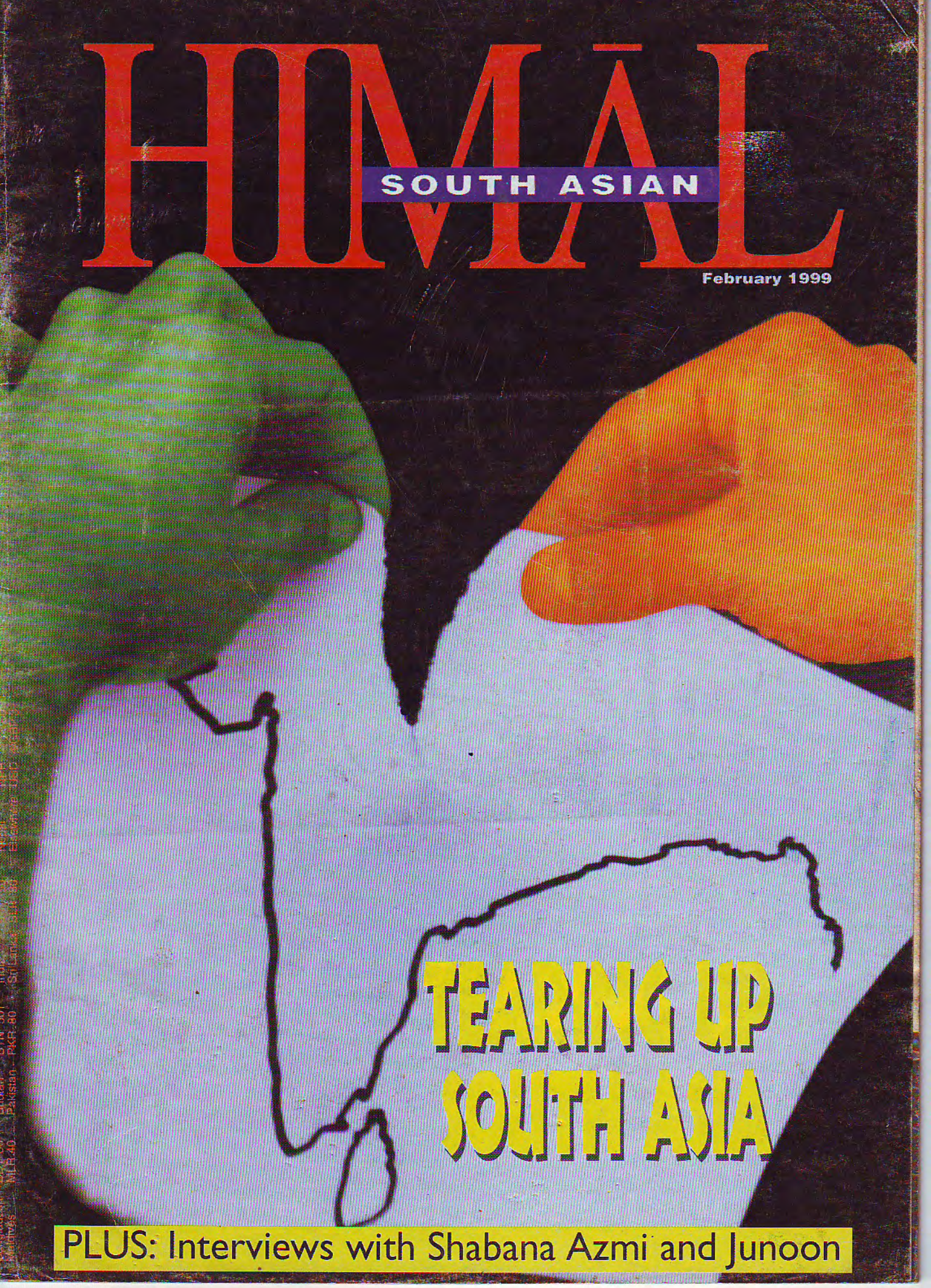


# HIMAL

SOUTH ASIAN

February 1999

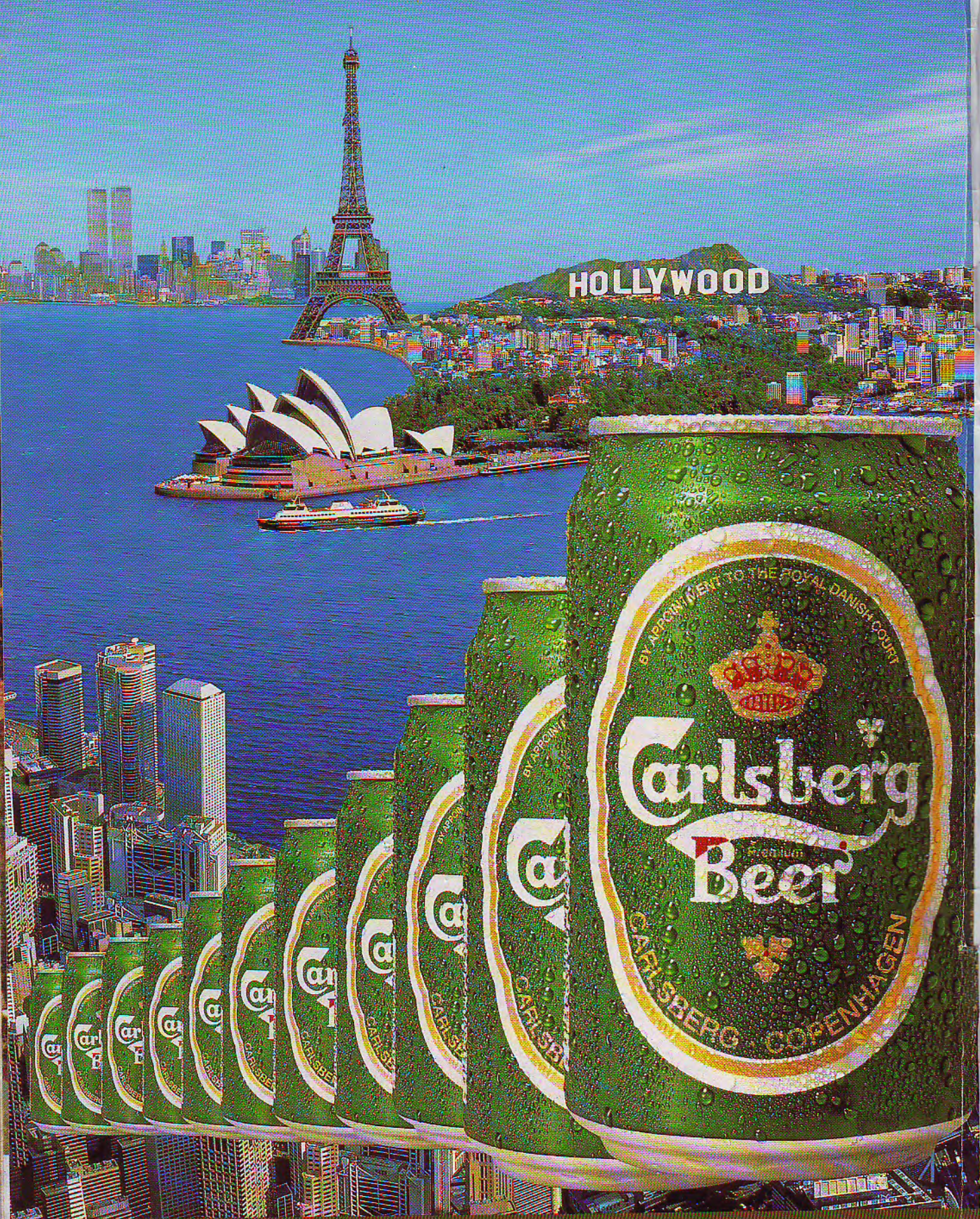


**TEARING UP  
SOUTH ASIA**

**PLUS: Interviews with Shabana Azmi and Junoon**

Subscribers: India 901, Nepal 901, Sri Lanka 901, Pakistan - PKR-90, Maldives MLD-40, Bangladesh 901, Sri Lanka 901, Ethiopia USD 901





**Probably the best beer in the world.**



**MAIL** 3

**COMMENTARY** 6

Theocratic threat  
*by Yoginder Sikand*  
Pinochet and Panchayat  
*by Ajay Bhadra Khanal*  
Shirking middle class  
*by Nilan Fernando*  
At debt's door  
*by Shujaiddin Qureshi*  
Upper caste Christians  
*by Jawid Laiq*

**COVER** 14

It's just not cricket  
*by Beena Sarwar*  
Hindu Right is wrong  
*by Vijay Prasad*  
Fear of assimilation  
*by C.K. Lal*  
Roots of bigotry  
*by Mushtaq Gazdar*  
Soft target  
*by Urvashi Butalia*  
Interview with Shabana Azmi  
*by Tim Sebastian*  
Interview with Junoon's  
Salman Ahmad  
*by Khalid Ansari and  
Sangeeta Lama*

**FEATURES** 35

Brahmaputra's orphans  
*by Rupa Chinai*  
Run Dharsha, run  
*by Kalinga Seneviratne*  
Free radical  
*by Irfan Ahmed*  
Not worth a dam  
*by Himanshu Thakkar*

**MEDIAFILE** 48

**VOICES** 50

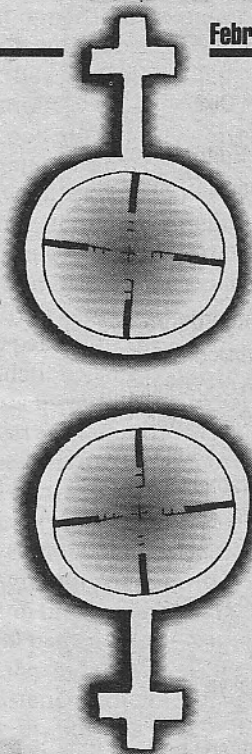
Interviewing Benazir  
Honouring Qadeer  
Voice of South Asia  
Blocking Suu Kyi  
Sanskrit Madonna  
LAT vs WP  
Foreign racket  
Re-inventing Snow White

**REVIEWS** 55

Defenders of the Establishment  
*reviewed by R.K. Raghavan*  
The Taliban  
*reviewed by Patricia Herft*

**WE ARE WAITING FOR YETI...** 60

## Tearing up South Asia



14

It does not matter whether they are Muslim or Hindu. Fringe extremists in South Asia seem to have found common threats: minorities and women.

"I don't think India is a monolith..."

30

"... when you come across people who have made choices that are different from your own, then rather than condemn them, if you can empathise with them, then perhaps you can extend that empathy to the other..."



## Sri Lankans aim for Sydney

41

Little Sri Lanka's investments in sports paid off at the Bangkok Asian Games. Now, its athletes have their sights on the Sydney Olympics next year.





## Editor

Kanak Mani Dixit

## Associate Editor

Deepak Thapa

## Copy Editor

Shanuj V.C.

## Contributing Editors

COLOMBO Manik de Silva

DHAKA Afsan Chowdhury

LAHORE Beena Sarwar

NEW DELHI Mitu Varma

Prabhu Ghate

TORONTO Tarik Ali Khan

## Layout

Chandra Khatiwada

## Marketing

Suman Shakya

Anil Karki

Sambhu Guragain

Awadhesh K. Das

## Website Manager

Salil Subedi

## Administration

Anil Shrestha

Tripty Gurung

Roshan Shrestha

## Marketing Office

Ajoy Biswas Dhaka

Tel: +880-2-812 954

Fax: 911 5044

office@dnk.net

## Media Sales Representative Karachi

Trans Indus Media (Pvt) Ltd

2nd Floor, Haroon House

Ziauddin Ahmed Road

Karachi 74200

Tel: +92-21-567 0081

Fax: 567 0085

tim@xiber.com

Himal is published and distributed by

Himal Inc Pvt Ltd

GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: +977-1-522113, 523845

Fax: 521013

himalmag@mos.com.np

http://www.himalmag.com

ISSN 1012 9804

Library of Congress Card Catalogue

Number 88 912882

Imagesetting at: Polyimage, Kathmandu

Printed at: Jagadamba Press, Kathmandu

Tel: +977-1-521393, 536390

## Contributors to this issue

**Ajay Bhadra Khanal** is the editor of Nepali-language weekly, *Patrika* of Kathmandu.

**C.K. Lal** is a Kathmandu-based civil engineer and newspaper columnist.

**Himanshu Thakkar** is an activist-researcher on water issues. He is also part of the South Asia office of the International Committee on Dams, Rivers and People.

**Irfan Ahmed** is a Delhi-based writer.

**Jawid Laiq** is a freelance journalist from New Delhi.

**Kalinga Seneviratne** is a Sri Lankan journalist, broadcaster and media analyst, who is also a lecturer in mass communications and radio broadcasting at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore.

**Khalid Ansari** is a Karachi-based reporter with *Newsline* monthly.

**Mushtaq Gazdar** is a filmmaker from Karachi and author of *Pakistan Cinema 1947-1997*.

**Nilan Fernando** is a Sri Lankan writer working in Dhaka.

**Patricia Herft** is a Dubai-based writer on women's issues.

**Rahul Bedi** is the Delhi correspondent for *Jane's Defence Weekly*.

**R.K. Raghavan** is the Director-General of Police, Tamil Nadu.

**Rupa Chinai**, from Bombay, reports on health issues for *The Times of India* daily.

**Sangeeta Lama** is a Kathmandu-based journalist with the Nepali-language *Himal* magazine.

**Shujauddin Qureshi** is a Pakistani journalist who writes on economic, development and social issues.

Author **Urvashi Butalia**, a co-founder of Kali for Women, writes on issues concerning women, media, communications and communalism. Her latest work is *The Other Side of Silence: Voices from the Partition of India*.

**Vijay Prashad** is Assistant Professor in International Studies, Trinity College, Connecticut.

**Yoginder Sikand** is a student of Islamic history, and freelance writer from Bangalore.

## SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

Send payment in local currency in favour of our subscription agent.

Country	1yr	2yrs	Local Subscription Agent
Bangladesh	BDT 480	900	International Book Agencies Ltd., 61, Motijheel C/A 2nd floor, Dhaka. Tel: +880-29-956 05 84/955 13 08
India	INR 420	800	Central News Agency Pvt. Ltd., 23/90 Connaught Circus, New Delhi 110001. Tel: +91-1-752 9385/777 0536
Maldives	MLR 360	700	Asrafee Book Shop, 1/44 Chandhane Magu, PO Box 2053, Male. Tel: +960-32-3424
Nepal	NPR 540	1000	Himal Inc. Pvt. Ltd., GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu. Tel: +977-1-523845/522113
Pakistan	PKR 480	900	TransIndus Media (Pvt) Ltd., 2nd Floor, Haroon House, Ziauddin Ahmed Rd., Karachi 74200, Pakistan. Tel: +92-21-567 0081-4 Fax: +92-21-567 0085
Sri Lanka	SLR 480	900	Lake House Book Shop, 100, Sir Chittampalam, Gardiner Mawatha, Colombo-2. Tel: +94-1-432105/430581/430582
Elsewhere	USD 36	66	
	GBP 25	45	
	Australia		Indra Ban, 12, Norfolk St., Paddington 2021, Sydney. Fax: +61-2-635 3207
	Japan		Akio Horiuchi, PO Box 9, Kiyose, Tokyo 204.
	Sweden		Empatum AB, Box 26159, 100 41 Stockholm. Fax: +46-8-141088
	Switzerland		Edi Muhlemann, Mosliweg 11, CH-3098 Koniz. Fax: +41-31-971 8065
	The Netherlands		Frans Meijer, Zwanenburgwal 278, 1011 JH Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Fax: +31-20-625 6690
	U.K. & Ireland		Joti Giri (Ref: H), 221 Ashly Gardens, Emery Hill Street, London SW1 1PA. Tel: +44-171-582 9355
	Germany		Geobuch, Rosental 6, D - 80331 Munchen (Munich), Germany. Fax: +49-89-263713
	North America		Barbara Bella & Associates, 500 Sansome Street, Suite 101, PO Box 470758, San Francisco CA 94147. Fax: +1-415-986 7860

Subscribers sending payments directly to the Kathmandu office from countries other than Nepal and India should do so at the rate quoted for 'Elsewhere' by demand draft/cheque in US Dollars/GB Pounds drawn in favour of

'Himal Inc. Pvt. Ltd.' at Circulation Department, HIMAL, GPO Box No. 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Subscribers who wish to pay through AMEX, VISA or MASTERCARD can fax or email details to: +977-1-521013 or <himalmag@mos.com.np>. For AMEX cards please include contact phone numbers.



**Balti angst**

I want to make a correction to a letter in HIMAL's November 1998 issue which gave the population of Baltis as 2.2 million. According to the 1998 census, it is in fact 0.83 million. I would also like to take this opportunity to add to what the writer had to say about the precarious situation in which the Balti people are today.

Although Baltis have always opposed their incorporation into Kashmir, the fact is the area was once under Dogra rule.

Thus, whenever voices are raised at international fora over Kashmir, the people of the Northern Areas, including Baltistan, are also included in the issue.

The people of this area have been facing persecution under the Pakistani regime, and are deprived of all political and judicial rights. Now, surveys show that more and more Baltis are averse to the idea of staying with Pakistan, and look forward to being part of an independent Kashmir. Anyone living in Gilgit can observe the rallies and mass meetings of the separatists. If a region, which willingly joined Pakistan in 1948, now wants to opt out of the union, that is an indictment of the Pakistani authorities' rule from the Centre.

Last November, two girls of the Ismailia community from the Ghizer district of the Northern Areas, were kidnapped by some Sunnis of Chilas district. Within a few days, the incident took the shape of a religious riot and roads were blocked by demonstrators. The government has been blamed for supporting the Sunni kidnapers. (The majority of the Northern Area population is Shia.)

According to community heads, this was not the first such case; earlier 61 girls were taken away to Chilas, and the government took no

action. The government has been strongly criticised for supporting the Sunnis. The people are saying that they liberated themselves from the Dogras and joined Pakistan to protect their religious beliefs, but it seems their religion is in danger even in Pakistan.

The oppression of Shias is very sad and depressing, and those who are perpetrating it can never be patriots, rather they want to see this country break up. They should not push the people of the Northern Areas so much into the corner that they decide to

review their merger with Pakistan, and go for an option not favourable to Pakistan.

