human dignity and self worth.

Much as Phule had done 50 years earlier, Periyar focused on the regulation of sexuality through caste codes. Periyar institutionalised the self-respect marriage, one where activists married across castes, did away with all rituals (in fact Periyar often had couples marry at times that were supposed to be inauspicious according to the Hindu almanac), and treated their marriages as an occasion for political speech-making and caste critique. S Anandhi and V Geetha's work shows that these were attempts to critique the gender hierarchies inherent in the structure of the Hindu marriage, thereby *politicising* marriage. The SRM's attempts to reduce the financial burden of weddings was connected to the attempts to rethink marriage itself as a partnership of two political comrades who had decided to marry, relieving families of any part in the performance of the marriage. The use of Self-Respect slogans and banners to adorn cinemas and other public places where Self-Respect marriages took place, and the exchange of 'vows' that sought to respect the public and political lives of Self-Respect activists as much as it sought to re-imagine their private lives as one of mutual desire, challenged caste orthodoxy. Periyar's attempts to integrate caste and gender issues politically through the form of the Self-Respect marriage lead to imaginings of a different future, one where issues of caste, gender and sexuality could be reconfigured and rearranged for the mutual respect and pleasure of men and women.

These brief examples show that gender ideology was critical in controlling caste boundaries, an issue that comes through clearly in critiques by dalit and lower-caste thinkers. Caste ideologies draw on biological metaphors of stigma and defilement to enable differentiated conceptions of personhood. However, such prescriptions are also routinely violated by the intimacy

that such hierarchies enable, as radical attempts to annihilate caste noted. Because caste distinctions legitimate forms of socio-political control through the regulation of kinship, upper-caste men had access to dalit women, for instance, while they demanded that 'their' women preserve caste purity through the purity of lineage. Dalit and non-brahmin critiques of caste recognised the hypocrisy of caste's sexual economy. (This is not to suggest that such critiques went unopposed, or that they were successful. For example, there were members of the non-brahmin movement in Maharashtra who were interested in emulating upper-caste standards of sexual behaviour and respectable conduct as a form of upward mobility.) As with the organisation of sexuality and race in the American south or South Africa under apartheid, the regulation of sexual access across caste and race *by law* distinguished this state of affairs. Compromised as feminism has been by its caste and class coordinates, this historical memory is considered the province of those interested in caste politics, ie dalit-bahujans. In the process, a profound analysis of how caste, gender, and sexuality work together has remained unacknowledged. What would it mean for contemporary feminist politics to acknowledge a critique of caste and gender that has emerged outside of an identifiably 'feminist' framework?

Excavating an alternative history of gender and sex-

uality, one that complicates basic feminist preconceptions about how patriarchy operates or where to locate gender oppression, provides evidence of long-standing Indian debates about gender inequality. Such genealogies are powerful for countering chauvinistic Hindutva arguments about feminism as a Western import. At the same time, such radical political critiques of the caste/gender order necessarily complicate the search for authentic sexual practices and pleasures unsullied by the perversions of the West – what we might call the 'Kamasutra syndrome'. In fact, if such critiques were to become central to the Indian feminist canon, it would be the responsibility of feminists – dalit-bahujan and otherwise – to craft a critique of gender and sexuality that addresses caste as critical to the ways in which gender relations become visible in social space. This is a form of responsibility that neither privileges dalit-bahujan experience as extraordinary, nor one that practices a form of caste amnesia as the precondition of being secular and modern. Rather, it is a means of acknowledging entangled and shared histories through which women often exploit other women as the precondition of their own freedoms, where men are engaged in complicated negotiations of masculinity, and where men's claims to women as sexual property has to be understood through the lens of both caste privilege and gender domination. ▽



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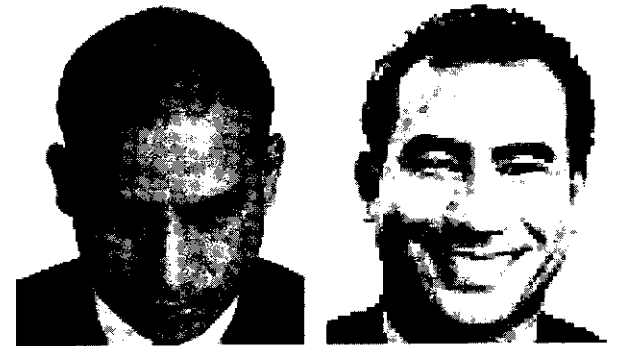
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**A D V E R T I S E M E N T**

# Dual citizenship Of what and for whom?

The 'Pravasi Bharatiya Divas' held in honour of the Indian diaspora at Delhi in early January 2003, and the announcement of a 'national day' commemorating the return of Gandhi to India from South Africa mark a new moment in the government of India's relationship with its expatriates. But the question still remains, 'who is an Indian'.

by Itty Abraham

The long history of Indian migration to places far from India has led to a situation where Indians are now found in most parts of the world, in various states of being. In a few places, such as Indonesia and Thailand, they have been assimilated to the point of near-indistinguishability. In others they have become an integral if contested element of the host country because of the size of the community (East Indians in Trinidad, Guyana, Fiji). In East Africa, they are long-standing communities without a great deal of assimilation. In still other places, such as the gulf, the white commonwealth and the United States, they represent economic migrants of various social and economic classes. There are other categories; these examples are intended solely as illustration of the great variety of what can be called NRIs and PIOs ('non-resident Indian' and 'people of Indian origin' respectively).

The modern story of Indian emigration overseas begins with the colonial period and the demand for labour following the abolition of slavery in 1833. Indenture, a system of labour-contracting that came close to slavery but retained the fiction of free labour, sent thousands of Indian men and women to the West Indies, Mauritius, Fiji, Malaysia and other plantation states in the British empire. Many of those who went abroad were low-caste agricultural workers from contemporary Bihar and Tamil Nadu. They would not have thought of themselves as 'Indian' but rather as Maithili speakers or members of particular castes as they left the shores of India. When they reached their destination, they had received any number of epithets, 'hindoos' and 'coolies' being only two.

To this well known form of mi-

gration has to be added the travels of merchants and their families, especially from the west coast of India, sailors and shippers, civil servants, religious figures and pilgrims, who could be found from the Caribbean to South Africa to Malacca. The British empire initiated a new form of movement in its use of the Indian army as an imperial counterinsurgency and military police force, from Africa to Europe, where Indians distinguished themselves in two world wars. These groups were not necessarily migrants, though some did stay behind in the places they visited, but their travels and presence helped establish the idea of Indians as a transnational category, roughly similar to, though on a smaller scale, the idea of the overseas Chinese. Even before the idea of 'India' was fully established in the territorial domain of the country, the idea of the Indian overseas was a meaningful category that included Hindus, Sikhs, Parsis, Muslims, Christians and others.

The importance of overseas Indian populations in the national anti-colonial struggle has not received its full due in historical literature. After all, the most distinguished Indian leader of the struggle for political independence owed no small part of his rise to political awareness to his experiences as a diasporic lawyer in pre-apartheid South Africa. On his return to India, among the first mass actions Gandhi undertook, in 1921-22, to try and mobilise the Muslim community was around an event far removed from Indian soil, namely, the fall of the caliphate after the rise of the young Turks. Working in a climate that was quite internationalised, and not yet territorially determined, it was possible to raise passions that could be called anti-colonial around this seemingly confessional issue.

### Overseas NRI/POI populations

Southeast Asia	4.6 million
Persian gulf region	3.4 million
United States	1.7 million
United Kingdom	1.2 million
South Africa	1 million
Canada	850,000
Europe (excl UK)	560,000
Mauritius	710,000
Africa (excl SA)	540,000
Trinidad & Tobago	500,000
Suriname	150,000

Awareness and interest in the Indian overseas population, or diaspora, does not end with the arrival of Gandhi. From the 1920s onwards, the Congress party – even more than the Communist Party of India – raised the issue of the condition of labour and political rights of overseas indentured labour and emigrants at every annual meeting. The colonial Indian government did respond, and these pressures often led to trouble in London with (British) representatives of the Indian government facing off against the representatives of the dominions of Canada and South Africa in particular. Whether via popular reactions to the recommendations of Ceylon's Donoughmore Commission, whose implementation resulted in the Tamil minority being completely swamped by the majority Sinhala in the 1931 state council elections, or the state executions of labour leaders in Malaya, Indians overseas were part of the larger imagination of a nation still coming into its own.

That is why it came as quite a shock following independence when the Congress, in power, made it quite clear to its overseas diaspora that it could not expect to call on a 'right to return'. The emigrants were informed that they should make their peace with their local communities and seek to settle down in Ceylon, Malaya or anywhere else. Indian nationalism was being exclusively defined around territory. The difficulties with this definition were at once visible with Indians in Ceylon. Negotiations between an increasingly chauvinist Ceylonese government and its Indian counterpart dragged on for years; the compromise forged by the Sirimavo-Shastri agreement of 1964 finally forced one million 'estate Tamils' (Tamils of relatively recent migration who were primarily employed as plantation labour) to be repatriated, as long as it was understood that this created no precedent for a 'right to return'.