*Sengge Tshering  
Skardu, Baltistan*

**Flesh trade**

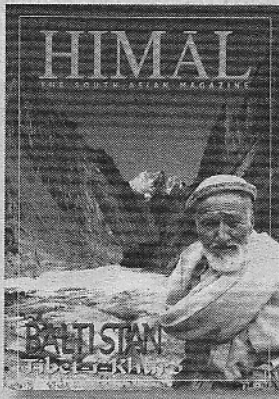
Going through John Frederick's "Deconstructing Gita" in the October 1998 issue was like reading parts of my own recently completed report on the trafficking of women in Nepal. The writer's view that the

entry of Nepali women into the flesh trade is due to lack of employment opportunities and/or of significant sources of income was also the conclusion I had reached in my study.

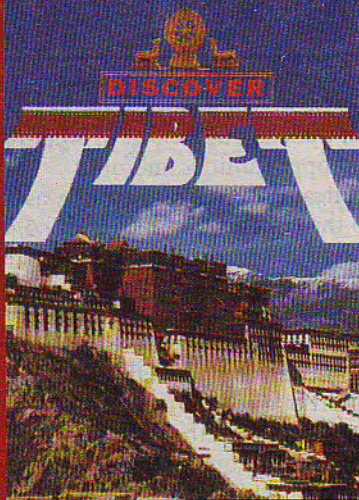
Look at the facts. Forty-five percent of Nepal's population live below the national poverty line. Despite development efforts and support by the international aid community over the decades, the country's economy has failed to keep pace with the rapidly growing population. This is due to several factors including the instability of the government, the heavy dependence on a low-productive agricultural sector, weak institutional and human capital, and over-dependence on foreign assistance.

Agriculture comprises the major portion of Nepal's GDP and most of the 80 percent of the population who depend on this sector are subsistence farmers who do not grow any surplus to sell. But living in today's society without liquidity is virtually impossible. Standards set by an increasingly materialistic society pressures those from low-income households to seek alternative means of income.

A huge majority of Nepalis live







**THE ULTIMATE  
ADVENTURE  
DESTINATION**

**&**

**THE HIMALAYAN  
KINGDOM OF  
NEPAL,**

**BHUTAN & SIKKIM**

Let TIBET TRAVELS & TOURS, the Leading Tour Operator in Nepal unfold for you the inner secrets & mysteries of these fascinating land, people & culture - so different from anything you have ever imagined.....

For details contact:



**TIBET TRAVELS & TOURS (P) LTD.**

P.O. Box 7246, Tridevi Marg, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 249140, 250611, 250748

Fax: 977-1-249986 / 250747

E-mail: [kalden@tibetwink.com.np](mailto:kalden@tibetwink.com.np)

Website: <http://www.tibet-travels.com>

# HIMAL

THE SOUTH ASIAN MAGAZINE

**More than one reason why  
Himal makes essential reading.**

*Himal has a list of aims, modestly stated, which has to contend with paranoid politicians, hidebound bureaucrats and millions of miles of barbed wire. It has on its side the virtues of readability and the absence of dogma.*

**Ramachandra Guha**  
**The Telegraph, Calcutta**

*A most daring magazine venture.*  
**Khushwant Singh**

*Provides more emphasis on regional issues than any other international magazine.*

**The News, Lahore**

*A magazine with a South Asian bias to counter the petty-nationalism and narrow geopolitical considerations of the region.*

**The Pioneer, New Delhi**

*The magazine that looks at all of South Asia as its beat.*  
**Sunday, Calcutta**

*A regional magazine with an international outlook.*

**The Economic Times, Bombay**

*A very different magazine by definition and content.*

**The Sunday Times Plus, Colombo**

*Himal is literate and readable.*  
**Tsering Wangyal, Tibetan Review**

*A magazine that caters to a very interesting niche.*

**Indian Printer and Publisher**

*With its broad and humane vision, the magazine helps capture the unity as well as the diversity of this unique part of our planet.*

**Javed Jabbar, Karachi**

**Journalism Without Borders**

Himal, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Tel: +977-1-522113/523845/521013 (fax)

email: [himalmag@mos.com.np](mailto:himalmag@mos.com.np)

URL: [www.himalmag.com](http://www.himalmag.com)

in rural areas and their only way to earn money is by moving to the cities in search of work. Many of them end up joining the small manufacturing industry, which is comprised mainly of garment and carpet factories. These places have become one of the prime targets of Indian pimps and Nepali middlemen. During my research I found that women are sold through factory owners to pimps and middlemen for anywhere between USD 200 and USD 500.

There are various other ways through which women end up in prostitution. Some are lured with promises of marriage and/or of work in India. Others are kidnapped from their homes, usually in remote parts of Nepal. And in other cases, families knowingly and willingly send their daughters (or wives or sisters) into the sex industry. Some women go in search of jobs themselves to ease the burden on their families. Whatever the case, it is the hope of additional income that leads them to prostitution.

What is alarming, though, is that ever-younger girls are being forced into the sex trade. A recent study showed that the age of these victims has dropped from 14-18 years old to 10-14 years old. In some villages, one does not find girls over the age of nine.

An estimated 7000-10,000 women and children are trafficked from Nepal into India every year. Around 200,000 are said to be working in India's sex industry. Sometimes a few are rescued, but others are still trapped. There are others who are hesitant to come back to Nepal because they are ashamed and afraid of the ostracism they will face in Nepali society. Some say that they would rather continue to work in India because there is nothing left for them in Nepal, as their families will not accept them back. In Nepal, they feel they will be forced to roam the streets again, a fact that is partially true.

In the course of my research, I



also came across numerous articles and case studies on the flesh trade, and almost all of them blamed its perpetuation on either the open border between Nepal and India or the corrupt police and government officials in both countries. However, apportioning blame is not going to solve the problem. It is time to look at the core of the problem, which is quite obvious—Nepal's poverty. Only with a responsible government devoted to uplifting the nation's economy can Nepalis have a better chance of survival within their own country.

Rita Lohani  
Clark University,  
Massachusetts

**Monica's anatomy**

I've read Himal with interest over the years and will continue to do so in the future. Though I'm not a subscriber, there are few issues which I haven't had the opportunity to read. I've appreciated the magazine's incisive social and political criticism, its refusal to shirk from issues of substance, and its tendency to highlight and examine matters of social justice, including sexism.

Given what I thought were Himal's strongest qualities, I was surprised to read in the "Mediafile" section of the September 1998 issue columnist Chhetria Patrakar's concern with Monica Lewinsky's anatomy. Why should we have to read about Patrakar's curiosity as to why "press photographs studiously focus on Ms Lewinsky" (sic) torso and leave her bottom half out of the frame".

To his credit, Patrakar's criticism of this omission lies in the fact that "the voyeuristic demands of media require that the public be shown an attractive woman". But Patrakar's choice of language and tone—indeed the framing of his ques-

tion—makes his criticism of others' sexism ring hollow.

Kenneth D. Croes  
Princeton, New Jersey

**Yeti, come back**

When I got my last issue of Himal and it had no yeti at the end, I thought it was what we in the business call a 'defective copy', also an 'export reject', maybe OK for us Indians but not for elsewhere. But I can as much do without yeti as Jim Hendrix could do without his daily poke. So I asked a friend in Yankland, and for safety (you know US Mail) another in Old Blighty, to send me their issues. These arrived, but the lady had done

the vanishing act there as well. Then it dawned that this was not little Nepal's trick on us big Indians but a considered, or consideredly idiotic, decision to drop the page altogether. This is a warning. If the yeti does not reappear I shall be contacting the LTTE for further action and advice.

Ramachandra Guha  
Bangalore

I have to tell the "Abominably Yours" columnist how you have been missed in the last two issues. Did someone finally trace your feminist footprints and scare you away? Please come back to the back pages; Himal isn't the same without your spicy, acidic missives.

Alexa Dvorson  
Cologne, Germany

I am in shock. As a faithful reader of Himal the Himalayan magazine, and having watched the magazine's sweep broaden to envelop the dusty plains and the seas, I was glad the yeti had thought it unnecessary to hudge from the last page, issue after issue. Now what have you done? Surely she has no need to hibernate.

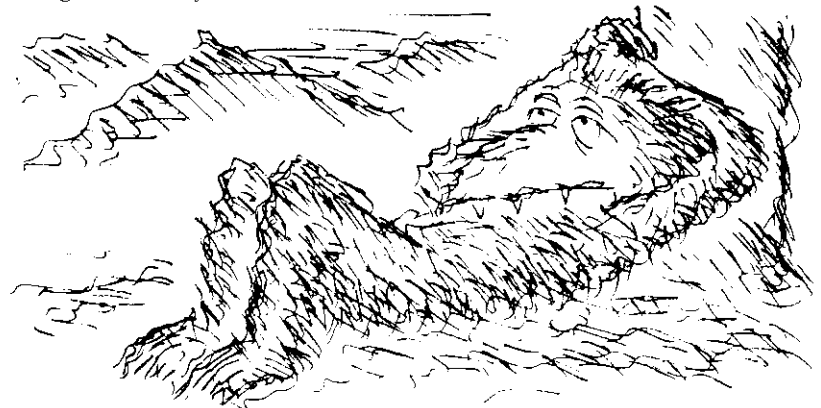
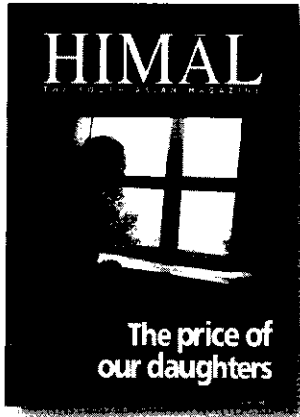
Ann Ninan  
New Delhi

At first I thought it was just a case of PMS, this sudden silence from the erstwhile yakkety yeti. But now methinks your hirsute lady columnist is seriously thinking of not coming back at all. What gives? What has caused her chest hair to curl and get her all upset? Fee not commensurate with her appetite? Unrequited love? Sore bum from all that sitting while writing her column? Whatever it is, do lure her back, even if it means rubbing yak butter on an immense behind. The thought of a Lady-less Himal is, well, abominable.

Maria Makris  
makrism@aol.com

I have just received my January copy of Himal and am disappointed to see that "Abominably yours" is still missing. Please pass on my good wishes to your correspondent for an enjoyable extended leave. When will she be returning? I always read her column before anything else in Himal, so her incisive satire and wit is sadly missed.

Adrian Price  
<adrian@sway.prestel.co.uk>





INDIA

## THEOCRATIC THREAT

WITH THE BJP having come to power at the centre, and having emerged as a formidable force all over North India, Christians are now fast joining Muslims and Dalits as one of the principal victims of Hindutva terror. Recent months have witnessed a sharp escalation of attacks on Christian priests and nuns, and the destruction of churches, particularly in Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. More recently, in Orissa, an Australian missionary and his two sons were set ablaze by a mob reportedly shouting "Bajrang Dal Zindabad".

Christians account for a little less than 3 percent of India's population, but their contribution to the development of the country, in the field of social service, education and health care, has been quite out of proportion to their numbers. Traditionally, Indian Christians have kept a low profile, preferring constructive social engagement to agitational politics. Their relations with other religious communities too have, by and large, been peaceful and relatively free of controversy.

What, then, accounts for the growing Hindutva fury against Christians? While it is true that Hindu communalists have always been stiffly opposed to Christians, preferring to see them as 'anti-nationals' and agents of Western powers, that does not explain the rapid spread of anti-Christian violence from the mid-90s onwards. There are many factors at work, one of the most significant being the changing orientation of the Church in India in recent years, due to which vested interests are feeling increasingly threatened.

Barring the Syrian Christians of Kerala, who trace their conversion to the first century AD and to St Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus, almost all of India's Christians owe their conversion to European missionaries—first, the Portuguese and the Dutch and then the English—who arrived in India in the wake of the establishment of European colonial rule in the region. Till 1947, the church in India was modelled completely on the European pattern, and missionaries saw the dissemination of European culture as inseparable from their task of spreading the Christian gospel.

After 1947, however, demands began to

be made by Indian Christian leaders to make the church in India more authentically 'Indian'. Not only were European missionaries and clergymen replaced by Indians, the Indian church also embarked, although for some, rather too hesitatingly, on what it called the process of "inculturation". This meant making a clear distinction between the message of Christ, on the one hand, and its European expression on the other. Consequently, the Indian church increasingly turned its attention to addressing and responding to the Indian social context within which it was placed.

This shift in orientation manifested itself in two principal ways: firstly, in what was termed as the "Indianisation" of the Church, represented essentially by the use of art forms, architectural styles and ritual practices generally associated with the Brahminic Hindu tradition, and secondly, in a growing concern for assisting the process of the country's economic development, by setting up a vast network of schools, hospitals and charitable institutions.

The late 1980s was the period which saw the dramatic upsurge of the dalit, backward-caste and tribal struggles all over India. However, this upsurge was accompanied by the rapidly growing strength of Hindutva, or Brahminism in a new garb. Meanwhile, there was the failure of the developmentalist ideology to effectively tackle the problems of mass poverty, unemployment and widening inequalities. That was when important sections within the Indian church began questioning its role in promoting, whether inadvertently or otherwise, the twin structures of Brahminism and capitalism.

Christian dalit ideologues, inspired by the Ambedkarite movement, called into question the continued discrimination against the dalits within the church, although they form almost 80 percent of the total Indian Christian population. Radical Dalit theologians, such as the late Rev Arvind Nirmal of Aurangabad, Rev M. Azariah of Madras, and Rev James Massey of Delhi, even accused the largely 'high' caste Indian church leadership of 'Brahminising' Christianity in the name of 'Indianising' the church. At the same time, influenced by Latin American 'liberation theology', many Indian Christian theologians also began critiquing the church's conservatism and its connivance with the ruling elites—manifested most strikingly in its chain of English-medium schools that cater largely to the children of wealthy families, most of whom happen to be 'high'

**Indian Christian theologians also began critiquing the church's conservatism and its connivance with the ruling elites—manifested most strikingly in its chain of English-medium schools that cater largely to the children of wealthy families, most of whom happen to be 'high' caste Hindus.**



caste Hindus.

The emerging dalit and liberation theologies are today propelling significant sections within the Indian Church towards the path of radical social activism by challenging structures of oppression—religious, cultural, economic and political. Contemporary dalit and liberation theologians see Jesus himself as a revolutionary, a central concern of whose mission was to oppose the hegemony of the ruling establishment and to crusade for a radically new social order.

This new commitment to a socially engaged, radical Christianity is today inspiring many Christian priests, more so Catholics than Protestants, to engage themselves in the struggles of the poor, particularly the dalits and the trihals. It is this that has earned them the wrath of the vested interests and dominant elites—landlords, money-lenders, merchants and others—who see the growing assertion of the marginalised as threatening to them. As Father Cedric Prakash, coordinator of the Gujarat chapter of the United Christian Forum for Human Rights, explained in a recent interview, the continuing attacks on Christians in Gujarat owes directly to the fact that the Christian priests had helped “empower the Dalits and Adivasis [so that] they can stand for their rights and fight back”.

It is these ‘high’ castes, who have for centuries sought to legitimise their cruel oppression of the ‘low’ castes in the name of Hinduism, that also provide the backbone of support for groups such as the RSS, VHP, BJP and the Bajrang Dal. Attacks by Hindutva activists and their supporters against Christian priests and nuns working in various parts of India, sought to be legitimised in the name of ‘protecting Hinduism’ and ‘preventing conversions’, are thus nothing less than a declaration of war by vested interests on those who would help the oppressed. ▲

*-Yoginder Sikand*

## NEPAL

# PINOCHET AND PANCHAYAT

“THERE WAS no reason for the police to shoot at all. We were just demonstrating on the streets, when all of a sudden, bullets began raining down on us.” Thus described Ram Chandra Maharjan the events at his

hilltop hometown of Kirtipur in Kathmandu Valley during the 1990 People’s Movement. Maharjan’s account is among the hundreds of depositions before the three-member Mallik Commission constituted in 1990 soon after the success of the Movement, to investi-

gate instances of criminal acts by the state during the 49-day-long pro-democracy agitation.

As in other countries that suddenly emerged from authoritarianism to democracy, the free but shaky governments of Nepal since 1990 have failed to take action against those who criminally suppressed opponents of the erstwhile Panchayat system. In their version of events to the Commission, all those incriminated shifted responsibility citing that they were only acting under orders. Policemen named their superiors, who, in turn, passed the buck on to the Home Ministry and the notorious “National Resistance Committee”, constituted of hotshots of the Panchayat regime to oppose the People’s Movement. On its part, the Committee pleaded that it too was following instructions from the ‘higher authorities’. In those days of absolute monarchy, ‘higher authorities’ could only mean the king, and there the exercise of identifying those responsible faltered.

The Commission submitted its report to the interim government formed immediately after the restoration of democracy. The government, a coalition of the Nepali Congress, the communists and royalists, however, decided not to take action against police personnel implicated in the Mallik report. The government’s argument was that such action may affect the general elections it was mandated to conduct. All it did, therefore, was seize the passports of politicians implicated and send the report to the Attorney General.

The Mallik report had recommended strong action against those implicated. The then Attorney General, however, was of the opinion that no action could be taken as evidence against individuals was lacking. This was a view that generated heated debate in the country at that time, and the head of the Commission, Justice Janardhan Mallik, himself protested that the report contained enough proof for prosecution. But the matter did not go further, and despite assurances by governments of all hues since then, there has



MIN SAIRACHAWA

*Awaiting justice:  
Relatives grieve  
during the 1990  
Movement.*



been no attempt to implement the recommendations.

Years of political opportunism and national amnesia have taken their toll and the commitment to seek justice for past wrongs has begun to fade. (The report was made public only towards the end of 1995.) Nearly a decade after the atrocities of the spring of 1990, the guilty remain unpunished.

It took the extradition case in London of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet to revive memories in Nepal of its own past. Some sections of the Nepali media started drawing parallels between Pinochet's blood-stained rule and Nepal's own authoritarian Panchayat regime. Meanwhile, a group of 121 law students sought to file a writ in the Supreme Court seeking it to direct the government to take action against 47 political stalwarts of the Panchayat regime who were named in the report. Their argument was that since the burden of finding proof is the government's, statements in the report should be taken as "first information reports" on the basis of which investigations should begin. The initial petition was not accepted on the grounds of a technicality, but the lawyers-to-be were not to be deterred and they submitted another petition, the hearing on which is upcoming.