### Bypassing the queue

The turbulent economic climate of the 1970s and 1980s helped to establish the idea that the non-resident Indian population was an economic resource of considerable potential. From the 1970s onward, the growing importance of remittances from the Persian gulf states forced the Indian state to recognise the potential value of overseas Indians, even if they were often uneducated, largely Muslim, and primarily from the labouring classes. Yet, notwithstanding the importance of these funds, and precisely because of the social background of the gulf migrants, the policy of the state did not change substantially. It was only with the emergence



US-based NRIs like Pepsi Chief Financial Officer Indra Nooyi (left) got the dual citizenship nod. Others, in countries like Trinidad, did not.

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**The NRI is the  
Indian equivalent of  
the overseas  
Chinese: a  
potential source of  
foreign direct  
investment and  
technology transfer**

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of middle class success stories in the West, such as Sam Pitroda who came back to India with the telecom revolution up his sleeve, and Swraj Paul (now knighted), that the idea of the NRI began to take root. The NRI was seen as the Indian equivalent of the overseas Chinese: a

potential source of foreign direct investment and technology transfer. With the growing wealth of overseas engineers, scientists and doctors, a group of individuals whose skills had been largely provided by subsidies from the Indian taxpayer, it was felt that the motherland had a reasonable expectation of some return on investment. Little, however, was forthcoming from these middle class, upper caste migrants in the US and Europe until the information technology boom of the 1990s when a new class of computer

specialist, often hailing from urban lower middle class and agrarian India, began to take up residence in the West. While gulf remittances continue to matter enormously, the recognition given to those migrants falls far short of the overwhelming attention paid to the US-based NRI, whose primary interest in India, to the extent it exists, appears to be in building temples and supporting cultural ventures.

Until the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power, nothing really changed. However, the rise of the BJP was intimately related to overseas populations in a number of ways. Apart from overseas financial support, the Hindu revivalist message of the BJP and its 'family' was sharpened and strengthened through its overseas connections. For instance, many scholars have remarked upon a contradiction inherent in *Hindutva* – a majority population that represents itself as a beleaguered minority in order to increase its strength against those who are objectively weaker than it. This message bears particular force overseas, where Hindus are a minority, and where cultural anxiety about the reproduc-

tion of religious or traditional values acquires new force.

While earlier generations of migrants and contemporary gulf residents might have wanted the Indian state to offer them greater protection of their human rights, NRI populations in the West do not seek the same guarantees. Rather, the primary motivation behind their political efforts in aid of the Indian state seems to be the desire to hold dual citizenship. While the government made an early and poorly managed effort to respond to this desire via its PIO scheme, few were willing to pay the exorbitant fee for uncertain benefits, which included separate lines at immigration counters in Indian airports. Queues in India being what they are, this was still hardly compensation for shelling out USD 1000 per family member. The relatively well-off middle class NRI, who is the most articulate proponent of dual citizenship, seeks a means to protect his property rights in India, to repatriate his foreign currency, and to be recognised as Indian provided he can hold onto the foreign visa-free passport acquired with no small difficulty. This is, by the same token, a desire of the newly landed immigrant rather than succeeding generations, no matter how Indian they may feel themselves. It has not been recognised that the particular urgency with which dual citizenship is now being called for will pass, to be replaced with a more pragmatic conception of a passport as a means to move, not unlike the maritime flag of convenience – buy the flag of another country, escape taxation and regulations.

Now that we have heard that the government will award dual citizenship only to Indians from seven countries, the question of who is being excluded acquires great force. Earlier generations of migrants to the Asia-Pacific region and to the Caribbean are not included in this dispensation, but Indians living in the white commonwealth and the US are. The gulf migrants – still the single largest source of remittances – are excluded. Although the Dr LM Singhvi High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora makes clear that economic nationalism rules its report – increasing the flow of hard currency funds to India and improving the image of India abroad – the most obvious source of funds, and the overseas Indians most in need of protection, are excluded from dual citizenship. It is difficult not to see a caste-religion hierarchy at work here, buttressed by the latest 'security threats'.

There is much to be commended in the committee report, in particular its effort to map globally the scale of the Indian diaspora. However, in spite of its official remit, the report dares not ask the most basic and necessary question – 'who is an Indian' – yet provides answers to the question both in the decision to selec-

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**Nepalis, denizens of the 'only Hindu kingdom', are given free reign to wander all over India, while the Bangladeshi Muslim migrant is a dangerous infiltrator, potential terrorist and overall subversive**

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tively award dual citizenship and in its almost comical invocation of national security concerns. The dangers associated with dual citizenship are well reflected in the report, where this recommendation is the only one in the 30-page executive summary printed in bold type. Most of the relevant paragraphs are dedicated to a discussion of how the dangers of dual citizenship may be avoided, including the dangers of terrorism. To quote: "The Committee made detailed recommendations [with regard to dual citizenship], being deeply conscious of the heightened security concerns following the series of terrorist attacks, especially the attack on India's Parliament on December 13, 2001". Dual citizenship is, in this sense, all about weighing possible economic benefits against the fear of letting in a terrorist.

It is barely worth mentioning that terrorists seeking to infiltrate India's territorial space rarely do so via the mechanisms of international flights, immigration lines and dual passports. They sneak across borders after paying off border patrols, they get onto boats carrying drugs and gold across the seas, they walk across tracts of land that have no sign that any country might lay claim to them; worse still, they may be produced within the body politic. What is the real security threat being invoked here? The only answer appears to be a problem of Indian political and constitutional history that has yet to

be resolved: how to legitimately exclude Pakistanis and Bangladeshis – Muslims – from requesting Indian citizenship when they fulfil all other requirements for being Indians without invoking the rule of religion. It is no surprise that Nepalis, denizens of the 'only Hindu kingdom', are given free reign to wander all over India, while the Bangladeshi migrant, usually Muslim, is a dangerous infiltrator, potential terrorist and overall subversive, even though s/he may be engaged in extremely hard and poorly rewarded work that an Indian will not choose to do. The dual citizenship debate helps bring to the fore long-standing biases in Indian foreign relations and seeks to impose the latest artificial resolution to the unresolved question at the heart of the republic: who is an Indian?

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# A society on pyre

The stars are not wanted now, put out every one;  
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun—  
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood:  
For nothing now can ever come to any good  
— WH Auden, *Funeral Blues*

**DESPITE THE** tall claims of saffronite pseudo-historians, the history of 'India that is *Bharat*' begins only with the British conquests of the Indo-Ganga plains after the battle of Plassey in 1757. Earlier, it was the gods who peopled Asoka's Jambudwipa while all contemporaneous foreigners were *yavanas*. One would have been hard put to find either *brahmanas* or *sramanas*. Neither did the boundary of Manu's *Aryabrata* extend beyond today's north India.

After the sepoy mutiny of 1857, later recorded as the first war of independence in the nationalist literature of free India, the British transformed the Mughal's fluid expression of Hindustan into something concrete: the concept of India as a unitary colony of the crown in South Asia. Lord Curzon elaborated the place of India in the empire in an eponymous book published in 1909, and it was with its publication that the seeds of the future hegemon in the Subcon were sown. And even more than Guru Golwalker, the *Sangh Parivar* owes a debt of gratitude to Lord Canning (1812-1862), the first viceroy of India, for providing it with the imagination of *akhand Bharat*.

A competing imagining began with the arrival of Mohandas K Gandhi from South Africa. Gandhi's *swaraj* was different from earlier anti-colonial movements for self-rule. Even though cloaked in the vocabulary of tradition, *swaraj* was a radically modern concept – it dared to fashion an inclusive Indian identity based on universal values of equality in polity, equity in economy and justice in society. For a backward colony mired in poverty and hopelessness, these concepts were revolutionary.

Jawaharlal Nehru continued with the Gandhian project of imagining a new India and added two dimensions of his own to it – state secularism and Fabian socialism. It is this process after which Sunil Khilnani has titled his book on the subject: *The Idea of India*.

Nehru's daughter used such an idea of India as a resource. A demagogue par excellence, Indira Gandhi coined catchy slogans such as '*garibi hatao*' (calling for an end to poverty), abolished the privy purse, nationalised banks, created war hysteria against Pakistan, and declared a state of emergency in the country when faced with the prospect of an adverse court decision. She did all this in the name of defending her late father's idea of India. The fiasco that was the Janata Party government excused her sins of omission and commission. When

Madam Gandhi was killed by her bodyguards, the pogrom of Sikhs that followed elevated her memory to that of a divinity of Hindu wrath.