Pinochet's junta lasted 17 years, during which about 3000 were kidnapped, tortured or disappeared. But at the end of it, Pinochet was allowed to go free in a trade-off for democracy. Nepal's Panchayat regime stood firm for nearly double the period of the Chilean dictator's rule. During the full three decades that the king held absolute power, it is believed that thousands were imprisoned, tortured or disappeared.

The 1990 uprising saw scores killed in unprecedented crackdown by the state. And as, unlike in Chile, Nepal's transition from autocracy to democracy did not include a blanket pardon for those responsible for those offences, there is all the more reason for following the Mallik Commission's recommendations.

But the longer it takes, the more difficult it is going to be. The Panchayat-era forces have now regained a strong footing in the country's political milieu and have partnered governments with the very 'democrats' and communists who joined forces in 1990 to bring down the Panchayat regime. (Among those whose passports were seized were Lokendra Bahadur Chand, who became prime minister with the help of the communists in 1997, and Pashupati Shamshere Rana, who was a

powerful minister in governments which included both the Nepali Congress and the communists.)

The Mallik report has thus come to symbolise justice-in-waiting, and a challenge to the collusion between fighters for democracy-turned-rulers and those who at the very least abetted atrocities during the rule of the Panchayat.

This Nepali inability to right historical wrongs has a precedent that goes back 50 years. In 1950, began Nepal's first experiment with democracy following the semi-violent overthrow of the rule by hereditary prime ministers of the Rana family. The excesses committed during the 104-year Rana rule was conveniently forgotten in the spirit of the so-called Delhi Compromise, between the king, the Ranas and the Nepali Congress, representing the people.

The Mallik Commission report had given Nepal a chance to start afresh after the restoration of democracy in 1990. But as things have turned out it may once again prove to be an opportunity lost. ▲

-Ajay Bhadra Khanal

**The sons and daughters of Sinhalese cultivators and fishermen fight on against the sons and daughters of Tamil cultivators and fishermen, cheered from the sidelines by the middle classes.**

## SRI LANKA

# SHIRKING MIDDLE CLASS

**THE KILINOCHCHI** disaster in September 1998 was the exclamation mark at the end of the Sri Lankan government's failed strategy to capture the Jaffna-Vavuniya highway, help Tamil moderates establish a political head-head in the Jaffna peninsula, and force the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) to negotiate on its (the government's) terms. The battle resulted in thousands of casualties, mostly on the army's side, and was perhaps the costliest since US troops cornered Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard at the end of the Gulf War in 1991. The defeat was soon followed by the government's decision to call off its "Operation Victory Assured" and, sensing its advantage, the LTTE's new offers to enter into unconditional talks which the government promptly rebuffed.

Further deepening the gloom, recent reports in the Sri Lankan press that South African President Nelson Mandela would facilitate negotiations turned out to be, in the words of the Sri Lankan Foreign Minister



Lakshman Kadirgamar, "idle speculation" What no one hothered to ask was why Mandela would risk his unmatched cache and credibility in attempting to reconcile two warring sides that seem so uninterested in compromise. As the new year began, the government turned its attention to the provincial council elections, while the army appeared to have changed its strategy, from forging mass formations of troops and artillery to opting for smaller fighting patrols.

Sri Lanka's citizens are quick to blame their leaders for the seemingly endless political and military stalemate but the "civil societies" on both sides of the ethnic divide are equally to blame. This is a war in which the sons and daughters of Sinhalese cultivators and fishermen fight on against the sons and daughters of Tamil cultivators and fishermen, cheered from the sidelines by the middle classes of both communities who dominate the war's discourse but whose contributions to the war effort are mostly measured in airy words and good intentions.

The contradiction between the Sinhalese desire to vanquish the LTTE and their unwillingness to enlist, especially when the tide of battle shifts and victory appears remote, is perhaps the Sri Lankan army's greatest obstacle to achieving its objectives. The Tigers face the same frustration. Their dream of Elam would be closer to reality if more Tamils left the comforts of asylum abroad and joined up.

But it appears that the majority of the people from both sides, at home and elsewhere, comprise this very shirking middle. Too clever to enlist and too proud or insecure to advocate concessions, these people, often insulated from the full effects of the war, argue that the government's devolution proposals go too far or don't go far enough. They either stall or overreach. Stall, because dialogue and debate without closure amounts to filibuster and overreach, because neither side can expect to achieve through negotiations what it has failed to through war.

The more victory-minded among the Sinhalese and Tamil communities contribute money directly to the war effort through the National Defence Fund or LTTE front organisations, while others give to charities that support widows and children of dead soldiers, purchase artificial limbs, and so on. While these soft donations are graciously accepted, they are not what the army or the LTTE require to finish their business. Both sides need fighters, desperately, and all the money and high-tech weaponry in the world are not

going to help either side win unless more arm-chair firebrands, who believe compromise is impossible, have the courage to act on their convictions and enlist.

The role of the shirking middle will have to be more decisive because there are more of them. They can continue to stall or overreach, while letting people with fewer social options do the fighting for them, or they can put their political weight behind the not-so-proud leaders and activists of both communities who would rather compromise than win, and who, demonstrating a courage of their own, are working for a negotiated settlement, however imperfect.

▲  
-Nilan Fernando

## PAKISTAN

# AT DEBT'S DOOR

**ON THE** surface, it seems that Pakistan is making a comeback into the good books of the international financial community. In the third week of January, it received a USD 575 million "bailout package" from the International Monetary Fund to improve its balance of payment situation. Following the IMF loan, came a separate credit of USD 350 million from the World Bank for reforms in the banking sector. Islamabad has also sought a re-scheduling of its loans servicing with the Paris Club, a consortium of donor countries and subsidiary organisations of the IMF, and a relief of USD 3.5 billion is likely from that direction.

Earlier, in September 1998, sensing the gravity of Pakistan's economic mess and a possible default in payments to lending institutions, the US government had eased the economic sanctions for one year. (It is believed that this was due to Pakistani assurances that it would sign the CIBT during 1999, a fact denounced, by right-wing religious parties led by the radical Jamat-e-Islami, as a rollback of the country's nuclear programme.)

For a country facing economic sanctions after the nuclear tests of May 1998, said the government's economic managers, the credits from the Fund and the Bank would provide relief to the economy. However, independent economists, bankers and businessmen see them only as a further burden on the ailing economy. Pakistan already owes about USD 30 billion to various lending agencies and these packages, intended to avoid an im-





**Vajra** (literally--flash of lightning), is an artists' condominium, a transit home for many, providing a base during months of hibernation and creative inspiration. Its isolation, graphic splendour and peaceful ambience, make an ideal retreat from the clock of pressure.

Ketaki Sheth  
*Inside Outside*

I stayed a week at the **Vajra**, by which time I had become so fond of it that I stayed another.

John Collee  
*The London Observer*



## in Kathmandu, the Vajra

Swayambhu, Dallu Bijyaswori, PO Box 1084, Kathmandu  
Phone 271545, 272719 Fax 977 1 271695

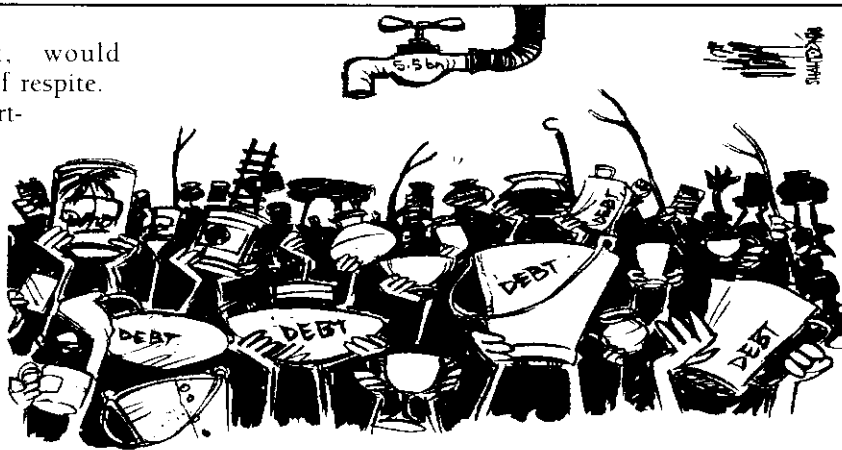


mediate default, would provide but a brief respite. Moreover, these short-term benefits will not count for much as the time will come when the country will have to pay back the money.

Neither the government nor the IMF has revealed all the conditions tagged to the latter's package, hut experts believe they may include stringent economic demands such as raising power and oil prices, devaluing currency, and broadening the revenue base. The declared conditions call for a growth rate of 5 to 6 percent over the medium term, reduction in annual inflation rate to 6 percent by 2001-02 against the present rate of 9 percent, reduction in the external current account deficit from about 3 percent of GDP in 1998-99 to less than 1.5 percent of GDP by 2001-02, and improvement in social indicators.

Given Pakistan's declining exports and the drying up of new investments after the nuclear tests, it will be very difficult for the government to fulfil all it has committed to. The current IMF credit consists of two programmes: i) extended structural adjustment facility (ESAF) and ii) compensatory and contingency financing facility (CCFF), which is commercial credit at market interest rates. The major portion of this package is the CCFF loan aimed at offsetting the shortfall of export earnings during 1999. "It is ridiculous to make up for export earnings by taking costly loans," said Shahid Hassan Siddiqui, senior banker and chairman of the Research Institute of Islamic Banking and Finance in Karachi.

In an attempt to prevent movement of foreign exchange out of the country after the nuclear blasts, the government had taken some unpopular decisions including the freezing of all foreign currency bank accounts and imposing restrictions on imports. Importers were asked to deposit 30 percent of the import letter of credit amount in advance and directed to purchase dollars at market rates. (Only the import of essential items like food, oil and drugs were exempted.) For this, the central hank introduced a dual exchange system, which provided for an inter-bank exchange rate reflecting the market situation,



besides the official rate of exchange.

To encourage exports, the government allowed exporters to sell 50 percent of their hard currency earnings at inter-bank rates and surrender the remainder to the government at official exchange rates. (This ratio was recently increased to 80 percent; earlier, all export earnings had to be given to the government at the official rate.) Unfortunately, these steps had no impact on exports: export figures for July-December 1998 reveal that earnings fell by over 12.5 percent over the same period the year before.

Government control over the foreign currency accounts shook the confidence of investors and the common people as a whole. Over half a million account holders were deprived of their money overnight in the wake of the state of emergency imposed just after the nuclear blasts. Although the government later defroze the accounts, allowing withdrawal in Pakistan rupees at the official exchange rate, the public's confidence is still not restored. "That confidence can be restored only by spending on development of infrastructure and the social sector, which would create employment and bring investment," said Asad Saeed, an economist with the Karachi-based Pakistan Institute of Labour, Education and Research (PILER).

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, which stood at USD 1.26 billion before 28 May, had plunged to USD 400 million by October 1998. The injection of USD 346 million—reimbursement of the purchase price of F-16 fighter jets held by the US—brought the reserves up to USD 1 billion at the beginning of the new year. But the economic crisis is far from being over. Cautioned hanker Siddiqui, "It has just been deferred till September, after which we will see a very difficult situation."

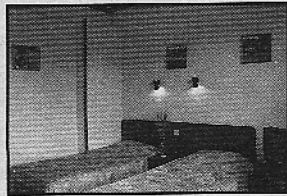
**-Shujauddin Qureshi**



**"By far the best deal in the inexpensive range of hotels"**

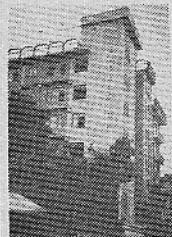
*Frommer's Nepal.*

**Kunsang's personal service matches four star quality for a trusted and comfortable stay**



**Features:**

- on a quiet lane, situated conveniently in the heart of Thamel
- business and travel centre (e-mail, fax, private phones, trekking, rafting and safari)
- satellite TV, safety deposit, air-conditioning, elevator and luggage storage
- bath-tubs with 24 hr. hot shower, roof top garden and friendly staff



**HOTEL EXCELSIOR (P) LTD**

P.O. BOX 9432,  
NARSINGH CAMP  
THAMEL, KATHMANDU NEPAL  
Tel: 411566, 257748, Fax: 977-1-410853  
E-mail: [excel@wlink.com.np](mailto:excel@wlink.com.np)  
URL: <http://members.tripod.com/~HotelExcelsior>

**Our Activities:**

1. WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE
2. CARGO CONSOLIDATOR AND INTERNATIONAL FORWARDER
3. IN BOUND-OUT BOUND,
4. AUTHORISED CUSTOM BROKER OF HMG-NEPAL



**SHANGRI-LA FREIGHT (P) LTD.**

GPO BOX: 11829  
THAMEL, BHAGWAN BAHAL,  
KATHMANDU, NEPAL  
PHONE : 424456/414657/424732  
FAX: 977-1-424732  
e-mail: [sfl@wlink.com.np](mailto:sfl@wlink.com.np)

**"A COMPANY WITH RELIABLE SERVICE AND COMPETATIVE RATES"**



**DISCOVER THE WONDERS OF NEPAL**

**MT. MANASLU ADVENTURE TREKS (PVT.) LTD.**

SPECIALISES IN TREKS AND OTHER ADVENTURES IN THE HIMALAYAS.

WE HAVE AN ENTHUSIASTIC AND PROFESSIONAL TEAM OF PLANNERS AND GUIDES WHO WILL GIVE YOU PREMIUM SERVICE.

WE ALSO OFFER WHITE-WATER RAFTING, JUNGLE SAFARI, MOUNTAINEERING AND ROCK-CLIMBING.

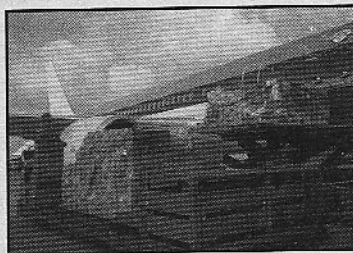
WE ALSO ARRANGE TICKETS AND OTHER TRAVEL SERVICES FOR TREKKING IN PAKISTAN, TIBET (INCLUDING MT. KAILASH), BHUTAN AND INDIA.



PO. Box 15145  
Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Call: +977-1-423542, 424632  
Fax: +977-1-351155  
Email: [manaslutrek@wlink.com.np](mailto:manaslutrek@wlink.com.np)

**WELCOME TO**

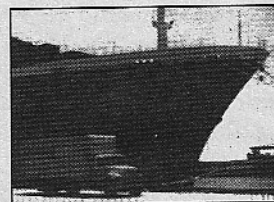
**Jai ANNAPURNA FREIGHT (P) LTD**



We are proud to say that our cargo service is the most reliable, efficient and professional. We offer you the best service (IN-BOUND/OUT-BOUND)

**Our services:**

- All packaging /safe storage
- Customs clearance
- Transportation / pick-up & drop
- All necessary documentation
- World-wide Air/Air, Air/Sea & Road/Sea cargo service
- With most reasonable rates
- Guaranteed friendly, helpful & efficient service
- Time to time shipment information



**Jai ANNAPURNA FREIGHT (P) LTD.**

P.O. BOX: 8973, NPC 199  
PUTALISADAK, KATHMANDU, NEPAL  
TEL: 247316, 231687 FAX: +977-1-242500



SRI LANKA

# UPPER CASTE CHRISTIANS

**CHRISTIANS FORM** 2.3 percent of India's population and 2 percent of Pakistan's, while they account for 7.6 percent of Sri Lanka. But unlike in Pakistan, where Christians have been under siege due to the country's blasphemy laws or in India, where they have recently been targeted for attacks by Hindu extremists, the relatively well-off Christians of Sri Lanka have managed to achieve a state of equilibrium with the island's Buddhists and Hindus.

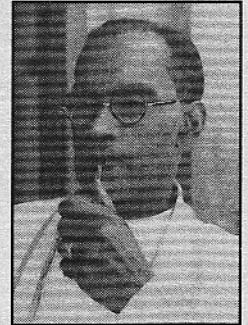
Sri Lanka's Christians are not an elite community but nor are they from the socially deprived groups of tribals and 'lower' castes as are the bulk of Christians in India and Pakistan. Upper crust Christians have played a prominent role in Sri Lankan society and politics ever since the 1920s and 1930s when the landed gentry was used as a favoured instrument by the British for the gradual devolution of power to local elites. A disproportionately high percentage of the landed gentry and commercial class was from wealthy Christian clans. The Senanayakes, the Kotelawalas, the Bandaranaiques and the Jayewardenes—all practising a tactical mix of Christian and Buddhist beliefs—were among the dominant, anglicised, upper class families to whom the British handed over power on 4 February 1948 when Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) became an independent country.

Their political dominance continues to this day in the figures of President Chandrika Kumaratunga and her mother, Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike. The President's father, Solomon West Ridgeway Dias (generally known by his initials as SWRD) Bandaranaike, converted to Buddhism from Christianity and rose to become Prime Minister in 1956 on a wave of Sinhalese-Buddhist populism generated largely by him. The Trotskyist Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Communist Party were also dominated by leaders of Christian origin—Colvin de Silva, N.M. Perera and Pieter Keuneman. The Ceylon Tamil parties in the 1950s and the 1960s also had a number of Christians in important positions. (In this sense, the Christians of Sri Lanka have been like the Brahmins of India who have held key positions in parties right across the political spectrum from the BJP, to the Congress party,

to the communists.)

A small sub-group of Christians of mixed Eurasian origin, the Burghers, provided eminent personages to Sri Lanka's civil service, the officer corps of the armed forces, and the literary world. This is in sharp contrast to India and Pakistan, where Anglo-Indians were derided for their mixed parentage and could only aspire to modest occupations.