Jawaharlal's grandson chose to ignore the Nehruvian idea of India and rode to power by cashing in on the communal divide created by his mother's killing. The Rajiv Gandhi regime brought in the Doon-goons of free-market fundamentalism and religious obscurantism. The Nike shoes and Ray-Ban Aviators of a former commercial pilot did not come in the way of realpolitic, and the Shah Bano episode demonstrated to the saffron brigade that the state was no longer wedded to the (flawed but nonetheless earnest) secularism of Gandhi and Nehru.

The *Ram shila* and the *rathayatra* culminated in the destruction of the historic Babri Masjid, and Guru Golwalker's ideological children entrenched themselves in New Delhi through Pokharan II, Kargil and the devoted worship of their new deity – George Bush II. It is easier to curse the Narendra Modis and Pravin Togadias – they go to ridiculous lengths to invite the scorn of the secular elite upon themselves – but they are merely symptoms of a deeper malaise that afflicts Indian society. The concept of the state as a protector of all faiths, dating back to Asoka and Akbar, is long dead, and the Nehruvian idea of India too is taking its last gasp. Since no credible alternative has yet emerged, the consuming classes are deserting the republic for the illusion of an India Incorporated.

## Funeral feasts

The resurgence of religious fundamentalism and economic conservatism is not unique to India. Post-11 September, to submit meekly to the global hegemon seems to be the common fate of all humanity. What really rankles is the lack of willingness on the part of the Indian elite to realise the gravity of the looming crisis. For the few hundred thousand super-elite PLUS ('people like us') of the ABCD-type in metropolitan cities (Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Calcutta, Delhi), the fate of the other 1.4 billion simply does not matter (one billion in India and 0.4 billion in the rest of the Subcontinent). Corporate India has not even realised that its free ride cannot last if the 'other' India is not taken on board as well.

Even though the event was billed to be of continental scale, participants from the Subcontinent dominated the Asia Social Forum (2-7 January 2003) at Hyderabad. It was a meeting of activists, scholars and others agitated by the spectre of economic globalisation and global one-man-rule. The mood at the venue, the Nizam College grounds was festive, but every participant seemed to understand the enormity of the challenge presented by profiteering multinationals and weak

national governments hoodwinked into thinking that the market provides all the answers.

The so-called national media of India ignored the event completely even as it went gaga over the Confederation of Indian Industry's 'partnership summit' hosted by Hyderabad, aimed partly at attracting foreign investment into Andhra Pradesh. The chief minister, Chandrababu Naidu, may be a charming host but it is quite unlikely that any of his prospective suitors felt safe in a state where abject poverty and superficial prosperity live cheek-by-jowl in the capital itself. The visiting business bigwigs must have had a ball in Hyderabad at public expense and then gone home to do what they know best – sell some more of their products and services to the remittance economy of a city that takes pride in providing virgin brides to the oil sheikhs of Arabia.

Even as Hyderabad was occupied with the social forum and the business meet, there was a fiesta on in New Delhi. The central government laid out the red carpet for its prodigal sons and some daughters. The purist regime of New Delhi revealed its true colours by creating a hierarchy for Non-resident Indians (NRIs) and people of Indian origin (PIOs) based on which country they belonged to – while residents of countries with freely convertible currencies will be entitled for dual nationality, their poorer cousins will have to fend for themselves. This then has happened to the 'idea of India' in the age of multinationals.

### Hazy future

The town of Saharsa in the Kosi floodplains of Bihar is a long, long way from Hyderabad. On the fourth Republic Day of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the town was shrouded in haze as hundreds of limp tricolour flags braved one of the bitterest winters in living memory. Electricity supply in Saharsa district is erratic, its roads are in a shambles, the water supply is unreliable, municipal services are nonexistent, and all that the policemen do is extort small-change from famished *riksaa*-pullers.

The bare bottoms along railway tracks that so revolted VS Naipaul in *An Area of Darkness* are a poor joke in comparison to the overflowing sewers of almost every town in Bihar. If the sanitary practices of a society indicate the level of its culture, then municipalities of the Ganga plains have regressed to a stage earlier than that of the Indus valley in the second millennium BCE.

But in Saharsa too, islands of private affluence thrive in the sea of public misery. Along the market strip, hundreds of portable generator sets light up the lives of impulse buyers and creative shopkeepers. A plethora of private 'boarding English convent academy' schools compete for custom while government schools wither away in neglect.

Whether staffed by a trained doctor or a quack is a different question altogether; almost every medical shop is a private clinic and only those go to government hospitals who have nowhere else to turn to. Laloo Prasad

Yadav may be guilty of various ills, including having made off with the fodder, but should he alone take the rap for the mismanagement of public services in Bihar?

No privatisation drive can succeed in treating the deep-rooted ills of political economy, created by various historical forces that hit and hurt the poor in a town like Saharsa. In the name of state socialism, government policies have pushed people into the embrace of the business classes. Those without purchasing power have nothing while the rich call for lesser government still rather than rally for better government. The need, however, is for more government in such societies, not less; and authority has to be established in a lawless land before government can be substituted even in part.

Globalisation has no meaning in this region of Bihar where all business revolves around rites of passage: a feast for the male newborn, dowry for the daughter, funerals for the old and annual *shraddha* ceremonies for the dead. These generate more business for the retailers in the small towns of north India than other, more productive, pursuits. In settlements such as Saharsa, the living envy the dead, especially under the shroud of the winter fog or *seet lahar*.

More worrisome than the abject condition of the breathing poor are the loss of hope in the middle class and the lack of self-confidence among the social elite. Almost everyone who has the capacity to change the status quo wants to opt out. Information technology – the El Dorado of the Indian bourgeoisie – is a useful tool to fool the waiting-to-be-rich middle class, but it has no meaning for the masses for whom even the kerosene lantern (the electoral symbol of Laloo's Rastriya Janata Dal) is an object of desire.

One may say that Bihar is an extreme example that diverts attention from the technological strides being taken by a country that boasts a scientist as head of state. But that is ignoring the obvious – it is the worst case that tests the mettle of an ideology or a leader. Maharashtra has its mafiosi, Karnataka-Tamil Nadu have not been able to handle the lone warrior Veerappan, Andhra is fighting its Naxalites, Bihar and Jharkhand have been tackling their individual Maoist insurgencies for decades. None of these challenges is going to disappear even if every corporate Indian begins to drink colas (red, blue or of whichever hue) by the gallon.

There is no escape in sight from the tyranny of commerce as a concerted attempt to discredit politics gathers momentum. If another world is possible, as the Asia Social Forum proclaimed, a new socialism must rise from the ashes of the old one. There is no other way of tackling the twin monsters of communalism and class hatred in India. And since the present boundary of India encompasses most of South Asia, the region cannot hope to rise unless Bharat tackles its internal contradictions, so visible in both Hyderabad and Saharsa. ▽

– CK Lal

# Sikkim on top



Gangtok

A part of India for less than 30 years, Sikkim has nonetheless come to embody the best of South Asia's largest state: engaged and responsive governance, sustained and ecologically-sensitive commercial development, and large-scale investment in the state's people to make it a 21<sup>st</sup> century development dynamo. Sikkim is unique for its lush and rugged physical setting and human diversity, but it has also made a name for itself as one of the best-managed states in India. Led by Chief Minister Pawan Chamling since 1994, Sikkim has reversed a fiscal slide, taken governance to the people and balanced resources from New Delhi with intelligent local planning. It now stands at the top of the heap and has set a course to continue its impressive advancement in the decades ahead.

## A land of beauty and extremes

The erstwhile kingdom of Sikkim joined the Indian union in 1975. With a small physical setting, 7096 square kilometres, and only a half-million people, Sikkim may be among India's smallest states, but its biodiversity, topographical variation and ethnic diversity belie its size. The state is divided into four districts – North, South, East and West – with Gangtok, the capital, lying in the East district. More than three-quarters of Sikkim's borders are international, with Nepal, Tibet (China) and Bhutan bounding this landlocked state to the west, north and east.

The south of Sikkim rises from north Bengal's rolling hills while the northern terrain is highly mountainous; the state's elevation ranges from a mere 300 metres above mean sea level to over 8000 metres. As a result, the variety of flora and fauna within this small state is Himalayan in scale, encompassing the tropical, the temperate and the alpine. The lower areas have an abundance of ferns and bamboo, the northern valleys are draped by pines, oak, chestnut, white magnolia and wild cherries, while in the upper reaches, rhododendrons and orchids, of which Sikkim has 600 species, stamp their colourful mark on the landscape. The third highest peak in the world, Kanchenjunga or *Khangchendzonga* (8598 metres), is on Sikkim's northwest frontier.

Sikkim is also blessed with a variety of animal life. 35 percent of India's birds are found in Sikkim, and it is the home of such endangered species as the red panda, the elusive snow leopard, the clouded leopard, the blue sheep, the musk deer, the Himalayan *tahr*, the lammergeyer, the Impeyan pheasant, the Satyr tragopan and the blood pheasant.

36 percent of Sikkim is under forest cover, making it one of the most attractive destinations in South Asia for

nature and wildlife enthusiasts. This, along with its towering mountains and famous Buddhist monasteries, of which Rumtek, just outside Gangtok, is only one, have helped Sikkim raise substantial revenue from tourism to invest in its people. Given its reputation for being one of the few places in India, and indeed in the Subcontinent, that has enjoyed uninterrupted peace in recent times, Sikkim has emerged as one of Asia's premier tourist destinations.

## People and leadership

Lepchas are thought to be the original inhabitants of Sikkim, and today, they, Bhutias and ethnic Nepalis are the three predominant communities. Apart from these groups, Sikkim has attracted many settlers from the plains including, more recently, migrant workers who have arrived in Sikkim to assist the many ongoing public works projects such as road building. At INR 50, Sikkim guarantees the highest daily wages anywhere in India. The current state government, led by the chief minister, Pawan Chamling, recently succeeded in procuring scheduled tribe status for the Limbus and the Tamangs of Sikkim, thus fulfilling a long-pending demand to protect the interests of these two communities. It has also asked New Delhi to accord constitutional recognition to the languages of the Lepcha, Bhutia and Limbu peoples.

In 1975, Sikkim went from being an independent monarchy to becoming the 22<sup>nd</sup> state of the Indian union. It has since been fully absorbed into the Indian polity and now, under the governance of the Sikkim Democratic Front (SDF), prides itself on being a leading example of real, people-based democracy. The SDF has been in power in Sikkim since 1994, and earned re-election in 1999 on an impressive slate of successes. To get a clear picture, in 2001, Sikkim published its Human Development Report, becoming only



Land of unsurpassed natural beauty: Tsomgo lake (3753 metres), a red panda cub, one of Sikkim's rhododendrons.

the third state in India to do so. In 2002, the SDF government successfully completed the first phase of its government-to-people information exchange programme, which was innovatively fashioned after traditional fairs.

As part of its development plan for Sikkim, the SDF government has mapped out a long-term strategy of accomplishing 100 percent literacy, poverty elimination, youth empowerment and sustainable fiscal health. Devolution of power to local communities and previously marginalised sections of the populace such as women are viewed as inalienable components in a programme of bottom-up development. Policy-makers also appreciate that infrastructure development must advance mindful of the natural needs of this ecologically diverse and fragile state. Its unique geo-strategic position makes Sikkim ideally placed for a day when the WTO regime diffuses nation-state boundaries, allowing Sikkim to become the focal point of regional trade between eastern India, Nepal, Tibet (China) and Bhutan.

When the SDF came to power in 1994, its primary objective was to rescue the state exchequer. In 1994, Sikkim had internal revenue generation of INR 40 crore; even meeting the cost of the salaries of government officials was a challenge. With its finances in such a precarious state, contractors and suppliers were loath to work in Sikkim. The SDF realised that the institutionalisation of certain fiscal processes was imperative before Sikkim could achieve badly needed stability in its fiscal regime.

In a bid to invigorate economic growth and social development, and bring some predictability to the system, the SDF undertook an intellectual exercise to formulate a time-bound development strategy, and to determine how best its objectives could be realised. The government set up the state planning commission to achieve this and bring



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the government's fiscal programmes in line with the objectives of the centre's 10<sup>th</sup> five-year plan (2002-2007). Sikkim's annual internal revenue, now standing at INR 150 crore, attests to the state's careful strategy of nurturing tax and non-tax revenue.

The wheels for achieving the medium-term goal of creating an enabling context for economic growth have also been set in motion. Infrastructure, a key input in industrial activity and agricultural mobility, is being built in consultation with various stakeholders in the development of Sikkim. The Confederation of Indian Industry, international donor agencies, multilateral financial institutions such as the World Bank, bureaucrats and leaders from various civil society groups have been involved in the formulation of a development agenda such that its fruits reach the people at the grassroots level. An effort is underway to formulate public-private partnerships in order to power development programmes. The airport at Pakyong, near Gangtok, which is scheduled to be operational by 2005, is expected to do much for facilitating business in Sikkim. Also in focus are developing Sikkim's massive potential for power generation and distribution (Sikkim expects to be a power exporter by 2007), roads and connectivity, and education. In a state where almost 60 percent of the population fall below 24 years, it is especially important that the job market grows at a healthy and sustained rate.

A major achievement for Sikkim was securing the state's inclusion in the North Eastern Council in December 2002,



*Rumtek monastery*

which gives it access to central funds allocated for incentive programmes in the region, and allows its youth preferred access to premier educational institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology in Guwahati, Assam. This not only assists Sikkim in garnering fiscal support for its industrial and agricultural development programme but also enhances its human capital.

The development agenda is being fashioned with an eye on certain long-term goals that Sikkim hopes to achieve by the year 2015. Among other goals, this includes the alleviation of all poverty through a vibrant, ecologically-sensitive economy that is responsive to global economic developments; achieving a negligible level of unemployment by grooming a skilled workforce and promoting the service industry as the key economic sector; reaching 100 percent literacy; facilitating high levels of social justice; making health care accessible to all while eliminating HIV infection from the state; stabilising the population at 5 million by 2050; and facilitating inclusive democracy. Fiscal planning has also been geared to achieving the aim of internal revenue generation of INR 1000 crore by the year 2015, which is a realistic goal if Sikkim's revenue generation continues to grow at its current rate of 35 percent per annum.

At the December 2002 meeting of the National Development Council, the apex planning body in India, the chief minister announced that Sikkim was targeting an annual growth rate of 10 percent per annum, two percent more than the target national average. To help with this aim, he requested that the centre link Sikkim to the prime minister's 'golden quadrilateral' highway project that will join India's east and west. If achieved, this will reduce the state's dependence on the overburdened 31 A national

highway that currently is its only road link to the rest of the country. He also petitioned New Delhi for an additional INR 100 crore in support of the Pakyong airport project. Making clear that human resource development was at the heart of Sikkim's development programme, Chamling also asked for a university to be established in Sikkim.

### Janata Mela

Literally, 'public fair', the *Janata Mela* completed its first phase in mid-December 2002 with the chief minister addressing a crowd of thousands in various places in the state. An exercise in direct contact, the *Janata Mela* is a forum for the chief minister to engage the people of Sikkim on government policies, encourage them to become self-reliant and empower them to ask for responsibility in governance by emphasising that it is the people's money that the government spends. It also provides a site of interaction between senior bureaucrats, who may otherwise not need to step out of Gangtok, and the people of rural Sikkim. At the fair, government departments such as those of animal husbandry, agriculture and horticulture, industries, welfare, health, information technology, forestry, the Sikkim Industries Development and Investment Corporation Limited and the State Trading Corporation of Sikkim, among others, set up stalls to disseminate information to the rural populace of the state.

This format of government-people interaction facilitates a two-way exchange allowing people to gather information on government projects and programmes and how to optimally utilise them, and provides a medium through which senior bureaucrats, by appearing in person to meet Sikkim's communities, get direct feedback on policies from citizen-



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Bustling Gangtok, meeting point of northeast India, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet (China).



Groundbreaking ceremony at the future Pakyong airport (left), and Pawan Chamling.

The state's income is distributed in such a way as to benefit agricultural workers, rural areas, urbanites and commercial development. Politically, the devolution of power to the panchayats and the pro-active inclusion of women are helping the state to engage all citizens. People's courts, *lok adalat*, have been set up in Gangtok, Gyalshing and Mangan districts.

At INR 6 a kilo, publicly distributed rice is cheaper for ration-card holders in Sikkim than anywhere else in India. Free land is provided to

stakeholders.

At the fairs, held in six constituencies in the first phase, the government distributed welfare benefits to people below the poverty line through measures such as Rural Housing Scheme cheques, GCI sheets for roofing, grants to *panchayats*, land for the landless, toilets, greenhouses and tarpaulin, unveiling food for work programmes, and releasing cheques for old age pensions. The 200 cooking gas connections distributed to impoverished people in each district embody the government's philosophy of balancing human development with ecological sensitivity by reducing dependence on limited forest resources while improving human living standards.

Addressing a thousands-strong gathering in Dentam, west Sikkim, the chief minister laid out the SDF government's development plans for the state and called on citizens to help Sikkim achieve internal revenue generation of INR 1000 crore by the year 2015. Stressing the need for self-reliance on a household-responsibility basis, Chamling unveiled the Chief Minister's Self-Employment Scheme (CMSES), which earmarks INR 18 crore per annum for the next five years for youth-based business proposals. An individual only needs to have passed the metric exam to be eligible for seed capital and technical assistance. Forward-looking programmes such as this one, with the state playing a catalytic role in developing youth potential, are geared toward achieving minimal unemployment by 2015. The chief minister also demonstrated the efficacy of the public meetings by discussing Sikkim's inclusion in the AEZ (Agriculture Export Zone) for ginger, large cardamom, *dalle khursani* (pepper) and floriculture. In his public interactions, he stressed that farmers must switch to organic fertilisers rather than rely on chemicals to enhance productivity in the short-term.