Historically, the sharp cleavage in Sri Lankan society has been ethnic rather than religious or sectarian as has been the case in India and Pakistan. The 70 percent Sinhalese majority and the 11 percent Ceylon Tamil minority (who are markedly different from the 9 percent Indian Tamil minority whose forebears were brought over as tea plantation labour in the 19th century) have distinct racial memories of conflict whose current manifestation is the fierce war between the Tamil Tigers and the Sri Lankan armed forces. Religion is secondary and peripheral in this racial conflict, though Buddhism has been stoked by Sinhalese chauvinists and Hindu-



S.W.R.D

LANKA MONTHLY/DISEST

**Percentage of Religious Groups in South Asia**

(Some of the figures are estimates. N=Negligible or Not Estimated)

Countries	Buddhists	Christians	Hindus	Muslims	Others
Afghanistan	N	N	N	99	N
Bhutan	75	N	25	N	N
Bangladesh	N	N	12.1	86.6	N
India	0.8	2.3	82.4	11.7	2.8
Maldives	N	N	N	99	N
Myanmar	87.2	5.6	1.0	3.6	2.6
Nepal	5.3	N	89.5	2.7	N
Pakistan	N	2.0	1.8	96	N
Sri Lanka	69.8	7.6	15.2	7.4	N

COMPILED BY JAWID LAIQ

ism by Tamil separatists to fuel the ethnic fire.

Caste also has a role in Sri Lankan politics, both among Sinhalese and Tamils, though marginal in comparison to the major role of caste configurations in Indian politics or to the severe, Sunni-Shia sectarian schisms in Pakistan's political battles. The Goyigama caste has generally been regarded as the most significant in intra-Sinhalese politics and the Vellala caste was considered to be important in Ceylon Tamil public affairs. Traditionally, both the Goyigamas and the Vellalas were landowning, cultivator castes. The only person from a humble caste and class background to have reached the very top in Sri Lankan governance was Ranasinghe Premadasa, the country's president from January 1989 to May 1993 when he was assassinated. The other person who has got to the top from modest class and caste origins—though in an opposing sphere and by a brutal process—is the Tamil Tigers chief, V. Prabhakaran. ▲

- Jawid Laiq





*Beena Sarwar*

# IT'S JUST NOT CRICKET

**Fringe extremists on both sides of the India-Pakistan border are feeding off each other to kill, maim and brutalise their people in the name of religion.**

It must be one of the most ridiculous and ironic situations around—but nobody's laughing. Two of South Asia's bigger neighbours are engaged in a covert war that goes beyond the insidious activities of their secret agencies and support (unofficial, of course) for each other's insurrectionists.

The mindset that is damaging peace in the region is increasingly reflected in the positions taken up by the fringe 'religious' groups in both India and Pakistan, who feed off each other, brutalise society, and intimidate, kill and attack in the name of religion. Once part of a single nation, the propaganda that has been consistently drummed into people's minds has resulted in a belief that 'the other' is not really a human being.

*Praying under armed guard in Lahore.*

Things as innocuous as a new bus service or a cricket game between the two countries are used as excuse for chest-thumping war cries. The religious zealots on both sides vow not to allow bilateral relations to improve, whether through a cricket match in Bombay, a bus service between Delhi and Lahore, or business ties that seek out the best of comparative advantages between India and Pakistan. But the irony lies not just in their symmetrical threats—take away their names and no one would know which side of the border these threats are emanating from—but in the weak-kneed response of their respective governments.

If the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is unwilling to put a brake on Bal Thackeray, the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) of Nawaz Sharif pussyfoots around Pakistan's own radi-



THE NEWS

cal groups. Both governments verbally (but weakly) condemn the violence and threats of violence, but implicitly provide support through inaction at controlling the source.

In the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, 'the other' has come to encompass the Muslim sects also, with radicals from each side considering the other to be non-Islamic, or worse, as Muslim 'impostors', and therefore deserving of death. Although the main battle is now between the extremist factions of Shias and Sunnis, members of other religions and minorities like the Christians, the Hindus and the Ahmedis feel extremely vulnerable.

Yet another irony becomes apparent in the continuing protests of Pakistani Christians against the attacks on Christians in India. Take



the resolution moved in Pakistan's National Assembly last month by minority member Peter John Sahotra, who is affiliated with the ruling party. He did not move any such resolution after an explosion in a Roman Catholic church in Karachi two days before Christmas, in which three worshippers were killed. Or when a Presbyterian church was demolished in the Punjabi town of Sheikhpura in early December 1997, and its priest, Father Nur Alam murdered a month and a half later, for pursuing the case.

Or when the authorities demolished a shanty town in the Punjabi town of Sahiwal last year, destroying 70 houses along with a church. Perhaps the fact that the slum dwellers were Christian was incidental, and their homes may have been destroyed even if they had been Muslim. But no government authority would have dared demolish a mosque, howsoever illegally constructed. In fact, mosques in Pakistan are extending their boundaries all the time, encroaching upon public parks, roads and pavements.

### **Venomous messengers**

Another resolution passed in the National Assembly on the same day as Sahotra's, condemned the cold-blooded murder of 16 worshippers at a Shi'ite mosque in the southern Punjabi town of Muzaffargarh. However, this resolution evoked much debate. Could the fact that it was Shias, and not the majority Sunni community, who were the target of the Muzaffargarh killings have contributed to this verbal squabbling?

Supporting the resolution, the Awami National Party parliamentary leader, Afsandayar Wali, argued that passing it would send a strong message to the world that Pakistan was against such terrorism—a particularly important point, given the trouble Pakistan is having convincing the world that it is not engaged in "exporting *jihad*". The resolution was unanimously adopted in the end, but concrete steps need to be taken if this violence is to be curbed.

Fears about the 'Talibanisation' not only of Afghanistan, but of the entire region are increasing; the fascists in the Sangh Parivar across the border, known as "India's Taliban", are part of this phenomenon.

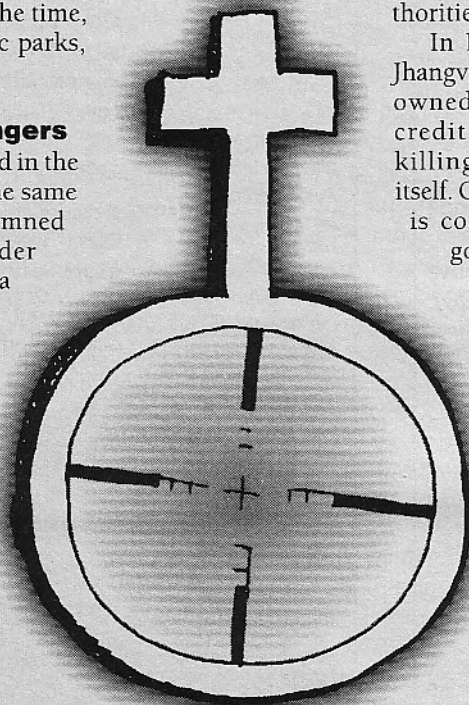
The zealots continue to thunder fire even when they are on the run after warrants are out for their arrests, from 'hideouts' in both Pakistan and India. What kind of signal is issued when Atal Behari Vajpayee tours the areas affected by communal violence in the company of the president of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the organisation that perpetrated it in the first place: "Tsk tsk tsk, this violence is terrible, but I'm still friends with the bullies who are responsible."

The Shiv Sena can openly threaten the Lahore-Delhi bus service and the cricket match between India and Pakistan, and its leadership freely gives statements to the press (and issues more threats), without fear of any action against them by the authorities.

In Pakistan, the Laskhar-e-Jhangvi for the first time publicly owned up to murder, taking credit for the Muzaffargarh killings. This is ominous in itself. Obviously, the organisation is confident enough now to go public with such a dastardly claim. Not without reason, for this group receives significant political patronage from those in power. The men responsible for these murders include Laskhar-e-Jhangvi activists who escaped from jail in December 1997—a jailbreak about which wardens had been duly warned, but whose requests for stepped up security were ig-

nored. Barely three weeks later, the escaped convicts were among those who mowed down 25 Shi'ite men and boys at a prayer meeting at a Lahore graveyard.

These killings are part of a series of retaliatory murders which have increased since an explosion at the Lahore Sessions Court in January 1997 killed 27 people, including the extremist Sunni outfit Sipah-e-Sahaba (SSP) leader Maulana Ziaur Rehman—the





# RECENT ARRIVALS AT MANDALA

1. **Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of Kathmandu Valley:** Vol. I Text, Vol. II Plates, Mary Slusser, *Reprint Edition*
2. **Food, Ritual and Society:** A Study of Social Structure and Food Symbolism among the Newars: Per Lowdin
3. **Moran of Kathmandu:** Priest, Educator & Ham Radio 'Voice of the Himalayas': Donald A. Messerschmidt
4. **Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom:** The politics of culture in contemporary Nepal: Edited by Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka & Whelpton
5. **Dictionary of Nepalese Plant Names:** Keshab Shrestha
6. **The Arrow and the Spindle:** Studies in History, Myths, Rituals and Beliefs in Tibet: Samten G. Karmay
7. **Contes et Legendes de La Vallee de Kathmandou Nepal:** Keshar Lal
8. **The Nepalese Caitya 1500 years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley:** Niels Gutschov
9. **Tourism and Development Science & Industry Interface:** Ramesh Raj Kunwar
10. **Buddhism in Nepal (465 BC - 1199 AD):** Naresh Man Bajracharya
11. **Journey to Enlightenment the Life and World of Khyentse Rinpoche Spritual Teacher from Tibet:** Photographs and Narratively: Mathieu Ricard
12. **Power Places of Kathmandu: Hindu and Buddhist Holy Sites in the Sacred Valley of Nepal:** Photographs by Kevin Bubriski, Text by Keith Dowman



## MANDALA BOOK POINT

P.O. Box No.: 528, Kantipath, Kathmandu, Nepal.  
Tel: +977-1-255444, 227711, 245570 & 249555  
Fax: +977-1-255921  
E-mail: mandala@csl.com.np

We accept  
Visa, Master Card & American Express

How to avoid  
putting on **weight**  
during your next vacation.

When it comes to the topic of weight, climbers are rather sensitive people. They put on one teeny tiny extra gram, and suddenly they become severely depressed.

Which is why at Marmot, you might say we're constantly battling the bulge.

Take for instance our new Thunderlight jacket. It weighs in at a profoundly economical 20 ounces. And that's with the PitZips™, the roomy Angel-Wing movement™, and the big, helmetfitting, roll-up hood.

Constructed with solid 3 Ply Gore-Tex® fabric and reinforced in all the blowout-prone areas, it's guaranteed not to spring a leak, rip, tear, fall apart, or anything else that may ruin an otherwise perfect vacation.

Because up around 8,000 feet, you start to redefine what's truly important in your life.

To find out more, get a catalog, or for dealer information, call us:

(707) 544-4590. E-mail us:

Info@Marmot.com.

Or visit us on-line:

<http://www.Marmot.com>

*The Thunderlight is a lightweight, weatherproof jacket constructed of rugged 3 Ply Gore-Tex® fabric with reinforced body and shoulders. And it weighs only 20 ounces.*



# Marmot™ For Life.



Laskhar-e-Jhangvi is a splinter group of the SSP. But the cycle of violence goes much further back, to the murky reign of Gen Zia-ul-Haq and his overt encouragement of politicised religion. And before that, to the constitutional declaration of one sect as 'non-Muslim', and even before that, to the adoption of Islam as the 'state religion' of Pakistan. Since then, obscurantists have been appropriating religion for political gains, and the problem is that there are too many takers.

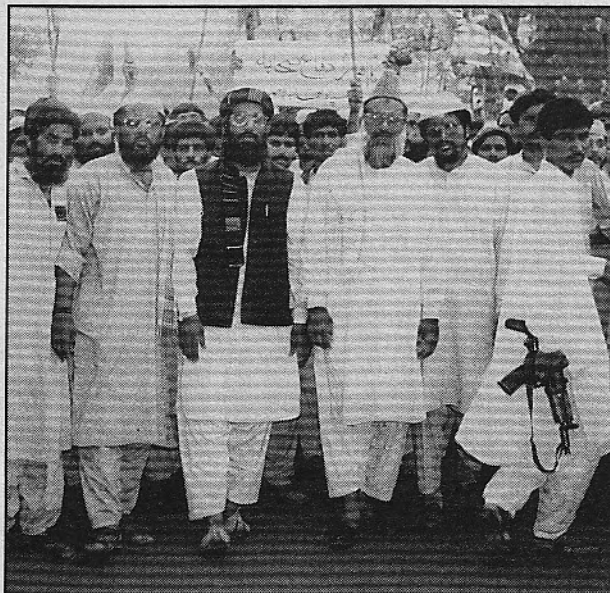
Adding fuel to fire is the state's continuing failure to provide alternatives, particularly in terms of education and employment. Gen Zia and successive governments encouraged the sectarian divide by allowing the proliferation of religious schools. There are 35,000 religious seminaries registered in Punjab alone. Unofficially, the number is estimated at 100,000. And most are sectarian in nature: they preach the Islam of one or another 'sect'.

### Creed of terror

There is no check on the curriculum and teachings in these schools, on their sources of funding, or the impact they have on impressionable young ones, most of whom attend because of the guarantee of two square meals a day. By the time they leave these institutions, the students are full of blind conviction. This conviction will often include the belief that those belonging to other sects are *kafir* whom it is *jaez* (valid) to kill—wall chalkings and graffiti on buses proclaim this openly, as do sermons from mosques.

In India, schools run by the BJP are engaged in brainwashing young minds. Incidents involving sectarian terrorism evoke a routine wimpish administrative response. Deputy commissioners and police chiefs are shuffled about, hate literature is confiscated only belatedly, and then there is much sloganeering and claims of the sectarian monster having been conquered.

It is much the same in Pakistan where there is no visible campaign to rid society of hate speech and hate materials. Newspapers routinely print what are essentially incitements to murder on their front pages, and no action is taken against those who make these pronouncements. Political parties play dumb on the sectarian issue, and successive governments have routinely compromised with the sectarian groups. Take the example of the PML, which, shortly after coming to power, declared it would check the inter-sect violence. To this end, it established the Anti-Terrorist Courts and the Muttehida Ulema



THE NEWS

*Sipaha-e-Sahaba leader Tariq Azam (black waistcoat) leading his flock.*

Board. The ATC convicted no more than a handful of communal terrorists, and now has decided to concentrate on other areas. The Muttehida Ulema Board, set up by the chief minister of Punjab Shahbaz Sharif, the brother of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, fizzled out after he failed to turn up at five consecutive meetings after the inauguration.

As a result, once more people are praying in mosques and *imambargahs* under the shadow of armed police deputed to each place of worship. This is how Muslims in a declared Muslim country are besieged and terrorised by their fellow believers. The message given by Prime Minister Sharif himself is one of violence: he has openly exhorted crowds to pressurise and "force" those who oppose the controversial 15th Amendment to the Constitution to change their views. Taking the cue, his ministers have used unparliamentary language about activist NGOs, as in the case of Punjab Minister for Social Welfare, Pir Binyamin Rizvi, who accused a couple of women's NGOs of "conspiring against national interests". The proof? None required. The fact that they are among those who oppose the 15th Amendment and have met visitors from India apparently makes for a strong enough case.

If things are to change, the Pakistani government must honestly appraise the repercussions of the messages its own functionaries give out. It must critically examine the sectarian situation and do what needs to be done, without playing to the political gallery. And the same is to be done, across the border, by the Government of India. ▲





Vijay Prashad

# HINDU RIGHT IS WRONG

**Extremist Hindutva worming its way into the minds of the Indian masses is making intolerance look like a good habit.**

**T**he leopard does not change its spots. It was a given that the Hindu Right in India would be the vanguard of intolerance, and at the end of one year in power that is exactly how it is.

It should, however, be kept in mind that the rulers in Delhi, are not all from within the family of the Hindu Right. Of the 13 coalition partners, most represent regional elites whose supporting the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was based on the BJP's promise to be more moderate (in contrast to the unbridled visions of the fascistic members of its extended family).

Prominent secularists and sometime socialists like George Fernandes and Yashwant Sinha are part of the coalition handwagon. But for all that, BJP's governance has in no way been qualitatively different from how the preceding Congress governments ruled. What sets BJP apart though is its "authoritarian symptoms", as pointed out quite rightly by Prakash Karat of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which keeps in focus the disease of intolerance that is gnawing Indian society.

What is the disease that drives the BJP-led coalition government? At the hehest of crucial sections of the dominant classes that want

to see the economy recomposed to their interests, the government proceeds apace with what is so unhappily called "liberalisation". For example, the Patents Bill and sale of public insurance companies seem to proceed unimpeded by the curious *swadeshi* being sold by some parts of the Hindu Right. How does a party so committed to territorial nationalism and to the sovereignty of the Indian (or, *sotto voce*, the Hindu) explain its cavalier handover of popular resources to imperial capital and to a small section of the Indian elite?

How else, but by the perversion of the idea of nationalism. What was once a partial concern for peoples' well-being, now slowly becomes a jingoistic obsession over one's "national security" (hence the bomb and the anti-China/Pakistan rhetoric), and into unwarranted attacks on internal Muslim and Christian minorities. To be a patriot, in this skewed logic, is to don the garb of a paramilitary thug. Meanwhile, the nation's resources are up for sale to the lowest bidder, whether transnational corporations or to *hawala*-financed firms.

This protean form of intolerance allows for a different enemy in each decade. In the 1970s, the principal enemies of the Hindu



Right of Bombay were dalits, Tamil workers and the communists. A decade later, the target shifted to Muslims, particularly after the Meenakshipuram conversions and with the revival of the Ayodhya campaign. Now the ire of the Right has landed on Indian Christians. In Delhi, the BJP tried to denotify churches in a bid to increase liquor stores and bars in the city. (Since liquor cannot be sold beside religious buildings, the BJP government tried to argue that the sacrament is itself alcohol!)

The BJP greeted the entry of Sonia Gandhi into politics with jeers about her religion. Then, Ashok Singhal, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) chief, said that Amartya Sen's Nobel Prize was part of a Christian conspiracy, even as VHP activists raged through Dangs district in Gujarat in what is explained by some informed quarters of the Hindu Right as acts of anti-imperialism.

### Nuclear Hinduism

The purpose of this intolerance is simple: it re-focuses the troubles of the multitude and re-directs them against marginal communities who are treated as the cause of distress. With the capture of the Indian Council of Historical Research, the sectarian revisions of school text-books, and the attempted introduction of the "Saraswati Vandana" in the classroom, the Hindu Right (with its opportunist partners) is trying to worm its way into the minds of the masses and make intolerance seem a good habit.