### A state one step ahead

That the present government has a vision of the holistic development of Sikkim is clear from its people-friendly attitude, intelligent planning and responsible administration.

landless *Sukumbasis*, who also receive state assistance in constructing their houses. The Rural Housing Scheme that will cover a total of 10,000 beneficiaries every year has been successfully launched and implemented. 70 percent of total plan outlay has been earmarked for the development of the rural areas of the state. Milch cows, piglets and seedlings are distributed free of cost to poor farmers to increase their purchasing power and eventually make them self-reliant.

In order to encourage school-enrolment, the government provides free primary education. It also distributes school uniforms, textbooks and exercise books free till class five, and a midday meal programme has been launched. The groundwork has already been laid for establishing a medical college in the state.

The results of Sikkim's investments are plain to see in the 2001 Human Development Report. At 69.7 percent, Sikkim's literacy stands above India's national average of 65.4 percent, and female literacy, at 61.5 percent, is considerably higher than the national average of 54.2 percent. Infant and under-five mortality, at 43.9 and 71 per thousand, respectively, are well below the respective national averages of 67.6 and 94.9.

The SDF's governance is based on the principle that Sikkim should be a model state in India for others to emulate. Accelerating economic development in spite of the difficult terrain, inclement weather, impenetrable interiors and other factors, it has ensured the prevalence of the rule of law. An efficient and responsive police force is of course however only the basic safeguard. And the government realises that in order to maintain the tranquillity in the state, economic development that is geared to minimising unemployment is essential. Above all else, Sikkim has relied on its slate of resources – both human and physical – to create a dynamic and well-administered state. With corruption in check, a growing economy and appropriate safeguards for the environment, Sikkim is literally and figuratively near to the top of South Asia. ■

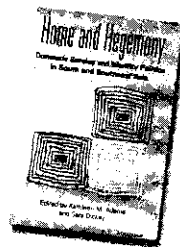
# When good help is hard to find

On 17 January 2003, Nepal's government lifted a five-year-old ban on Nepali women going to Persian gulf countries to work following a supreme court ruling that the ban violated the women's human rights. The ban was imposed in 1998 to 'safeguard' Nepali women from the perils of domestic work in Islamic countries, where there have been some highly publicised instances of the physical and sexual abuse of foreign maids. This ban was imposed even though women were a source of valuable remittances – approximately USD 450 million, or 50 percent of all foreign exchange earnings, 13 percent of Nepal's GDP. The gulf countries were deemed unsafe as women there 'have few rights anyway', and where Nepali women, locked behind the high walls of wealthy Arab households and speaking no Arabic, have little recourse to social support networks. For employment agencies, individual women and activists, the rights argument was the legal expression of what is, for most of the millions of domestic workers in Nepal and elsewhere, a decision driven fundamentally by economic concerns.

*Home and Hegemony: Domestic Service and Identity Politics in South and Southeast Asia* presents ethnographic sketches of domestic service in south India, Nepal, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, and Java and Sulawesi in Indonesia. Although the editors, Kathleen M Adams and Sara Dickey, accept that it is impossible to estimate the numbers engaged in domestic service because of the unorganised nature of such employment, and because migrant domestic workers are often unregistered, they cite studies to assert that far from decreasing with

the spreading use of time- and labour-saving technologies, as was widely assumed would happen, the number of domestic workers and people who employ them is only going up.

There are two types of essays in *Home and Hegemony* – those that focus on domestic workers employed in their own country, and those that deal with migrant domestic workers. Dickey writes about how workers and employers, when talking about each other in Madurai, Tamil



**Home and Hegemony:  
Domestic Service and  
Identity Politics in South  
and Southeast Asia**

Kathleen M Adams and Sara Dickey, eds.  
The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor,  
2000. pp 288, ISBN 047211106X

reviewed by **Anagha  
Neelakantan**

Nadu, south India, construct different identities with reference to class, character, and the luxury of choice as opposed to necessity. Rachel Tolén's essay deals with the rather fashionable cultural studies subject of the contestation surrounding the transfer of class-based knowledge, such as the ability to speak English, in the context of the rather cosmopolitan railway colony in Madras where the servants are close to being government employees, but are

not quite. Saubhagya Shah writes about the construction of class and urban-rural identities, focusing on the fictive kinship and schooling that children who move from Nepal's hinterland to be live-in servants in Kathmandu experience. Jean-Paul Dumont also focuses on language, examining the use of the terms 'domestic workers', 'helper' and 'nursemaid' in the Philippines, the deep meanings they convey and their transitory nature. GG Weix also writes about fictive kinship, and "betwixt and between" identities in Java where domestics are adopted into their masters' homes. In particular, she delineates how the logic of gift-giving regularly and ritually sabotages the illusions of family bonds. Editor Adams discusses the role of humour, especially joking references to kinship terms, in maintaining and subverting hierarchies in homes with long-term live-in domestics.

Four essays deal with a different kind of domestic service. Michele Gamburd analyses how the contested changes in ideas about motherhood, gendered divisions of labour, and personal identity are played out when Sri Lankan women migrate to be nannies and housemaids in West Asia 'for the sake of their own children'. Louise Kidder's contribution discusses how relations between British expatriates in Bangalore and their Indian domestic workers show that hierarchies of skill, knowledge and dependence can be not quite linear – expats may have the money, but they cannot function without the skills and local knowledge of their employees. Nicole Constable presents the case of domestic workers from all parts of the Philippines who in Hong Kong, as much in response to local stereotypes about them as exhortations from their own government to be 'model workers', start to articulate a single Filipina identity. Constable illustrates how the official as well as defensive 'Filipina' identity is regularly complicated by differences in class and sexuality. Kathryn Robinson analyses the po-



sition of Indonesian women. They were initially encouraged to work in Saudi Arabia because it is also 'Islamic', but incidents of abuse led to a long-drawn debate on whether it is acceptable for Indonesian Muslim women to work overseas, as well as to a diplomatic impasse between the two countries. Robinson demonstrates that while gender, religion, and the 'new order' Indonesian rhetoric of the 'family principle' constructed a national identity that appeared to provide opportunity, when these same principles were deployed to manage economic and diplomatic relations, the results for women were often less than progressive.

### Hegemony at home

As is evident, *Home and Hegemony* is mainly concerned with how the negotiation of the politics of identity is central to maintaining 'hegemony' – the relations of domination and submission that determine consensus on meanings, values, and ways of doing things. Guided by Raymond Williams' assertion that these constantly interrogated relations, which entail both coercion and consent, "saturate the whole process of living", contributors take as their basic premise that the home is the preeminent site where hegemony is reproduced, and that domestic service presents a uniquely powerful and concentrated set of negotiations, because domestic service is widely understood as more than just a form of labour where household duties are performed for remuneration. Domestic workers render personal, sometimes intimate services in homes they are not members of, creating a forced intimacy constantly at odds with the actual social and economic, if not always emotional, distance between them and their employers. The tension between domestics and their employers throws into sharp relief the differences between the two sides, in terms of class or status, gender, ethnicity, nationality or age, among others. Understanding how these differences play out is a way

of further understanding larger social processes.

The essays do a fine job of delineating the multiple identities domestic workers can and often need to take on, 'servant' now, 'domestic worker' at another time, to outsiders a privileged individual in their employer's household when entrusted with certain tasks, 'model worker' sometimes, but 'boisterous' during time off. Equally well described is how different kinds of domestic service (eg working at home or abroad) will influence the place of an individual in society. Though few of the essays touch explicitly on gender – the real-life equation of domestic work with women – this is one of the most illuminating strands through the volume. You see that domestic work can al-

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**As many employers are growing nostalgic for a more feudal past, for domestic workers it is becoming increasingly acceptable to 'aspire'**

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low women more opportunities, whether in going abroad to work instead of the husband, or being aware enough of the ways of the world to demand a raise as women in Dickey's Madurai can do, in terms of labour law and unions. The flipside is exploitation, whether in another country or their own. For some Filipinas in Hong Kong sexuality, butch lesbianism in particular, is a position from which they challenge the docile, feminine identity that the Philippine government prefers for them.

Such concerns place *Home and Hegemony* squarely in the tradition of the so-called 'cultural turn' in anthropology, the move from class-oriented analysis to interpretive formulations revolving around issues of identity and subjectivity and told through representations, meanings, memory. The quotidian home as the

site of producing and negotiating hegemony is fertile ground for such work.