*Macho Hindu, Ashok Singhal.*

The attack on Christian rituals in the name of anti-imperialism or the protection of Hindu rituals in the name of tradition, comes at a time when the Hinduism of the Right is faltering into the vulgarity of greed and power, avoiding the morality of justice. We now have a neo-Hindu bourgeoisie which erect temples with valet parking, conducts pilgrimages that allow the healthy (not just the infirm) to avoid the penances of the flesh (such as arduous treks to holy sites), and who follow godmen as they preach selfishness and avarice—the descendants of Bhagwan Rajneesh who once said that there were enough gurus for the poor, which was why he would minister to the rich.

Consider the International Society of Krishna Consciousness' "Glory of India Vedic Cultural Centre" temple in New Delhi, inaugurated by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in early April 1998. In this temple,

eight robots recite the scriptures and enact scenes from mythological stories. The vulgarity emerges even more callously when the VHP promises to build a "temple of strength", a *shakti peeth*, at the Pokhran nuclear test site and when VHP activists pledge to carry the irradiated soil as *prasad* (religious offering) across the country. As military chauvinism increased in the last months of 1998, 60,000 troops led by about 6000 officers of the Indian army conducted military exercises at the India-Pakistan border (code-named "Shiv Shakti"—these exercises are the biggest since Operation Brasstacks in the mid-1980s).

Nuclear Hinduism offers a macho and arrogant ethic to Indian society, one that remains far from the heritage of social justice one might find in the heterogeneous Hindu traditions. "India was a nation ruled by a bunch of *hijras* [eunuchs] in the past," said VHP's Singhal, and the tests are an "emphatic assertion of Hindu pride".

The use of Buddha in the spirit of nuclear jingoism was also an act of disdain towards

the dalits, for many of whom the Buddha is very special. In March 1998, the BJP Minister for Social Welfare in Uttar Pradesh, Prem Lata Katiyar, and her son sent their followers on a rampage against dalits in the town of Mahipalpur. The shadow of Ghatkopar (the site of the July 1997 massacre of dalits in Maharashtra) still lurks in all this. The desecration of Ambedkar's statue in that

Bombay locality was followed by at least one similar event in Amravati (Gujarat)—a dynamic propelled by the anti-Mandal and anti-Ambedkar University movement fashioned by the Sangh Parivar.

With 'caste' to perhaps reappear as a category in the 2001 Census, there is now even talk of identity cards with one's caste represented on it. India seems to be entering the stage of yellow stars and pink triangles, the touchstones of Hitler's Germany.

It is now up to reasonable people to struggle against the authoritarian symptoms of the Hindu Right and the vitiated agenda of these treasonable people. When the Hindu Right hurls the branding reproach of secularism, communism and socialism at us, we need to acknowledge that this means that they fear the power of those ideas. But ideas themselves do not make history, organised people do. ▲



SALIL SUBEDI

C.K. Lal

# FEAR OF ASSIMILATION

**The past is not always something to be proud about. Deep down, we are all mongrels. There is always an element of shame hidden in history, and such is the case of the Hindu as well.**

The first wave of Aryans, who invaded the Harappans of the plains of the Indus valley in about 1800 BC, learnt two lessons that had far-reaching consequences. First, that the Harappans had a clearly superior culture with advanced religion, refined art and a prosperous urban civilisation. Second, that despite their marked superiority, the Harappans ended up as the losers because they despised hierarchy and maintained an egalitarian society.

An inferiority complex arising from the first lesson prompted the Aryans to create a hierarchical social order. The Brahmins were to maintain purity to perform ritual sacrifices. Contamination of any kind was to be forbidden. The Kshatriyas were to be the warrior rulers. To facilitate their function, these protectors were allowed some measure of interaction with the artisan, the farmer, and the trader groups that were to be co-opted from the urban aboriginals. Together, they constituted the ruling triad in the first book of the *Rig Veda*.

The hierarchy grew with the addition of

Shudras in the later hymns. They were to be integrated from the non-urban aboriginals on the pain of servitude. These Untouchables were kept outside the system, either because they refused to surrender to the invaders or because they weren't economically very important to the ruling classes. But they were to be feared nevertheless, because their numbers were significant. Manu then appeared with his iron-clad dictates of purity. The fact that Aryan men had started marrying aboriginal women may have prompted him in his work to lump women together with the *dasas* (slaves) and animals.

Around 800 BC, the Kshatriyas got restive and sought independence from Brahmin domination, prompting the mythological axe-wielding Brahmin sage Parshuram to rid the earth of all rulers who did not bow to Brahmin supremacy. Between 600 BC and 500 BC, egalitarian religions like Buddhism and Jainism raised their heads but failed to survive. The eclipse of Jainism and Buddhism in Bharatvarsha is ascribed by Brahmins to the pacifist, tolerant and accommodative nature



of these Kshatriya religions. Resurgent Hinduism after the fall of Buddhism became puritanical, ritualistic, aggressive, and even more compartmentalised.

The Islam of the mendicants and the Christianity of the preachers were assimilated, but never accepted. Later, Buddha became an *avatar* of Vishnu, and Jainism a mere sect of highly disciplined Hindus. However, the phobia returned as soon as Islam rode in from the northwest on the horse of the invader. Hierarchy was then made even more exclusive to preserve purity. A vanguard community of Sikhs later emerged to protect this hierarchy, but even they were excluded when they started to grow as an independent power centre free of Brahmin domination. Fear of assimilation thus became rooted more firmly in the insecure Hindu mind.

### Phony tolerance

Caste mark, sacred threads and Sanskrit chants are kept alive not by secular institutions, but by religious zealots. When the *mlechcha* colonisers of Christianity overthrew the Islamic rulers, the fear of oblivion forced the hierarchy to incite the Mutiny of 1857. But gunpowder proved superior to the sacrificial fire, and the shame of loss impelled the hierarchy to find solace in an idealised past. Anyone who did not conform to this construct was an alien, an enemy, and hence not tolerable.

When the British departed India, they left behind a partitioned Subcontinent. Two insecure groups, both equally fearful of each other, vented their bottled-up anger at each other as soon as the common enemy left. The ideals of the Westernised Hindu leaders made them choose a secular Indian state, thus denying an identity once again to a huge majority of the population. Frustration and blind rage consumed the seeds of tolerance sowed by Mahatma Gandhi, and he became the first victim of the failure of his own ideology.

The martyrdom of Gandhi succeeded in creating a sense of guilt, but it did not last long enough to prevent the massacres at the Moradabads and the Bhiwandis. The fear persisted. Afraid of the relative prosperity of the Sikhs, the hierarchy looked for an excuse to teach them a lesson and found a convenient one in the political assassination of the lady who rode a tiger.

Still later, frightened by a Muslim awakening and Islamic assertiveness boosted by petro-dollars, a symbolic attack was engi-

neered on the whole community by demolishing the Babri Masjid. Shamed by Christian charity and service among the impoverished and downtrodden, now churches are set to light and missionaries (and their children) immolated.

Aggressiveness is rooted in fear. Nearly 4000 years after their arrival in the Subcontinent till this day the fear of assimilation that scared the Aryans continues to haunt Hindu society, even though it was the Aryans themselves who have been doing the assimilation all along. This is the reason why Hindus are the ones that harbour deep insecurities otherwise found in minority communities.

Will Hindus ever grow confident enough to be tolerant? V.S. Naipaul, who finds a new awakening in a wounded civilisation, may be hopelessly optimistic. To a Hindu mind, it defies logic that anyone would be interested in being a non-Hindu and different, when (it is thought) he can very well keep his difference intact in the larger Hindu fold. Tolerance comes only when a difference is recognised. Ascribed differences, on the other hand, breed contempt. The much-touted Hindu tolerance is a myth carefully cultivated by the privileged Brahmin-Kshatriya-Vaishyas triad to maintain their hold over society. In reality, anyone who does not conform to the Hindu worldview is less than human—either a *dasyu* or a *mlechcha*.

To cultivate tolerance, one first has to recognise that the past is not made up of pure unmingled pride. Dig deep enough, and we are all mongrels. There is always an element of shame hidden in history. Descendants of Aryan invaders cannot undo what their ancestors did to the Subcontinent's aboriginals. But they can at least stop acting phony. The rhetoric of *panchjanya*, the idea of including non-caste tribals as the fifth category of Hindus (and which is also the name of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh mouthpiece), is merely another offer of assimilation, not of acceptance.

The breaking down of hierarchy, spread of equality and institutionalisation of social justice may bestow that dignity to the downtrodden which will one day lead to acceptance and respect for differences. But myths do have value. If the myth of Hindu tolerance causes the community to become tolerant, to behave the way it claims it has been behaving for centuries, then perhaps the distinction between myth and reality will blur and eventually disappear. ▲

**During the Mutiny of 1857, gunpowder proved superior to the sacrificial fire, and the shame of loss impelled the hierarchy to find solace in an idealised past.**



*Mushtaq Gazdar*

# ROOTS OF BIGOTRY

**Intolerance is the result of self-indulgence, and when religions turn their back on their founding ideals.**

by *Mushtaq Gazdar*

A standard thesaurus list of the synonyms for "intolerance" would include words such as "bigotry", "prejudice", "partiality", "fanaticism", "dogmatism", "racism", "jingoism", "sexism", "bias", "injustice", "umbrage", "discrimination", "high-handedness", "narrow-mindedness", "nepotism", and so on. Each of these terms denotes base characteristics that are antitheses to the development of a just and democratic society.

The history of human civilisation has been a continuous struggle to combat various forms of intolerance in individuals, rulers, groups and nations. The more autocratic a ruler, the less tolerant will the establishment be towards the common people. In reverse, citizens are more tolerant towards each other when their society is democratic. Intolerance is at its height in regimes which cannot stand criticism.

We find that many of the eternal stories of the world, the myths, are based on this residuum of reality. Take Greek mythology, for example. Zeus is portrayed as the supreme deity, the symbol of Power, Rule and Law. He is furious at Prometheus for stealing fire from the gods and giving it to man, and for teaching him many useful arts and sciences. For this rebellious act of imparting knowledge to a lesser being, Prometheus is chained to a mountain and vultures let loose to tear his body into pieces.

At one level this is a fantastic story that

shows how a powerful god manifests his wrath towards someone who dares think differently or go against accepted mores. On the other hand, tales like these contain a deeper lesson—they serve as warnings to would-be dissenters. This is why such stories continue to be told, to appease the powerful in society.

History is replete with tragic episodes in which upright people were killed, maimed, exploited or exiled for expressing views contrary to those held by the powerful. The revolutionary preacher to the poor and destitute, Jesus of Nazareth, became a threat to the Roman rulers and their rich Jewish business associates. Together they connived to convict him of blasphemy and had him crucified. The grandson of Prophet Mohammed, Imam Hussain, revered by the Shias of the Muslim world, was killed at Karbala for refusing to recognise the establishment of the first hereditary rule in Islam.

Indeed, most of the world's organised religions had begun as movements for the liberation of the oppressed—that is what is at their core. However, with the spread of faith, invariably, religion had to find a way to adjust to the power structures in society. Jockeying for power with the temporal rulers, the religious leadership always found it to its advantage to "co-exist". In return for a place among the ruling clique, the clergy bestowed upon the monarchs the divine authority to rule. On the basis of that strength, the latter went on to impose laws that limited freedom.





In the Islamic world, the rulers made good use of the tenet of blasphemy and *fatwa* to prevent or deal with dissidence. Nevertheless, there was resistance to religious fanaticism and to the strict religious laws, or the Shariat. This resistance came mainly from the mystics, the Sufi Karam, who had their own way of showing disregard for the laws of the caliphs. They did not directly attack the divine authority of the ruler; rather, they expounded the concept of *Wahditul Wajood* (Unity of Existence), which, in essence, taught that since Allah creates everyone, all are equal in his eyes—implying that no ruler has divine power.

Certainly, the Sufi masters were made to pay for their defiance, and in this, the rulers took the help of the clergy. Thus when Mansur Al Hillaj pronounced his idea of *Annul Haq* ("I am the Truth"), the rulers grew anxious of his popularity and got the priests to interpret *Annul Haq* to mean "I am God". Hillaj was condemned to death. Yet another mystic, Sarmad Sarmast, was killed for his proclaiming of *La Illa* (meaning that there is no god). This was in the era of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, the only Muslim ruler of India who tried to impose Islam among the people.

### Blasphemy law

It is the greatest of ironies that while religious leaders sought to use religion to reform society and to establish a just and equitable order for all, with the passage of time some of their followers have used their very teachings to create dogmatic states which emphasise differences between peoples and nations. They foment hate. The most evident manifestation of this today is in the former Yugoslavia, where the Christian Serb majority has embarked on a systematic massacre of Muslims.

At home, in Pakistan, the average person's acceptance of the other's religion is hardly any better. However, more alarming is the fact that the state itself has been active in persecuting religious minorities. The greatest threat these communities live under is the country's blasphemy laws under which it is easy to charge someone with malafide intentions, or even for mistakes committed inadvertently.

The two main provisions in the laws are:

**Section 295-B:** (Defiling, etc. of the *Qur'an*) *Whoever wilfully, damages or desecrates a copy of the Holy Qur'an or an extract therefrom or uses it in any derogatory manner or for any unlawful purpose shall be punishable with imprisonment for life.*

**Section 295-C:** (Use of derogatory re-

marks, etc. in respect of the Holy Prophet) *Whoever by words, either spoken or written or visible presentation, or by any imputation, innuendo, or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon him) shall be punished with death.*

It was to protest against these harsh laws that in May 1998, Bishop John Joseph, the well-known human rights activist and the chairman of National Justice and Peace Commission, committed suicide by shooting himself through the head in front of the Sahiwal Session court in Karachi. A day before killing himself, the bishop had sent a fax message to several newspapers stating that:

*Section 295-C is the greatest block in the harmonious relationship between Muslims and the religious minority in Pakistan. Once this obstacle is away each Pakistani will live in peace and our beloved Motherland, Pakistan will prosper... I shall consider myself extremely fortunate if in this mission of breaking the barriers, Our Lord accepts the sacrifice of my blood for the benefit of his people.*

The tragedy of Pakistan, however, goes further than the bishop's sacrifice of self. Not only is there prejudice against someone else's religions, there is extreme intolerance among the different sects of Islam within the country. The heightening of tensions began with the Islamicisation of Pakistan under Gen Zia-ul Haq. Punitive measures during Gen Zia's rule, such as public hangings, floggings, stoning to death, and chopping of hands, were meant to generate an atmosphere of fear in the country.

It succeeded at that, but in the process destroyed the sensibility and sensitivity of Pakistani citizens and created an environment of mistrust and excessive self-indulgence. It is now a regular feature that sects fight each other, spilling blood in individual or mass killings. Brutal and ruthless regimes can only beget brutality and ruthlessness in society, the extreme forms of intolerance, and Gen Zia's spawned such a





# HOW TO BE A BIG SENDER WITHOUT BEING A BIG SPENDER



UPS comes to your doorstep and offers delivery of packages, freight weight shipment and documents as fast and cost effectively as possible, worldwide.

Speedy and efficient customs brokerage and clearance.

Track for instant delivery or more information on net <[www.ups.com](http://www.ups.com)>.

Guaranteed, ON TIME, EVERY TIME, DOOR TO DOOR.

No one can compete like we do.



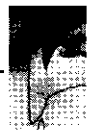
World-wide  
Olympic Partner

## United Parcel Service

H.O. Pradarsani Marg, P.O. Box 4417, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: 241100, 241122, 230215 Fax: 225915, 220535 Thamel: 423300  
Pokhara: 27241 E-mail: [nac@mos.com.np](mailto:nac@mos.com.np)

As sure as taking it there yourself





situation in Pakistan. It is the country's misfortune that there are so many today who know no other way than to continue on the path he charted.

Wherever and whenever intolerance raises its head, it has always been at the instance of some organised agency or the other. Undemocratic governments and autocratic political parties, to maintain their hold on power, create conditions conducive to disruption and division in society. Thus goaded on, people who are 'ordinary' in normal situations, behave abnormally and atavistically.

Which is why we see a parallel to Pakistan's experience in nearby India, where the coming to power of the Hindu rightist Bharatiya Janata Party has been accompanied by growing intolerance towards other religious faiths. The beginning of the new year saw Hindu extremists attacking churches and Christian missionaries. That the targetting of Christians comes after more than a decade-long campaign against Muslims by these very forces, which included the destruction of the 500-year-old Babri Masjid in 1992, points to a systematic propagation of the ideology of hate.

Religious intolerance in South Asia has its modern roots in the British colonial strategy

of "divide and rule", whereby the indigenous population was divided into several groups, while the coloniser, remained a single entity. However, not all the ills of our region can be blamed on the British colonisers. Intolerance towards others existed long before the first European set foot on the Subcontinent—in the form of racism.

For millennia, the deep-rooted caste system, based on the wholly irrational premise of 'superior' and 'inferior' races not unlike that practised by Hitler, ensured the tyranny of the privileged few over the majority 'low castes'. Later, with the spread of other religions in the Subcontinent, this prejudice found wider application among the two main religious groups, Hindus and Muslims. Muslims were the 'unclean' for the Hindus, and Hindus the 'unbelievers' for the Muslims—creating its own cycle of hate. Its final legacy has been the half a century of war-like tension between India and Pakistan.

Today, tragically, the two countries have internalised the animosity that earlier was limited to sabre-rattling between the two governments. Today, the swords are unsheathed within each country, community against community. ▲

**Brutal and ruthless regimes can only beget brutality and ruthlessness in society, the extreme forms of intolerance.**

## **ASIAN STUDIES IN ASIA (ASIA) THE ASIA FELLOWS PROGRAM 1999-2000**

The Colombo-based Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) invites applications for the Asian Studies in Asia (ASIA) Fellows Program. The Program is funded by a Ford Foundation grant to the Washington D.C. based Council for International Exchange of Scholars (CIES). The South Asia chapter of the program is coordinated by the RCSS.

The ASIA Fellows Program aims at addressing the current and growing need for Asian specialists in Asia by offering opportunities for highly promising scholars and professionals to gain knowledge of the countries in the region and an understanding of the contexts that shape global and regional issues.

Grants are awarded for a period of six to nine months, and include: round-trip travel grant from the fellow's home country to a host country within Asia, a living allowance, an allowance to buy books and other professional materials, a local travel grant for research trips to other parts of the host country, and a limited accident and health insurance.

Selected fellows can be considered for a follow-on grant to study and conduct research in countries outside Asia, and for short-term awards for presentations at major overseas conferences and meetings.

The ASIA Fellows Program is open to young and mid-career scholars, policy makers and professionals in the humanities, social sciences, and related fields, from countries of South and Southeast Asia and China. The applicants should be within the age limit of 45 years, and have a Doctor's or Master's degree or equivalent professional training, and a minimum of three year's university teaching experience for scholars or five years of work experience for other professionals. Preference is given to those without recent experience in the host country.



Application deadline is April 15, 1999. Those willing to apply are requested to send by fax or e-mail to the RCSS a short bio-note within no more than 200 words, and indicate the theme/title of a project on which the fellowship will be sought.

**Regional Centre for Strategic Studies**

2, Elibank Road, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka. Tel: (94-1) 599734-5; Fax: 599993. e-mail: [rcss@sri.lanka.net](mailto:rcss@sri.lanka.net)



Urvashi Butalia

# SOFT TARGET

**It does not matter whether they are Muslim or Hindu, conservative forces in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India seem to have found a common enemy: Women.**

One of the first things the Taliban did when they seized power in Afghanistan in 1996 was to impose restrictions on women. They were ordered to leave the public arena: going to work was not allowed, "inappropriate" clothing was banned, driving was taboo. One woman was actually beaten to death because she had accidentally exposed her arm while driving.

It is not as bad in Pakistan. Yet, it is hard to dismiss the Hudood Ordinance or the fact that a young woman marrying a man of her choice can be tortured, imprisoned and subjected to violence by her own family.

Further east in India, one of the first things the Sangh Parivar did when the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power was to target women. Groups of women were trotted out to declare their faith in *matri shakti*, the strength of motherhood. Those who did not conform to this exposition of Hindu womanhood were singled out and accused of being "Western" and anti-national. Earlier in Surat, after the destruction of the Babri Masjid, Muslim women were raped by Hindu men who claimed that they were avenging the rape of their sisters by Muslim men at Partition.

More recently, Christian nuns (perhaps

because they renounce marriage to a mortal man and are wedded to Christ) were targeted and raped. Deepa Mehta, the director of *Fire*, a film about a sexual relationship between two women, had to face threats and intimidation—how could she spread such slander about women? How could she claim that women could actually have the gall to express their sexuality?

Are these just isolated happenings or do they signal something wider, something that goes beyond mere intolerance? A film is stopped, women are raped, an actor's home becomes the target for a demonstration by virtually naked men, a painter's work is destroyed because it hurts the sentiments of a particular community, a high-ranking naval officer is dismissed because of his supposed defiance and is accused by a colleague of having anti-national sympathies because his wife is half-Muslim and does not fit the stereotype of the docile spouse, a cricket pitch is dug up... These are only some of the incidents of what we mistakenly call intolerance. And through many of these incidents runs a common thread: attacks on women.

At one time such violence could be passed off as "fundamentalist" or "communal". No





more. The answers are not that simple. We've known for a long time now that in times of communal or sectarian conflict, women are specifically targeted. They are the ones who become markers of the community, it is they who come to represent 'culture' and their desecration is a way of getting back at the men of the 'other' community. We don't need to look any further than the Partition for evidence of this.

The division of one country and the creation of another on the basis of religion was marked by widespread and systematic violence. While the killing and loot and arson went on, another kind of violence was taking place: hundreds of women were stripped naked and paraded in the streets, several had their breasts cut off, others were tattooed with the symbols of the 'other' religion, and many were raped. In each of these cases, the target was the woman's body. But it was more than the body: this was another way of getting at the woman's mind.

### Fair game

That was then. Today we're living in what we might call 'normal' times. Yet, women continue to face the same kind of violence and threats.

Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist, offers an explanation. Speaking of the Muslim world and its increasing conservatism towards women the world over (and she could well be speaking of other religions and communities), she says that such conservatism does not, as is often argued, take people 'back' to medieval times. Instead, its root is in the here and now. The far-reaching and profound changes that we are seeing in sex roles and in the relationships of power and love between men and women (many as a result of the women's movement the world over) have given rise to deep-seated fears in the minds of both men and women. The violence is a defence mechanism against the changes in sex roles and the difficult question of sexual identity. And it finds support among some women because the kind of change this implies in the 'givens' of

relationships is as frightening for women as it is for men.

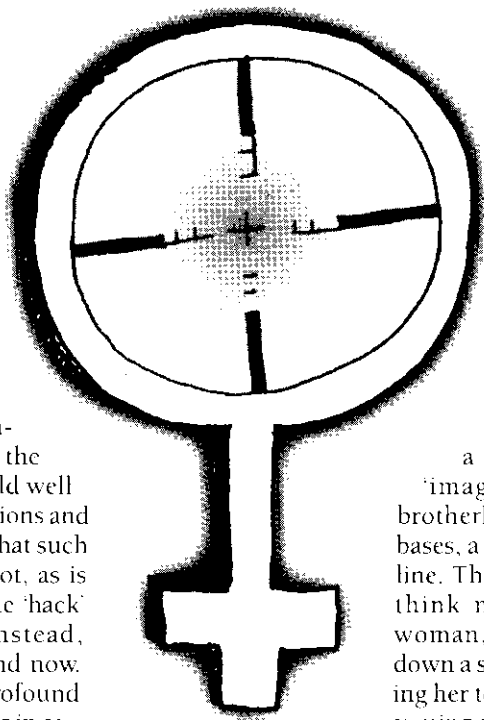
We're talking then about the modern world and very modern fears. Over the years more and more women have been coming into the public sphere. The competition for jobs has grown, the already small slice of the pie has had to be divided further. Increasingly, women are proving themselves to be as good as, and often better, than men in the workplace. The globalisation of the world's economy, particularly in our countries, has opened up some job opportunities (albeit for a short term), and increasingly, women are preferred in these jobs.

As more women move into the public sphere, the fear grows. Mernissi says that fundamentalists in the Muslim world are also obsessed with the question of women's education primarily because that trend tends to destroy the traditional boundaries and sex roles: it brings them out into schools, it sets them up against men.

One might go so far as to say, as Indian historian Uma Chakravarti does, that potentially, and often actually, every man is a sort of 'fundamentalist'. This is because they see themselves as being the norm, or definers of the norm—and every fundamentalist posture is built on a perceived deviation from a perceived norm. This

'imagined community' or brotherhood has, as one of its bases, a desire to keep women in line. Thus a man, any man, will think nothing of stopping a woman, any woman, walking down a street, any street, and telling her to "cover her head" by assuming some god-given (or male-assumed) right to do so.

In a way it is almost as if a sort of internal violence lurks within men all the time. Inside the home this takes the form of psychological and physical violence against the woman members. They can be subjected to this for something as trivial as wanting to wear a particular piece of clothing, or something as important as wanting to marry a man of their choice, or even something as basic as refus-



**Potentially, and often actually, every man is a sort of 'fundamentalist'.**

ing to perform their sexual 'duties'. And when these same 'violations' enter the public space, it is 'natural' to pick on women because they must be kept within the boundaries that have been set for them.

Any woman who occupies public space then, automatically becomes fair game. There is 'traditional' sanction here too, one that relates to women of the 'other' class, the lesser ones. For among our caste societies, the only women who did, and continue to occupy public space, were and are from the 'lower' castes, those who work the fields. And despite their 'untouchability' they have, for years, been fair game. It is, once again, that time-worn difference between those who have power and those who do not, or those who see themselves as the norm, and those who (like women) are different, and do not conform.

In today's world though, women of all

classes are in the public space, and it is not so easy to send them back into the home and family. So rules are set for this space too—limits that dictate how far women can go, and where the boundaries are drawn. The most threatening, because it is the least understood aspect of a woman's identity, her sexuality, is the one that needs clamping down on.

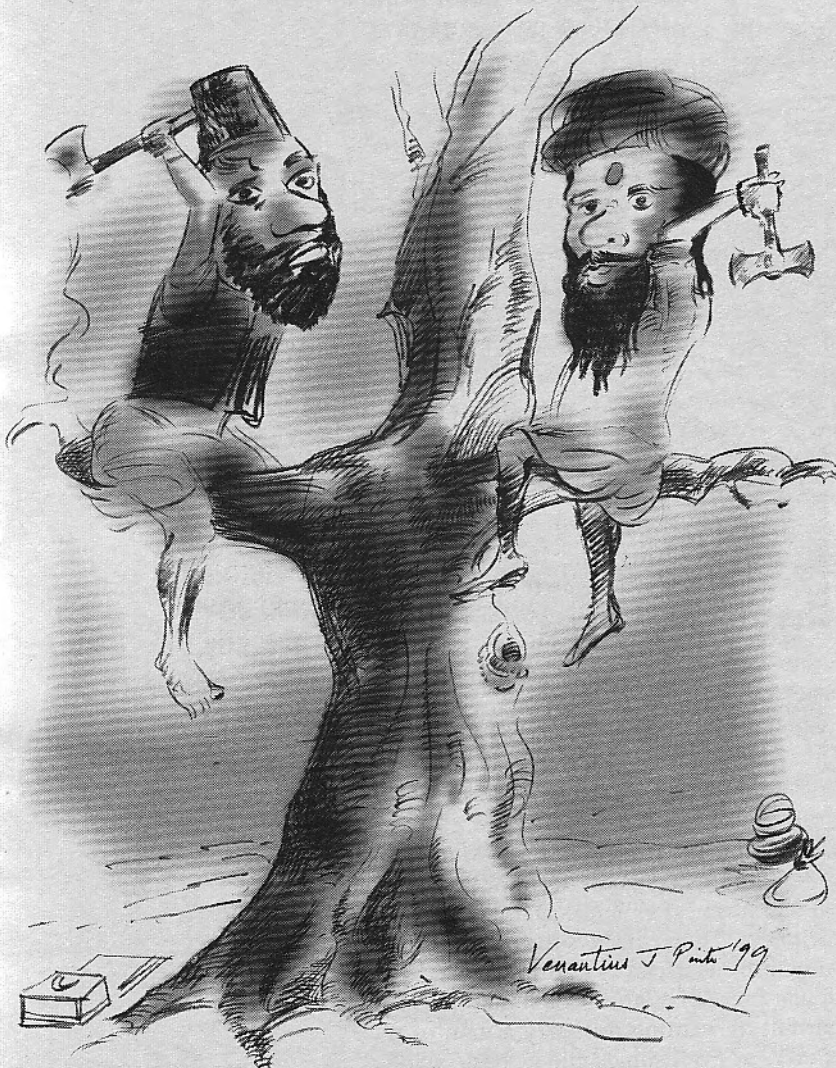
### Sanctioned rape

Perhaps the more practical reason that people (men) go for women in times of conflict or otherwise, could be that, in many ways, women provide much easier targets—one could almost say they are 'soft' targets. They are easier to attack, they don't hit back in the way that men can and often do, and most of the time, in order to attack them, men need only to take out that time-tested and old weapon, rape, which serves a double purpose: violate the woman, and 'humiliate' the men of her family and community by occupying her body.

There is increasing sanction for such violence against women these days. Television and films have to take a considerable portion of the blame for making it seem not only routine, but also desirable, not only acceptable, but something that is a necessary part of any self-construct of the male.

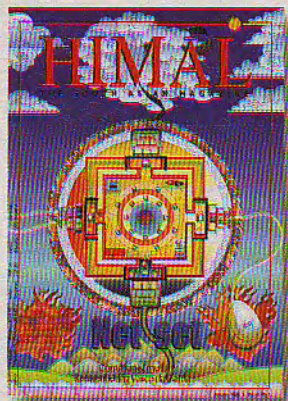
Closer to home, there are other reasons: after many years of flexing their muscles, the BJP have finally come into power at the Centre. And yet, it is a poor sort of power: hanging by a thread on a tenuous coalition that could break any moment. The BJP's fringe extremists, therefore, have to use other means to assert and exhibit this power. And what better method than to go for the women, not only of one's own community, but of the other communities as well? By aiming at one, they confirm their manhood, and by aiming at the other, they prove the emasculation of the males of the other community. Two purposes at one stroke.

It is time to understand the roots of this kind of violence. In this increasingly uncertain world, keeping women inside the confines of the home, or within the bounds of patriarchy, is about the only thing men can hold on to. It is the only thing that can give them a feeling of power, as they come face to face with their own increasing loss of inherited power. And women will have to fight that much harder to hold on to whatever space they have managed to gain in the public arena before they begin to fight for more, and more.



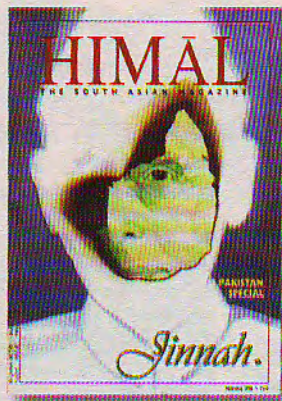


# Did you miss any of these?



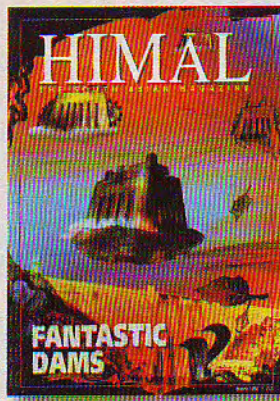
**January**

The Net in South Asia  
Legend of Vasco da Gama  
Communist mullah



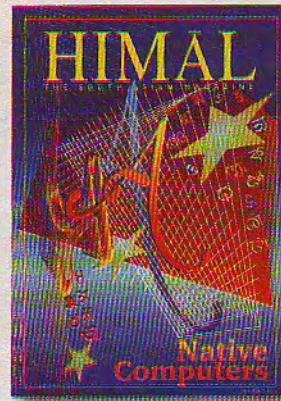
**February**

The 'conversion' of Jinnah  
Secularism and Bangladesh  
South Asia against Rushdie



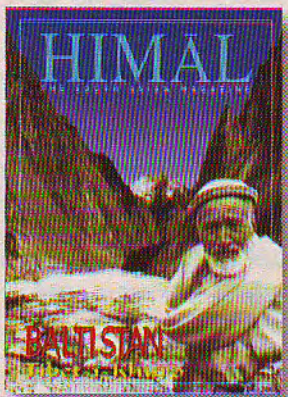
**March**

The dam debate  
Academic SAARC  
Insights of a Kashmiri poet



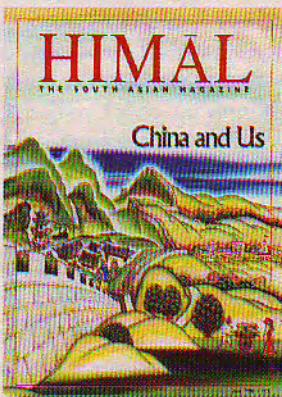
**April**

Native computers  
UN's South Asian club  
Governor Prabhakaran



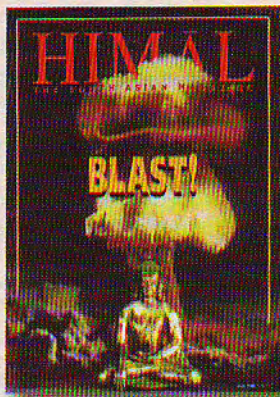
**May**

Everything about Baltistan  
Among the Naipaults  
Cardboard swadeshi



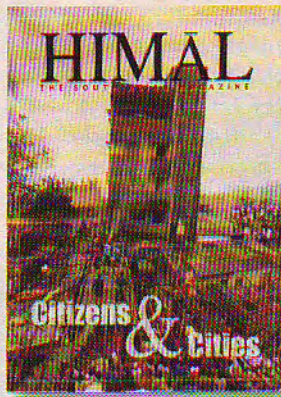
**June**

China and South Asia  
Defiling Lumbini  
Miss Beautiful Bangladesh



**July**

Best in anti-nuke writing  
Censorship in Sri Lanka  
Yeti on male remote control



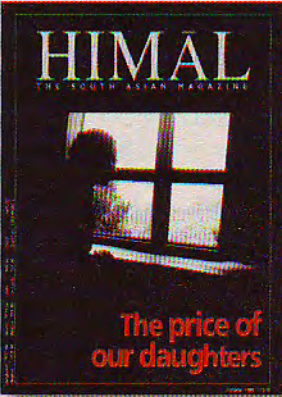
**August**

Exploding megacities  
Vanishing volunteerism  
Pakistani cinema



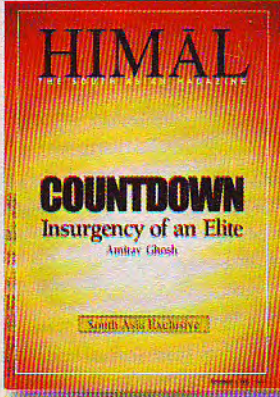
**September**

Unwell SAARC  
Lessons from Ladakh  
Sex and marriage in Nepal



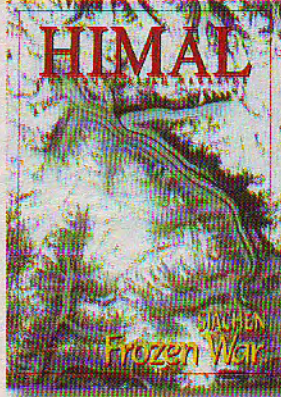
**October**

Sex trade myths  
The Taliban and the Hazaras  
Bhutan's refugee crisis



**November**

The bomb cult  
The beauty pageant myth  
Palk Strait fishermen



**December**

The Siachen war  
Tamil cubs  
The Indian-American

Back issues can be ordered from: GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Phone: +977-1-522113/523845, Fax: +977-1-521013, email: himalmag@mos.com.np





Tim Sebastian talked to Shabana Azmi in London for the BBC's Hardtalk Interview just after the film, *Fire*, was released in India. Excerpts:

• Congratulations on the new film *Fire*...in India they're stirred up to heights that people haven't seen before.

Yes, but it's been amazing you know, because the censor board has not given it a single cut, it's got a clean "Adults" certificate which

is really saying something...

• Why, is there a new wind of liberalism blowing through the censor department?

Well, I think if you can trust a woman to handle a difficult subject, she will do it with so much

sensitivity that even the censor board can't object.

• You intended to stir the country up, didn't you, why?