There are dangers in such an approach, for sure. The concept of hegemony itself can be obscuring when used in a purely symptomatic, rather than instrumental sense, as often happens in 'cultural studies'. Although even the more typically cultural studies essays, such as Dickey's on the creation and contestation of hegemonic identities through narrative, and Adam on small acts of subversion through humour and the limiting of certain practices, mercifully stay away from the twin clichéd spectres of Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau, they are not terribly successful in their attempt at relating the specifics of the circumstances they analyse to larger social and economic processes. They are self-contained discursive fields and remain ethnographic snippets, but not much more.

Cultural anthropologists working on identity and hegemony can sometimes get too caught up in the inchoate business that negotiating identity can be and brush off structural forces in a manner similar to how classic structuralists sometimes forgot about individual agency. Showing how domestic workers inhabit multiple subjectivities and how this can assist in small everyday acts of rebellion makes for interesting ethnographic vignettes, but when you zoom out from an individual worker and an individual employer to their respective classes it becomes clear that the weapons of the weak are just that, weak, and that, as anthropologist Judith Rollins says, "The 'inferiority' of the houseworker justifies paying lower wages and suggests that entire categories of people can be inferior, and that a social structure that maintains such people at a disadvantage may be a justifiable and legitimate structure".

Two essays, however, are notable for their understanding of the class character of hegemony as Gramsci described it. Saubhagya

Shah's contribution on young domestic workers in Kathmandu, while not heavy on ethnographic description, does a remarkable job in explaining the specifics of their world – how their class position is complicated by displacement, by being called *kam garne* (worker) while the possibility of being deemed *naukar* (servant) lingers, by being described as 'just like family', and by being sent to school as compensation for their labour. That, and living in a world far more prosperous than that of their families, displaces them from one class without placing them entirely in the other. GG Weix presents a rich ethnographic description of a large domestic retinue and the woman responsible for them in a small Javanese town. Like Shah, she too touches on the euphemising effect of kinship terms and gifts. Neither essay dwells explicitly on the notion of hegemony, or on generalities about identity, but the 'thickness' of the descriptions and a fine-tuned grasp of distinctions of rank even within the same class make clear the processes that are elsewhere described only theoretically or over-analysed and weighed down by jargon. Shah and Weix show how the negotiations of hegemony and identity link domestic workers and their employers with larger historical, social and economic processes and structures.

### Keep it professional

The essays in *Home and Hegemony* are ethnographies of change more than anything else. Robinson writes how the 'new order' government in Indonesia redefined women's role in a modern Islamic context, but suspended state protection in certain others. In Dickey's unpacking of narratives, an important trope is one that many readers will recognise – the employer insisting that things were better 'in the old days' when there was an emotional bond with the servants and that they 'take care' of their help. "Now all they are interested in is money". Weix's employer-informant says more or less the same thing, and in Constable's

essay, Hong Kong women compare ruefully the old amahs from mainland China with the 'brash' Filipinas they must now employ.

As many employers are growing nostalgic for a feudal past, for domestic workers it is becoming increasingly acceptable to 'aspire'. Domestic work may have been 'lowly', and might still for many be the only immediate option. But now it is also being viewed for what it is – a choice made out of economic necessity, and an exchange of labour like any other. From 'servant' to 'domestic worker'. Like other professions, this too holds the possibility of advancement, if not through savings, then through the networks of patronage that a 'good servant' can have access to. So people work in a railway colony in Madras, putting up with slights about wanting 'the lifestyle without understanding the life', because it might help a family member get a government position. Young children will be sent from the far hills to work in a house in distant Kathmandu for the schooling they will be provided, with the tacit understanding of the employer that domestic work does not have to be forever. Sri Lankan women work in West Asia not simply to support their families (usually, their husbands were already doing that), but to give their children more opportunity. Indonesian nurses and teachers work as housemaids when the economy collapses. For many Filipinas, also with similar qualifications, the aspiration is sometimes more than economic, such as a desire to see the world. Domestic workers are thus taken out of the box they tend to be left in even when studied. The contributions here acknowledge that they too are creatures of desire and that their situation too, like that of their more privileged employers, could conceivably change.

Change of all manner is more obviously signposted in the essays that deal with migrant domestic workers. In the 1970s, the Philippines was faced with large-scale unemployment, rising inflation,

massive international debt and little foreign currency with which to service it. But a way out was found quite easily. The OPEC oil price increase in 1973 fuelled a construction boom and massive industrial development in oil-rich countries, especially in the gulf. The problem was manpower. The Philippines may not have had much at that point, but it did have cheap labour, and so a labour export policy was formalised in the mid-1970s. Today the Philippines is one of the largest remittance economies in the world, with overseas workers sending home USD 6 billion annually. Thailand and Pakistan followed, and though Indonesia missed out on the initial boom, by the early 1980s there was a new demand for housemaids, which it decided it could fill in places such as Saudi Arabia. The OPEC oil price rise and the more recent Asian economic boom and meltdown helped foster new intersections of different locales. Today, labour is exported to all the relatively prosperous Asian countries, where residents simply refuse to take on work like the so-called 3K jobs in Japan – *kitsui* (hard), *kitanai* (dirty), *kiken* (dangerous).

Enough horror stories have emerged in recent years from migrant workers from and in many different parts of Asia, whether Malaysian maids in Saudi Arabia or Bangladeshi construction workers in Malaysia, that the phenomenon and its attendant perils have come to the attention of most who live in this region. Migrations such as these as well as more advantageous ones are different from the migrations of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and post-second world war migrations. Collectively termed 'new migration' by sociologists, the phenomenon has certain key features that set it apart: globalisation (more countries are involved), acceleration (the volume is constantly increasing), differentiation (there are different categories of migrants from the same country), and feminisation (more and more migrants are women).

### Missing some connections

The editors and Karen Hansen mention that industrialisation and global movements of capital have accelerated the expansion of the domestic worker phenomenon, but they neglect to see that the kind of hegemony constituted by domestic service relationships *in these times* allows for the reproduction of labour. Shah points out that a number of middle-class Kathmandu women explained that employing domestic help enabled them in turn to go out and work to provide more for their families. Constable writes that the Hong Kong government encouraged Filipinas to enter the country as domestic workers to 'lure' their employers – middle-class Hong Kong Chinese women – into the workforce. The remittances that the Filipina domestic workers send back home support the local economy, which allows for other exchanges of labour.

*Home and Hegemony* misses certain other connections too. The editors write that the contributions are concerned not just with identity politics and its relation to the maintenance of hegemony, but also with unpacking who 'masters' and 'servants' are, because once you know that, you can know who has what rights and what responsibilities. The somewhat simplistic statement is informed by civil society and a rights understanding of labour, but it is curious that although the entire volume is concerned with identity and hegemony, none of the essays, bar Robinson's, touches on how some of the obvious sites where identity is negotiated and authority is exercised – gender, sexuality, age – can be not just contested, but deeply fraught with violence. Some of the most common and wrenching stories that seep into public consciousness about 'servants' concern gross physical and sexual abuse, and overwork, especially of children. Not one makes it into this collection, even theoretically.

Possibly, it is not the place of ethnographers to take a moral stand, but that does not preclude

articulating a moral position on the language of rights and international and domestic labour law. Or interrogating, rather than simply giving examples of, the place of domestic service in the new international division of labour; once you accept, for instance, that domestic work makes other kinds of labour possible, how does this change the assessment of its actual value? After all, the reproduction of labour that domestic service makes possible in today's context helps reproduce the very hegemony that calls for greater help at home in the first place – the shifts in production and capital worldwide that, with developments in communications technology and

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### The reproduction of labour that domestic service makes possible reproduces the very hegemony that calls for greater help at home in the first place

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greater ease of transportation, make possible the movement of commodities and people and ideas. And, domestic workers also play a role in transforming social, economic and cultural narratives about national and transnational expressions of identity.

The contributors on occasion draw on notions of domestic workers from the public domain. Only a couple observe that the images of domestic workers that circulate in the media are very contentious politically. The examples are telling – the beating to death of an Indian domestic worker by two Kuwaiti princesses in London, Bill Clinton's 1993 nominee for attorney general, Zoe Baird, who withdrew when it came to light that she had employed in her home illegal Latin American workers. These instances are interesting because they deal with two closely related matters: the poor implementation or lack of adequate

legislation protecting domestic workers in most countries, and the many ways that immigration laws are circumvented to serve a market that wants help in homes but wants it cheap.

In a way, these examples point to systemic reasons that allow such things to keep happening despite the hue and cry about illegal immigration in the US, and the growing concern at the government level in many Asian countries about the safety of migrant domestic workers. It makes sense to not pay too close attention to manpower agencies that smuggle in migrant workers or even to individual employers who violate basic rights. If recipient countries which have a history of encouraging cheap foreign labour were to keep accurate records and track the employment history of every foreign worker, and ensure that they all are briefed on their status, rights and duties, there will be far fewer grey areas and instances of abuse will come to light. The migrant domestic worker's complaint will be harder to dismiss if she is legal and if she knows the most basic, efficient way to file a complaint, or at least the few words in the local language needed to do so. The recipient government will be forced to ensure at least to some degree, even if only on paper, that migrant workers enjoy internationally acceptable labour and human rights, and have access to legal redress, all of which would drive up the cost of 'cheap labour'.