Because I think that when one speaks about human rights, and one talks about minorities' rights, that must also

extend to the gay community. I think that the thing that *Fire* says to me is that when you come across people who have made choices that are different from your own, then rather than condemn them, if you can empathise with them, then perhaps you can extend

## "Cultural fusion, not nuclear"

Sangeeta Lama and Khalid Ansari interviewed Salman Ahmad of the group Junoon about their music, their Sufism, the controversy surrounding their tour of India and their ban on Pakistan Television (PTV).

• How did the show go for you in Delhi?

The Delhi audience gave us the biggest roar there. They were very enthusiastic. Unbelievably enthusiastic. In fact, when we were playing "Sayonee" on stage they were kind of singing louder than us (laughs). Fifty thousand people sort of singing "Sayonee" at you is...

• You seem to be more popular in India than here

in Pakistan.

No, I think it's wrong to say that. Among the people of Pakistan I think we're loved, it's just the government that doesn't like us (laughs).

• So what's the deal with concerts and so on, will you try to perform in Pakistan?

Definitely. A lot of people realise that speaking against the nuclear explosion is making sense now. We spoke about it

when they did it, when there was a lot of obvious sabre-rattling between India and Pakistan. But now look at the condition of the economy, what has the bomb got us? My question is, what did the bomb do for us?

• Was there a similar reaction in India to your anti-bomb stance?

We were touring India three days after the [Indian] blasts. We played

a concert in New Delhi and there were 50,000 kids there, ok. And we are supposed to be from this enemy country, and there were these banners I swear was really cool, kids holding up these banners saying "We want cultural fusion, not nuclear fusion". Their kids are just as cynical about their leaders as we are over here.

• Is it difficult without the



# "India lives in several centuries simultaneously..."

that empathy to the other, in inverted commas you know, the 'other' gender, the 'other' race, the 'other' religion, the 'other' community, which I think is an extremely important statement to make in today's world.

• *It's also a statement about marriage, isn't it, the state of marriage in India, how shocking is that to the male population in India?*

I think it is disturbing. Firstly, I don't think India is a monolith, I don't think everybody will react in exactly the same way. I think some people will be outraged, some will be

deeply moved, and for most I think it will start a process of questioning. But in India most certainly there is an insistence on keeping the marriage alive under all circumstances, which leads to women having to make many many hard decisions.

• *Did this force you to question...*

My own marriage? (laughs)

• *Yes, among other things.*

Well, my own marriage is a very special one and so is my father's, so it's not a very personal thing. But I do believe, I mean I don't

have anything personal against the institution of marriage, I think that when people are in a nurturing relationship, it is wonderful, but I do believe that a lot of violence against women stems from the fact that there is this system, that the girl will go out and will not come back except on her funeral pyre, and I think that needs to be questioned a bit. I think that parents need to continually support their daughter even after she has been married into another home.

• *Is this the best*

*way in India of getting these subjects looked at?*

I'm not saying that it's the best, or that it's the only way...I think cinema is always an extremely effective medium.

• *How hard was this role for you, how hard was it for you to take this decision?*

It was difficult. I was very moved by the script, I wanted to do it, and yet I took my own time considering it. Now I'm glad I did because in all the confusion that I had...by the time I reached

the set I was quite clear. I was very convinced of

## clear fusion"

*government on your side?*

We have done this without any support from the government. Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan did this without any support from the government.

• *But his music was more acceptable to the government, wasn't it?*

Yes, his was more traditional. Yet the government really didn't support him either. Yeah, you know when he died I

think the most shameful thing was that Nusrat Fateh Ali, an artiste of his calibre dies and the whole world is mourning his death and [it] is front page news in all the countries in the world, and our own country, they mentioned just passingly that "and Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan passed away" which

is, I think, a huge slap on the face for artistes.

You see, as long as you kiss the government's ass you'll be on







**SHABANA AZMI:**

## 'A process of questioning'

the integrity of the film, and the sensitivity with which it was being handled, and I'm very happy to be in it.

• *And it's a more realistic film, isn't it? Because at one stage you said you were fed up with films about this mystical third country...*

You know, I really believe that India is a country that lives in several centuries simultaneously. You know we have people living back to back from the 19th, 20th, 21st century and her

people at any given time and place encapsulate all the contradictions that come from being a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious society. Instead we have this view of this exotic, despite famine and flood, you know this view of India as the Third World which I find very difficult to take...

• *When all the fuss has died down about this film in India, what do you think it will have changed?*

It would have started a process of questioning,

and I think that's important. And if a film can do that, that's really the maximum that it can.

• *You're a friend of Gloria Steinem's...has she helped you?*

She loved the film. She really loved the film. I've read a lot of her work.

• *You're called the Vanessa Redgrave of India, do you like that, do you like these terms?*

Well, in the sense it helps people understand, people who don't know

**SALMAN AHMAD:**

## 'As long as you ki...

television, basically that's what it's about.

• *So there is no artistic merit involved...*

Not to say that all the people who have gone on television don't have artistic merit. It's like this Mughal court culture mentality. Unfortunately, even after getting our freedom, we still have this court culture mentality where they think we have to say "Nawaz Sharif, we bow down to you" or "Benazir Bhutto, we bow down to you".

• *Maybe you should have a nice song about Nawaz Sharif in your next album?*

Actually he wanted us to write a song for the *karz utaro, mulk sambhalo*, and we said "No". We said we are individual artistes, not the arm of the government.

• *The government has accused you of treason. Why?*

We were sent this piece of paper which said that while we were in India our minds were being subverted by the Indian government. In fact, one of the guys said that because at the Zee Cine Awards, you had Kajol and these Indian actresses sort of dancing to your songs, this was all a pre-planned plot to get you to say good things about India. I was like wow...their point was that you aren't actually that good.

• *Junoon is influenced by Sufi poetry. Is that your main inspiration?*

I think how it happened was that back in '91, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan invited me to play at a concert tour. And when I was playing with him I felt

a much deeper emotion on stage than you know this normal everyday rock music does. I just didn't know what happened, but all there was, was something very deeper than that. So I started reading a lot of books on Mulan Humi, Bhule Shah, a lot of his poetry. And Sufism, I read and read and read for a couple of years. I just sort of wanted to know more and more about it. And I found out really that the Sufi message is essentially a message of love, it's the essence of Islam and it doesn't have to do with scaring people into believing or beating them up or how...

• *It's also very personal...*

Ya, it's a personal connection with the Almighty. And all these Sufi poets if you read their poetry, you know they

believe in harmony, in mystic harmony, which I think [is] what religion is supposed to do, to bring people together, but unfortunately we're using religion to divide people. So it made a lot of sense to me. And this song "Saeen", which was our first outwardly spiritual song, it was on "Inquilab", our last album, I just thought the whole band really had to feel it. It doesn't divide you, you don't have to be a Muslim to believe in it, no? I mean, Brian is a Christian.

• *Your group is also accused of destroying tradition and Sufi mysticism.*

I think one of our songs "Sayonee", PTV refused to run it and they gave us a piece of paper which said that you are offending the sensibility of the Sufis, making fun of



my work, in as much as that, and also the fact that Vanessa is somebody who I deeply respect because she has really stuck her neck out for her political beliefs.

- *You talk about strong political beliefs, but people listen to your strong political beliefs because of your success as an actress.*

Most certainly yes, of course, and that's why I think people who have this position of influence, particularly in a country like India, must use it to make a positive contribution.

- *How much has that*

*success meant to you, how much has the acclaim, the awards...*

A lot. I think it has facilitated my life a great deal. It has also earned me a lot of respect. The people that I work with in the slums of Bombay, when I first started working with them, there was this awkwardness in the beginning because they had never had a film actor come into their midst...

- *What has that done for you, I mean you say the love they've given you, what has that done for you as an actor, has it enabled you to develop and go on to do*

*more things than you expected to do?*

Yes, in more ways than one. Because firstly I think acting, the remarkable thing about acting is that it's a two-way process. When I play the character of Radha, I give to her life everything that I have experienced as Shabana Azmi. Radha in turn gives to Shabana Azmi the experience of the world she inhabits, and so it is a richly rewarding experience. But I do believe that if I play a certain kind of part, from nine to six, I can't just switch off and say I'll get back to being somebody who had no connection with the

person I had portrayed. I think that would really become a travesty of the trust people place in you when you become friends with them.

- *And you like being pampered... and lots of fans?*

Pampered is not the right thing, pampered I like to be by my father and my husband. But by my fans...I have tremendous sense of responsibility towards them. I always get very overwhelmed by the affection of my fans and I feel terribly responsible. I feel I owe them something in return. ▲

## ss the government's ass you'll be on television'



The Junoon trio: Brian O'Connell, Ali Azmat and Salman Ahmad.

religious places. You've seen the video, have you seen the video, "Sayonee"? They said that this video is, and the song is offending Sufism. So I went to a lawyer and I asked which aspect of this song is offending Sufism. So he sent a legal notice to PTV and they said the line "chhod mere kata, tu to pagal nahin" which means, "forgive me you are not insane like me". So PTV,

they translated that as you're saying to God that you're not crazy like me.

I was like, wait a minute, number one we're not saying that you're insane, we're saying you're not insane like me, and they asked us to change the line to say, "tu to gafil nahin hen", gafil means "ignorant". So I said what you're saying is don't say to God that you're insane,

but you can say that he is ignorant, you know.

- *How does religion and spirituality fit into your music?*

Spirituality is something that I am a student [of]. We read so much about the poets of the 13th and 14th centuries because they were way ahead in their thinking. Even Allama Iqbal, I think he was so way ahead in the thinking. Unfortunately, all these rulers, they were afraid of freeing people. You know, if people understand their rights, they won't have any control over them. So they just wanted to keep these poets away, and I think [that's] why they don't want these songs running on PTV.

- *What about "Ehtasab",*

*would you say that was the most overtly confrontational song?*

That was the song which was directly attacking the political culture. The video and the words and the song, yeah. Look, for 50 years we have had freedom in this country, but nobody is free. In a democracy you should be allowed to speak out against the government if you want to, it's your right. But they wanted to teach us a lesson, I think that's what they want to do even now. They feel that if they ban us on PTV and then that will be the end of us. But you know love has a way of finding its way out.

- *Was "Ehtasab" shown on PTV?*

(Laughing) No, no. It was shown on BBC. ▲



# KODIKARA AWARDS

## RESEARCH GRANTS FOR YOUNG SOUTH ASIANS

The Colombo-based Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) invites applications for research grants under its annual Kodikara Awards programme. The grants are awarded to young South Asians for conducting policy-relevant research on strategic and international issues of contemporary South Asian interest. Each grantee will receive a total stipend of \$2,000 payable in four instalments over a six-month period. An additional amount may be paid for field research, if applicable, to be conducted in no more than three South Asian countries including the applicant's own. The award is tenable for six months, commencing usually in August, during which time each grantee will be under obligation to produce an original research monograph in English to be subsequently published by the RCSS. The grantee will be responsible for ensuring the required access to the library and research facilities in concerned institutions/countries. S/he may be required to conduct the research under the guidance of a supervisor. Nationals of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka up to the age limit of 35 years are eligible. Candidates should ideally have a Master's degree in international relations, strategic studies, political science, economics, history, anthropology, journalism, international law, or other related subjects. Women candidates are particularly encouraged to apply. Applications should be sent to RCSS enclosing:

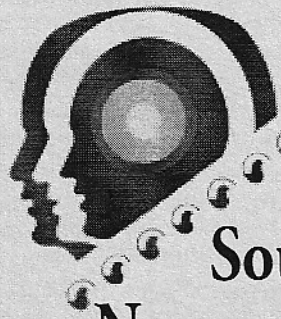
- Full curriculum vitae including details of academic records and evidence of research competence;
- A research proposal within 700-1000 words describing the theme, importance, objectives, and methodology of the study, and justification for field work, if any; and
- Copies of 2 publications, if available.



Candidates also have to arrange two confidential letters of academic reference to be sent directly to RCSS. The closing date for this year's awards is April 30, 1999. Earlier submission is encouraged; there is no prescribed application form. Further inquiries may be addressed to:

**Regional Centre for Strategic Studies**

2, Elibank Road, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka. Tel: (94-1) 599734-5; Fax: 599993. e-mail: [rcss@sri.lanka.net](mailto:rcss@sri.lanka.net)



## First South Asian Neurosurgical Congress

**Theme: Regional Collaboration in Neurosurgery**

*March 12<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>, 1999, Kathmandu, Nepal*

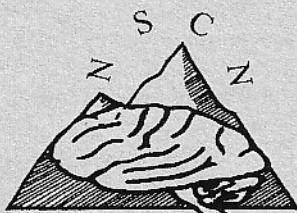
**Final announcement & call for registration and abstracts**

hosted by

**NEPALESE**

**Society of Clinical Neurosciences**

Neurosurgical Unit, Bir Hospital  
P.O. Box No. 4258, Kathmandu  
Tel: +977-221988, 221119 (EXT-359)  
Fax: +977-240058  
email: [nscn@nscn.wlink.com.np](mailto:nscn@nscn.wlink.com.np)



**KATHMANDU 1998**

**Venue:**

King Birendra  
International  
Convention Centre  
New Baneswor  
Kathmandu



# Brahmaputra's orphans

The yearly floods expose Assam's fragile health care system.

by *Rupa Chinai*

As the plane prepared to land at Dibrugarh on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, Assam looked like an ocean. The mighty river had overflowed. Paddy fields and villages lay submerged as far as the eye could see. Entire communities, along with their livestock, were living perched on bamboo platforms on stilts or *changs*.

Statistics on Assam's annual floods rarely reveal the true tragedies that

engulf the lives of people in this troubled and neglected part of India. As elsewhere, the state has abdicated its responsibility in providing health care and health education to the poor. Elsewhere in India, public philanthropy at least may work to provide some facilities for the poor, but here in India's Northeast they just die quietly.

Embankments built to contain

Assam's rivers breach regularly and as the flood waters rise and fall, epidemics of gastroenteritis, malaria and Japanese encephalitis rampage through upper Assam. The state's public health services are incapable of dealing with the situation. Added to the absence of basic life-saving drugs, is a general ignorance on all health matters.

Of course, Assam does not lack in public resources for investment in the social sectors. It is poor political leadership that keeps a well-conceived public health policy at bay, which is why the population of the state is one of the unhealthiest in the Indian Union. The floods only make a bad situation far, far worse.

Even as the state was reeling under a spate of epidemics during the floods in the summer of 1998, there appeared to be a deliberate attempt to under-report its extent. The state officials claimed there were adequate supplies of drugs and services and that the infrastructure was in place for their distribution. To take just one case of Lakhimpur district, the officials claimed there was no shortage



*Gastroenteritis patients overflow into the corridors of the Mangaldoi Civil Hospital. Below, the pregnant woman will deliver her child in her embankment hutment since she cannot afford the 10,000 rupees demanded by the government-paid doctor.*





## Did you know?



A quarter of the world's children live in South Asia.

Only one in two complete primary school.

Two in three children are malnourished.

One in ten die before their fifth birthday.

Half the world's maternal deaths occur in South Asia.

Find out about these facts and more in

### ATLAS OF SOUTH ASIAN CHILDREN AND WOMEN

The Atlas of South Asian Children and Women is designed to provide insight into human survival, protection and development in one of the world's most complex regions. The Atlas helps policy makers, development workers, researchers and readers in general to understand the extent of South Asia's complex problems of human survival and development.

The Atlas is illustrated with more than 100 pages of full colour maps, charts and graphs that provide the most recent data from the seven countries of South Asia at national and sub-national levels. The accompanying text assess, analyze and suggest remedial action - for these key components:

- The poor rates of survival, growth and development of South Asia's children and women;
- The inadequate access to food, health and care for the majority of women and children;
- and South Asia's potentially adequate, yet often underused, human economic and organizational resources.

Previously, no single reference source has compiled this wide range of official data on South Asian Children and Women. This comprehensive publication will also help to identify statistical gaps and inconsistencies that can be remedied by further research efforts.

The Atlas of South Asian Children and Women is prepared by the UNICEF regional office for South Asia, in collaboration with the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

#### UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia

P.O.Box 5815, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Phone: +977-1-417082 Fax: +977-1-419479  
Email: atlas@uncrosa.com.com.np

This Atlas of South Asian Children and Women is marketed in South Asia by Himal, The South Asian Magazine published from Kathmandu, Nepal

Parties interested in distributing the atlas in any South Asian city may contact:

**Himal, GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal**  
Phone: +977-1-523845, 522113, 521013 (fax)  
Email: himalmag@mos.com.np  
URL: www.himalmag.com

*As the century closes and another begins, we see children as the human bridge between what the community is and what it aspires to be. The continuing challenge is to link public policy with family and community behavior in support of children.*

*-1996 Kovalpudi resolution on children.*

## Request for Proposals

India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) is an independent national grant-making organisation that seeks to provide sustenance to creativity, collaborative work, and critical reflection. IFA, under its arts research and documentation programme, supports research into a variety of artistic fields, extends funds for documentation of historical value, and also offers grants for research leading to artistic productions and publications.

Research proposals that cut across different artistic genres, contribute to critical reflection about arts practices in the country, and address the practical concerns of the arts community, are also considered for funding under this programme. Projects we have supported earlier under the arts research and documentation programme dealt with subjects like Carnatic music, popular and commercial art, craft traditions and lifestyles, women photographers, architectural history, mural and miniature painting, cinematography, and the traditions of Indian sculpture.

IFA has recently announced its Request for Proposals, outlining application requirements, for the latest round of grants to be made under the arts research and documentation programme. IFA's Request for Proposals (in English and some other Indian languages) are available on request by writing to:



# IFA

The Executive Director  
India Foundation for the Arts  
Tharangini, 12th Cross  
Raj Mahal Vilas Extension  
Bangalore - 560 080, India  
Tel/fax: 0091-80-3310584/  
3310583  
e-mail: ifabang@blr.vsnl.net.in

*The last date for receiving completed applications is April 30, 1999. Indian nationals, registered non-profit Indian organisations, and persons resident in India for at least 5 years are eligible to apply.*



of drugs. Only upon being challenged by those who had visited the Civil Hospital ward and interviewed the patients, did they concede that the patients were buying even basic drugs from private pharmacies. The hospital stores revealed barren shelves. Lakhimpur's main hospital did not have antiseptics, detergents, bleaching powder, or even paper for writing prescriptions and soap for the doctors.