If there is an incident abroad, especially involving the citizen of a country that relies heavily on remittances, this is of course a matter of national interest in more ways than one, and a way for nations to make a play in the global contestation of hegemony. More realistically, though, there is also the distinct possibility of diplomatic pressure to back down from the host country, so its image is not too tarnished in the eyes of prospective migrant workers, often the backbone of considerable sectors of the economy. Recent years have seen some host countries such as Malaysia and

Oman react to concerns voiced by migrant workers' governments by signing with them labour agreements that stipulate conditions such as basic wage, a minimum level of skill, fluency in language, but most provisions are aimed at protecting migrant workers from devious manpower agencies, and implementation on both sides leaves something to be desired.

It is easier to point to solutions where migrant domestic workers are concerned, because the stakes are perceived differently, and because this segment of the domestic labour force is closer to other, less intimate, kinds of work. At best, it is professionalised, contractual, and dignified; at the very least, it is accepted that it should or could be so. For domestic workers who labour in their own country, there is often much cultural baggage to do with class or kinship or rank or rusticity that goes with the job. There is first the matter of legislation – Nepal, for instance, until recently had barely adequate laws for women, still does not for children. Labour law has a strong history in Nepal, although mostly unions rather than individuals have invoked it. Domestic workers who spend all day in their employers' houses have little opportunity to form pressure groups. Interventions by civil society institutions dealing with women or children or both appeal to an assumed morality in employers and society at large,

but there are few rehabilitation facilities for child domestic workers, for instance, such as there are for sex workers.

When employers in Madurai or a small Java town or Kathmandu say that their servant can have a purely contractual relationship if they want, a change that domestic workers tend to frame in terms of professionalisation, exchanging labour for wages, they also add ominously that 'it will not be like before; there

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**It is a job, and knowing what a slob the boss is, or doing his laundry, does not oblige the worker to be emotionally involved**

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will be no emotional bond'. Which might be just as well, because once a servant is elevated to the status of 'like family', she or he cannot go out, join a union and strike against the employers whose own need for support in the home has been reified into an expression of magnanimity towards an almost-poor relative. As for the woman who told Dickey, "This is not an officer-employee relationship. It's something different. Because that sort of relationship won't work here [in the house]", she may find in the near future that good

help really is hard to find.

Karen Hansen writes that "the problematic of domestic service is not found where it is most obviously looked for, in the private household, but in the inequalities deeply embedded in processes of state formation and nationalism in South and Southeast Asia". And indeed, the transnational movements of products, capital and labour that fuel the demand for migrant domestic workers also have impacts in countries and on groups that traditionally send out, rather than receive, migrant, domestic labour.

One does not need to buy the enthusiastic belief that devotees of globalisation have in the various kinds of 'progressive' values that these processes use to justify themselves and to 'manufacture consent'. But the language of equal opportunity and universal rights is slowly seeping into common parlance, and for domestic workers at home and abroad, that might be a good place to start, whether to assert the right to work as recently happened in Nepal, or to demand the same level of protection as other workers. First, though, one thing would have to change – the mystification of the home as the domain of employment. It is a job, and knowing what a slob the boss can be in private, or doing his laundry, does not oblige worker or employer to be emotionally involved.

### South Asian Classifieds

#### Call for papers

Language, Consciousness and Culture: East West Perspectives  
Society of Indian Philosophy & Religion  
3-6 January 2004  
CALCUTTA, INDIA

This conference will feature plenary addresses, volunteered papers, invited papers and panel discussions on philosophical, religious and scientific traditions of world civilisations. Abstract submission deadline 5 May; proposals can be sent to [chakraba@elon.edu](mailto:chakraba@elon.edu)

#### Call for papers

Journal of Food Technology  
FAISALABAD, PAKISTAN

The Journal of Food Technology, a new publication, is requesting multi-disciplinary submissions on issues related to food technology in South Asia. For more information, or to submit a paper, write to [java@fsd.comsats.net.pk](mailto:java@fsd.comsats.net.pk)

#### Conference

Third International Convention of Asia Scholars (ICAS3)  
19-22 August 2003  
SINGAPORE

One of the largest regular gatherings of scholars of Asian top-ics, especially in the humanities and social sciences, over 1000 scholars are expected to participate in ICAS3. Registration deadline 30 June. For

more information, access [www.fas.nus.edu.sg/icas3](http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/icas3)

#### Conference

Annual Meeting  
Association for Asian Studies (AAS)  
27-30 March, 2003  
NEW YORK, USA

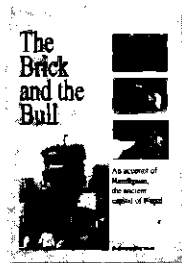
The AAS annual meeting will include more than 200 panel discussions on Asian topics, with several dozen focusing in particular on issues related to the Subcontinent. Preregistration deadline 3 March; for more information, access [www.aasianst.org/2003meetingnews.htm](http://www.aasianst.org/2003meetingnews.htm)

To place a classified ad announcing a conference, write to [advertising@himalmag.com](mailto:advertising@himalmag.com)



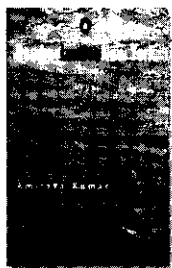
**The Origins and Development of the Tablighi-Jama'at (1920-2000): A cross-country comparative study**  
By Yoginder Sikand  
Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 2002  
pp xii+310, INR 595  
ISBN 81 250 2298 8

Possibly the most widely followed Islamic movement in the world, the Tablighi-Jama'at (TJ) emerged in early 20<sup>th</sup> century north India as a reformist movement stressing personal virtue above social or political mobilisation. With a dedicated membership said to be active in more than 150 countries around the globe, its meetings are reported to attract the largest congregations of Muslims outside Mecca. Yet, with its emphasis on traditional Sunni jurisprudence and its disengagement from the modern world, the TJ is poorly understood by outsiders. In this work, a scholar of Muslim history traces the TJ's eight-decade rise from a local reform movement to a global force.



**The Brick and the Bull: An account of Handigaun, the ancient capital of Nepal**  
By Sudarshan Raj Tiwari  
Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2002  
pp x+225, NPR 1150  
ISBN 99933 43 52 8

Although the Kathmandu valley's urban settlements are generally viewed as Malla period (circa 1200 – 1768 CE) creations, organised human habitation dates back nearly two millennia. In this work, Tribhuvan University scholar Sudarshan Raj Tiwari examines archaeological evidence and cultural traditions specific to Handigaun, the valley's earliest known settlement, which rides a ridge to the east of the contemporary town of Kathmandu. He attempts to relate those finds to characteristics of Nepal's Kirat and Lichchhavi periods, of the first millennium CE and first millennium BCE respectively.

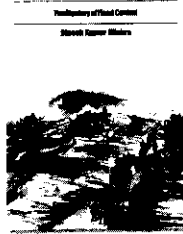


**Bombay London New York**  
By Amitava Kumar  
Penguin India, New Delhi, 2002  
pp xxiii+224, INR 250  
ISBN 0 14 302896 0

This collection of essays by Amitava Kumar follows in the footsteps of his earlier meditation on migration and personal identity, *Passport Photos*. Kumar, born in Bihar and currently a professor of English at Pennsylvania State University in the US, delves into a wide range of topics and personalities, engaging with the loneliness of migra-

tion, considering colourful figures such as Laloo Prasad Yadav, and contrasting recollections from his childhood in India with residence overseas. The concluding essay of this volume appeared in advance of the book's publication as 'Tale of the ticketless traveller' in *Himal* December 2001.

*Living with the Politics of Floods*



**Living with the Politics of Floods: The Mystery of Flood Control**  
By Dinesh Kumar Mishra  
People's Science Institute  
Dehradun, 2002  
pp 124, INR 360

Translated from a Hindi document published two years earlier, this book provides an overview of ecological, historical, economic and political issues affecting flood management in the Ganga-Brahmaputra river system. Critical of environment- and people-hostile hydroprojects intended solely for power generation, the author argues that water management efforts are determined by politicians who do not know water and engineers who do not know people. The result is a control of natural flow in the watercourses that is sheer environmental foolhardiness. Mishra, an engineer-activist of the Ganga plains, presents the technicalities of water management in layman's language, accompanied by engaging illustrations.



**Legal Aspects of the Kashmir Problem**  
By HS Gururaja Rao  
Minerva Press, New Delhi, 2002  
pp 595, INR 1000/USD 32  
ISBN 81 7662 197 8

Beginning with an overview of settlement patterns and historical contests for power in Kashmir, Indian jurist HS Gururaja Rao analyses the legal framework of the disputed region in the context of the Indian legal system and international agreements. In addition to the author's analysis of the dispute, the volume includes nearly 200 pages of letters, official reports, bilateral agreements, UN resolutions and treaties. This second edition updates a 1967 volume with deliberations on the 1971 war and the reciprocated nuclear tests of 1998, in addition to relevant documents from the past three decades. ▲

Compiled by **Deepak Thapa**, Social Science Baha, Patan

*Note to publishers: new titles can be sent to GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal. Books are mentioned in this section before they are sent for detailed review.*

# Nature's gift, IOYKI\*

South Asia is a basket with a regionful of problems, or a region with a basketful of problems, whatever. But the triumph of and challenge for our land is in the way in which we deal with human output of the most material kind. I mean excreta.

Just as we are what we eat, we are also (slightly circularly) what we digest. It is the spreading of wastes into the fields and terraces that has so added to the agricultural fertility of the vast and fruitful plains of the Indus and Ganga. In these tropics, the sunshine and humidity helps bacteria to grow. Decay is the order of the day, which leads to plant productivity. Organic breakdown adds to the humus, already rich with Himalayan silt and plant detritus.

Agricultural fertility delivers human fertility. High density of population leads to urban civilisations that in turn serve up high culture, flowering of the arts, and great architecture. The finest cities of our pre-colonial collective past – Lahore, Lucknow, Delhi, Kathmandu – derived their grandeur from the fertility of the next door fields.

Talking of density of population, you now know why South Asia houses a sixth of all humanity, at last count. Over millennia, human wastes got spread out in a thin layer over the land. China outstripped us to become more populous simply because the Chinese are more systematic in distributing the substance to the fields. We, on the other hand, mostly left it to gravity to transfer the slurry unto the eggplant patch.

Sadly, even the age-old custom/wisdom of visiting the *mairdaan* behind the cloak of the morning mist is now threatened. The commode, the cistern, the sewer system and treatment ponds are like a dagger to the heart of South Asian oneness with nature. No longer is the organic waste of our metabolism left to rot, dry, dissipate and distribute as *goo* and dust. We now flush it down the toilet with a surfeit of precious treated tap water, with a lot of soaps and detergents added which retard bacterial activity. If not into the septic tank, the waste finds itself diverted to aeration ponds. *Not good.*

Elsewhere, the slurry is dumped directly into streams and rivers, depriving the soil of the product of our labours. Nature's way right through geological and historical time has been to have soil interact with animal faeces. But now, we globalised prudes with middle class morality imported together with cotton from Newcastle think that gunk is evil, good only to be flushed.

Friends, if we forget how our fields became fertile, we forget a part of our history! Depriving the Indo-Gangetic soil of the nourishment it has received for at least 5000 years of human settlement invites civilisational collapse. There comes a defining moment in the evolution of modern society when things begin to spiral out of control, and with us in South Asia this will happen about the time that the sewers begin to *work*.

Archaeological excavation has shown (if I have not been told this then I am saying it) that the Harappan civilisation collapsed when they introduced a sewer system. And god only knows why Dwarka sank into the Arabian Sea.

Imagine the village of your (or your parents') childhood, and remember the place where the goods ended up behind the *paikhana*, and the vigorous growth amidst swarming flies of the best of fruits, legumes and leafy vegetables. Our ancestors always knew that the best grapefruits or lemons came from the trees that grew over in that corner, by the toilet soakpit. Household heads happily crunched into their cucumbers knowing but not asking where it came from. During the reign of the great emperor Chandragupta Maurya, none of the courtiers dared tell him the provenance of his much beloved *langda* mangoes. You had better believe this.

The best national politicians of today are those whose olfactory senses still subconsciously hanker for the pungency of the open pit toilet, the healthy buzz of little winged creatures at work, the sense of chlorophyll production at the true grassroots. Such politicians are the true sons of the soil. They understand that this pungency – removed city elites call it 'stench' – is part and parcel of the evolution of humanity. They also accept that something is lost when we have dry bathrooms – which should be an oxymoron – where form certainly does not follow function. How can it, when the toilet now looks like a futuristic throne, and why have we South Asians welcomed the commode into our homes like a cherished bride?

If the modernisation of South Asian society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not to falter before it has even begun, then we must find a way to counter the takeover of the commode. What is the way out? As I have been reminded so many times in my travels from the corridor of Wakhan to the cape of Comorin, "No problem to point only, solution also tell".

So suggestion herewith is. Let us do away with all sewer lines and septic tanks in this land of our ancestors, now ours. Let the glob in the backlot just grow, and then let us use it. In the cities, instead of garbage disposal, let there be garbage treatment, where the best portions are dried and sold as Grade One Soil. In the villages, let us go back to oneness with nature.

If you insist, some non-odorous method can be developed for the collection, putrefaction and distribution. Have faith in South Asian ingenuity, for is it not we who developed the zero, chess, the aeroplane and the participatory rural appraisal model? But really, we should be able to stand the smell if civilisationally we grew up with it. The symbiotic link between what we eat and what we beget needs to be re-established. *Chalo.*

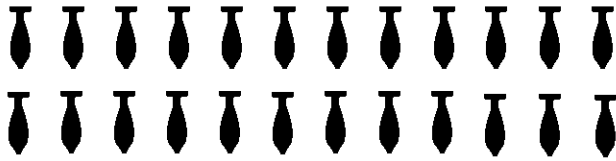
*Kamakhya Dixit*



\* if only you know it

# INDIAN AND PAKISTANI OFFENSIVE NUCLEAR CAPABILITY

2002 estimates, *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*  
(see inside, page 7)



## Pakistan

**Warheads:** Estimated to number between 24 and 48

### Delivery systems:

#### Aircraft

32 US-built F-16s

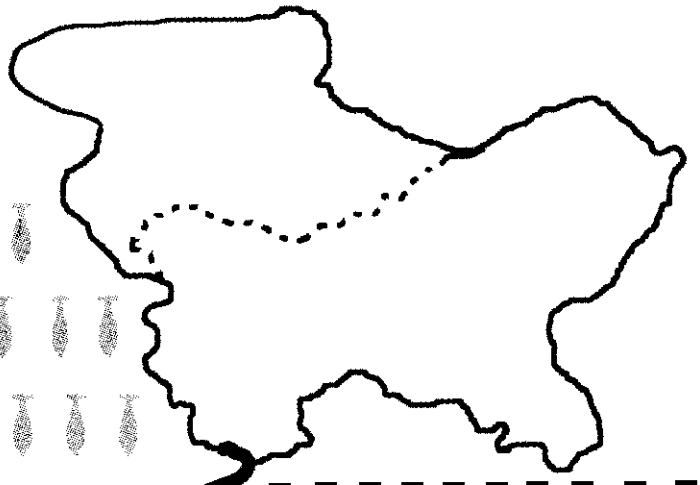
#### Missiles

Ghauri-1 (single-stage missile with a range of 1100 kilometres, payload up to 700 kilograms, first tested on 6 April 1998); Ghauri-2 (double-stage missile, first tested on 14 April 1999, three days after the Indian Agni-2 test); Ghauri-3 (under development, unconfirmed range of 2500 - 3000 kilometres, first tested on 15 August 2000); M-11 (Chinese-made missiles acquired since 1992; Islamabad is estimated to have acquired at least 30 from Beijing); Shaheen-1 (reverse-engineered from the Chinese M-9 missile, and can carry a 1000 kilogram payload up to 700 kilometres, first tested 15 April 1999); Shaheen-2 (medium-range missile claimed to be capable of delivering a 1000 kilogram payload up to 2500 kilometres).

#### Submarines

India is believed to be developing two sea-launched missile systems, the Sagarika and the

Dhanush. While it is not believed to be deployed yet, some foreign intelligence agencies classify the Sagarika as a submarine-launched ballistic missile. The Dhanush, a submarined-launched version of the Prithvi, may already be deployed. In January 2002, naval chief Admiral Madhvendra Singh told a news conference that "we have a triad of weapons for a second strike and one of the triad is at sea. The most powerful leg of the triad is in the navy and is hidden underwater and moving".



## India

**Warheads:** Estimated to number between 30 and 35

### Delivery systems:

#### Aircraft

MiG 27 Flogger (Soviet-designed aircraft manufactured under license by Hindustan Aeronautics, range of 800 kilometres, 165 produced); Jaguar IS/IB (joint British-French design, India purchased 40 from British Aerospace and assembled or manufactured another 91).

#### Missiles

Prithvi I (range of 250 kilometres, first tested in 1988); various other missile designs, including a second-generation Prithvi, medium-range Agni and intercontinental Surya, are said to be in various stages of development. The Agni, which has a range of 600-800 kilometres, has been tested, and a 6 January 2003 announcement said that it, along with the Prithvi, would be placed under a 'Strategic Forces Command'.

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