### **Doctored data**

There was also brazen doctoring of data. Although Lakhimpur lies in an area prone to the deadly cerebral malaria, official records would have you believe that there had not been a single death from malaria or Japanese encephalitis since 1995. Japanese encephalitis is endemic to the northern bank of the Brahmaputra and major outbreaks were recorded over the entire decade previously. The records also point to a suspicious disappearance of the disease between 1995 and 1997. Not a single case of infection or death was recorded. This is the cheerful picture available from the Assam-wide records maintained by the Director of Health Services in Guwahati. Look a little deeper, and you realise that of Assam's 23 districts, there is no data presented from 13 districts.

The government papers may record no cases of Japanese encephalitis, but on a recent visit, 19 patients of suspected Japanese encephalitis were found languishing in government-run institutions in Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts. Health authorities did not even know they had a serious outbreak in their hands. Although India has developed a vaccine against the infection and 70 percent of the population in Assam's endemic areas have been vaccinated, the required booster doses have not been provided. N.C. Das, chief medical and health officer for communicable diseases in Lakhimpur, says, "We are handicapped and helpless. We cannot even provide syringes for the vaccine, there are no vehicles, or money for petrol. I have sent reports to the government on what should be done, but

the politicians do not consider what we are saying."

Preventive health education is absent in trihal areas where the disease is prevalent. Pigs are known to be carriers of the Japanese encephalitis virus, and the pigs reared by the trihals move in with the people up into the *changs* during floods. At the public hospitals in Dhemaji and Lakhimpur, Japanese encephalitis patients were being treated on the basis of symptoms since confirmatory tests could not be done. There were no vital drugs in these hospitals where medicines are supposed to be distributed free, so some poor families had spent over INR 5000 (USD 110) for medicines and food in a week. At a time when they had already lost their annual crop of paddy in the floods, this was a vicious blow.

The local residents speak of the Gogamukh rural hospital in Dhemaji district as being a slice of the whole picture. The 30-bed hospital, catering to a population of 200,000, has only six beds. One patient was lying on a narrow wooden bench, while the bed of another was propped up by a wooden crutch. The hospital has no water or electricity, and the delivery room is a dark, windowless, smelly dungeon. Since there is no other alternative, up to 400 people visit this hospital every day for treatment.

The plight of tuberculosis patients is worse than those suffering from Japanese encephalitis. In the Mangaldoi district village of Dhulla, with a predominantly Bengali-Muslim population, virtually every house is ravaged by TB. The government TB centres have run out of even the basic reagents for testing sputum, and patients are directed to private clinics where they pay up to INR 300 for an X-ray.

Once again, drugs meant for free distribution are never available. The standard drug regimen, approved by

the national TB programme, requires patients to take a combination of at least five drugs, but the patients at Dhulla said they had received only two drugs: Streptomycin injections and Isonex tablets. Unless the therapy is completed, the TB virus develops drug resistance, forcing the patient to a second and much more expensive line of treatment.

Every time patients run out of money, treatment is terminated. What drugs they can afford they buy from private pharmacies, where it is likely they end up getting the wrong treatment because of incorrect prescriptions. A local government doctor's prescription for TB consisted of Calmpose injections and cough syrup.

In the TB ward of the Mangaldoi Civil Hospital, 25-year-old Sibiya Marak lies dying. He had sold his

last two bullocks in his hospital treatment. Little does he know that the two drugs provided to him by the hospital, improperly administered, have actually deprived him of all chances of survival.

Officially, there were over 1.2 million TB cases under treatment in Assam in 1997-98, but records show that the state received only three of the five essential drugs required for TB treatment from the central government. On top of it all, the supply is not enough for more than 100,000 patients. Vital and expensive medicines like Rifampicin and Pyrazinamide have not been available for years.

As part of the treatment, doctors routinely tell poor villagers to eat chicken, eggs, fruits, and to drink milk and take vitamin syrup. "But where do I find the money for them?" asks Zaida, a TB patient.

Halima Rehman is a social worker in Dhulla. She says, "The Bengali Muslim community here is pathetically ignorant. They eat fermented rice, red chillies and dried fish. Although this area grows green veg-

**Doctors routinely tell poor villagers to eat chicken, eggs, fruits, and to drink milk and take vitamin syrup. "But where do I find the money for them?" asks Zaida, a TB patient.**



**ENJOY THE GLORIES OF WONDERFUL NEPAL  
AND MYSTIC TIBET BY STAYING WITH US!**

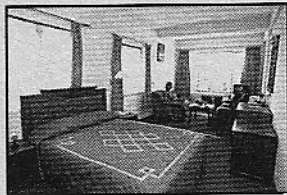


A brand new and also one of the finest three star hotels in Kathmandu. The Hotel Tibet (P) Ltd is very conveniently located in Lazimpat just behind the French Embassy and walking distance to all the major airline offices, banks, shopping centres, immigration office and Thamel.

With well-appointed 55 rooms and suites having all the basic amenities for a deluxe class hotel, it is a perfect place for guests of every category - be it simply holiday, trekking, pilgrimage tours or visitors of the nearby embassies. We are here to provide them with full value for money and of course our personalised service to ensure repeat visits.

The Himalayan Restaurant in the lobby level serves fine Tibetan, Nepalese and Continental cuisine. The Lobby Bar where you can enjoy after a hectic day with your favourite drink while listening to soft music.

P.O. Box 7956, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: 429085/86/87/88 Fax: 00977-1-410957  
Email: hotel@tibet.mos.com.np  
Internet: <http://www.catmando.com/hotel-tibet>



Place to come to if you want to feel pampered. Every body is so friendly and there's nothing like a CLEAN FRESH TOWEL everyday!  
Norma Monague  
Calgary, Ab; CANADA

It is very good. It's well run, clean, has hot water and is of excellent value... all with bathroom. There is a great view over Thamel area from the top of this friendly hotel  
"Lonely Planet" Nepal

It is often the **LITTLE UNNAMED THINGS** we do, that we are remembered most for.

.....Rooms are clean and comfortable and receive daily service. Room service, laundry service, luggage storage and safe deposit boxes are available.  
FROMMERS Comprehensive Travel Guide

**HOTEL GARUDA PVT. LTD.**  
G.P.O. BOX. 1771, THAMEL, KATHMANDU, NEPAL  
TEL: 416776, 416340, 414766  
FAX: (977-1-) - 413614, 472390  
e-mail: garuda@mos.com.np  
URL: <http://www.travel-nepal.com/hotel/garuda/index.html>

*The best gift you can give any book lover.*

A monthly magazine which introduces a whole new dimension to the world of books in India.

IRB is more than just a magazine of reviews. It is a platform which constantly throws up ideas, even conflicting ones. Read IRB for its incisive, analytical evaluation of the latest in fiction and non-fiction or for its witty, decidedly tongue-in-cheek banter about the world of books and bookmen.

Newsstand price INR 20/- per copy. Save 30% by subscribing.

- 1 year: INR 150/-
- 2 years: INR 250/-
- 3 years: INR 350/-

[Overseas: 1 year: US\$ 30/- (INR. 1050/-)]

Send in your cheques/drafts/money orders (add Rs. 10/- for outstation cheques) in favour of Indian Review of Books to

**INDIAN REVIEW OF BOOKS**  
62-A, ORMES ROAD, KILPAUK, MADRAS - 600 010. INDIA.  
TEL: 91-44-6412314 FAX: 91-44-6427484 E-MAIL: [ewb.maa@sml.sprintprg.ems.vsnl.net.in](mailto:ewb.maa@sml.sprintprg.ems.vsnl.net.in)



etables and seasonal fruits, it is not a part of their daily diet, because nobody has explained to them their nutritional value. TB is rampant here, and people desperately need correct information and help."

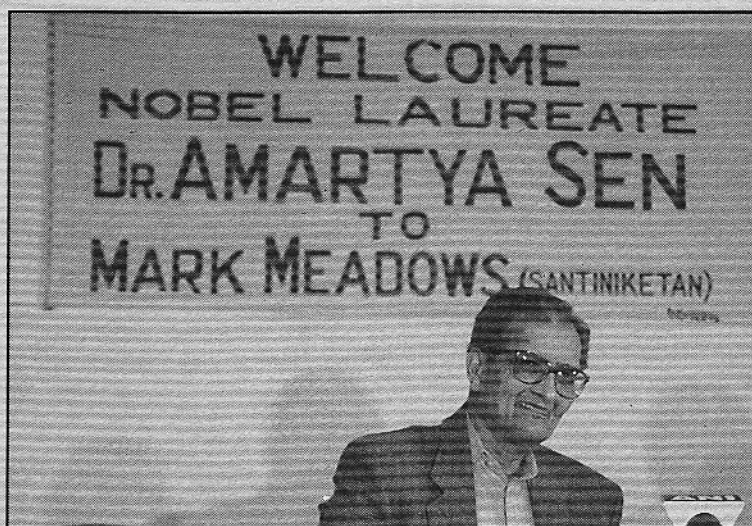
### Sick and neglected

Assam desperately needs strong curative services and preventive health education. In all of India, the state has the highest death rate among children below five years of age. It lags far behind the national average in male and female life expectancy.

Ironically, economists in Guwahati are categorical that Assam does not lack resources for social sector development. For instance, Assam spends INR 46 per capita in the social sectors. Even so, it is backward in health compared to neighbours like West Bengal, which spends only INR 36.32 per capita. To take another indicator, West Bengal has covered 84.9 percent of rural households with drinking water facilities, while Assam has managed only 43.2 percent.

According to Jayanta Madhab, chairman of the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation, the Centre transferred INR 490 billion (c USD 11 billion) to the Northeast between 1991-1997. Of this, Assam alone got INR 180 billion. But most of this amount was consumed in salaries and pensions to government employees. Barely 10-15 percent remained for development work, which was so spread out that nothing much could be achieved.

In a region wracked by separatist movements, any responsible government would have understood the obvious importance of providing basic education and health facilities, if only to send a message to the numerous small nationalities that they are indeed valued members of the larger nation. The Northeast is rich in its traditional skills and natural resources and its people do not require much to get on their feet. By persistently ignoring their needs, the ruling elite of the region and the uncaring politicians and bureaucrats in New Delhi are only abetting the growing sense of alienation and neglect. ▲



## A disarming proposal

**AMARTYA SEN'S** tour of the Subcontinent after being awarded the 1998 Nobel Prize for Economics looked like a victory tour of a cricketering hero. Amidst the adulation, he had a brief chat with Himal's **Beena Sarwar** in New Delhi about India-Pakistan relations. Some salient Sen-isms:

*No other country has as strong an interest in the continuation of civil democracy in Pakistan as India does. By conducting unnecessary nuclear tests, India has weakened the civil government and strengthened the military in Pakistan.*

*There is a very strong economic case for both India and Pakistan to disarm. There is a massive wastage of military expenditure, nuclear and otherwise. As Mahbub ul Haq pointed out in one of his reports, 85 percent of the armaments purchased in the world market are sold by the five permanent members of the Security Council. So it's not surprising that the Security Council does nothing to curb the arms trade. Meanwhile, what India and Pakistan lose because of this is monumental, in terms of human development and quality of life.*

*Nothing is as important as a dialogue with Pakistan. India and Pakistan can do less on their own than together.*

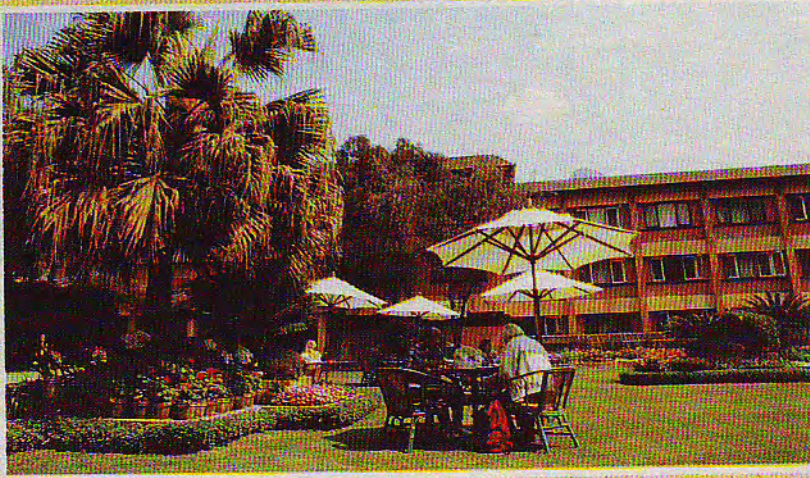
*It is important for the international community to be sensitive to India's worries about China, just as it is important for the Indian public to be concerned about, and take note of, Pakistan's legitimate worries about India. No thinking about security can be sensibly pursued without taking both these concerns into account.*

*The nuclear tests were a big moral mistake and added vastly to subcontinental tensions. India was very keen to keep Kashmir off the international agenda—which would have been hard to do anyway, but since Kashmir is the major bone of contention between India and Pakistan, the threat of nuclear war makes it natural for other countries to take an interest in this.*

*By testing, India has traded its military advantage over Pakistan in conventional warfare for a nuclear stalemate. In a nuclear war there are no winners and losers. If India wins, but Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta suffer a nuclear holocaust, that's not a victory. ▲*



Find Shangri-La in Kathmandu...



**SHANGRI-LA**  
KATHMANDU

...in Pokhara



**SHANGRI-LA**  
**VILLAGE**  
P O K H A R A

For Reservations contact Shangri-La Hotel, Lazimpat, PO Box 655, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: [977 1] 412999, Facsimile: [977 1] 414184, E.mail: hosang@mos.com.np, Internet: www.nepalshangrila.com



# Run Dharsha, run

**Little Lanka's investments in sports paid off at the Bangkok Asian Games. Now, its athletes have their sights on the Sydney Olympics next year.**

by *Kalinga Seneviratne*

The 13th Asian Games in Bangkok in December 1998, billed the last "great games" of the century, may well have been the dawn of a new and a more exciting era for South Asian athletics. The Subcontinent's sportsmen and women gave reigning champion, China, a run for their money at the Asian track and field events.

Shang Xiutang, general secretary of the Chinese Athletics Association, had said before the Bangkok games that China hoped to win more than half the gold medals on offer in athletics and named almost all the women's sprint events as sure wins for China. "In those events we can say that a few can pose a threat," he had boasted.

Shang had to eat his words. A new crop of Indian and Sri Lankan sprinters emerged to grab five gold, six silver and nine bronze medals

in the track and field events. This was the first real challenge to the over two decades of Chinese dominance in Asian track and field. While India's performance was commendable, it was the performance of the much smaller Sri Lanka that became the envy of the other participating countries.

Sri Lanka bagged two gold medals within 10 minutes on the second day of the athletics events, winning both the men's and women's 400-metre sprints. This was their first Asian Games gold in 24 years. Even more impressive was the performance of the petite 23-year-old runner Damayanthi Dharsha, who broke the Asian Games record twice in two days to beat China's Asian record-holder Li Xuemei.

Altogether the Sri Lankan runners won three golds and two bronzes, and were plain unlucky to lose out on another near-certain gold in the men's

4x400 metres relay when one sprinter dropped the baton. If their world 200-metre silver medalist Susanthika Jayasinghe hadn't pulled out of the Games, the islanders could possibly have won two more golds.

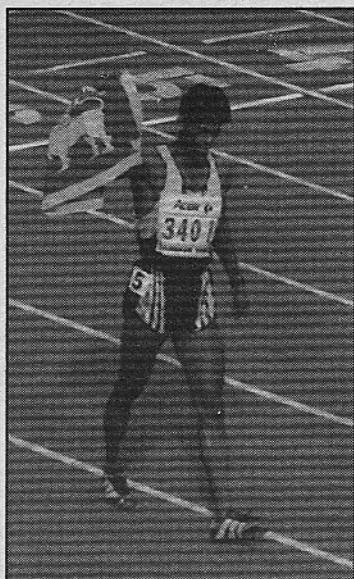
Before the opening of the games, both Xuemei and Jayasinghe had claimed that they would win the 100 and 200 metres races in record-breaking times. As it turned out, the 200-metre crown went to Jayasinghe's replacement in the event, Dharsha, whose victory was all the more remarkable since she is a 400-metre runner and hadn't even trained for the race. The Sri Lankans had expected Jayasinghe to win the event. "In the 100 and 200 we had Susanthika," said Dharsha's coach Sunil Gunawardena. "Since Susanthika pulled out, Dharsha ran. Now she's broken the Asian Games record!"

Sri Lanka's performance may have a lot to do with the Chandrika Kumaratunga government's policy towards sports. Since coming to power four years ago, and perhaps because the sports minister himself is a former sprinter, the state has been investing more on athletics. In addition to scholarships and monetary incentives during training, the medal winners at major international events

Dharsha talking to the press after her golden run.



KALINGA SENEVIRATNE



Sugath Tilekaratne with the Lankan flag after winning the 400-metre gold in Bangkok.





# The Explore Nepal Group



## BHOJAN GRIHA P Ltd

One of the finest and exclusive Nepali restaurant which serves traditional cuisine. Located within the heart of Dilli Bazar, an old historical building restored meticulously and converted into fascinating restaurant with intricate decor, subtle settings and comfortable ambience within nostalgic atmosphere. Traditional folk music and dances performed in full costume each evening over savory meals. Bhojan Griha is open every day for both lunch and dinner.



Instant reservation can be made at:

### Bhojan Griha

Phone: 416423, 411603 Fax: +977-1-243250  
E-mail: explore@mos.com.np



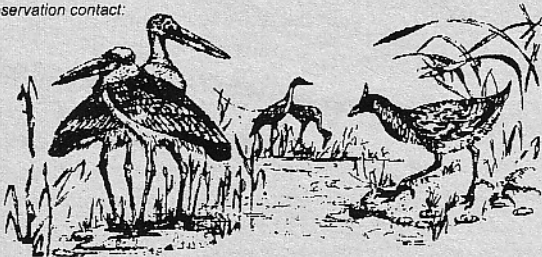
## Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp 24 Bedded Luxury Safari Tented Camp "Birds of Paradise"

Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp- the very luxury safari tented camp within Koshi Wildlife Reserve offers a unique chance to experience and view almost 400 species of bird life and some of the rare endangered wild games on the most peaceful and relaxing settings found anywhere in Nepal.

Still unexplored and remote, the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve first gazetted back in 1979 was mainly established to protect the last of the remaining rare endangered wild water buffaloes. Today the reserve extends 175sq.km and the vast expanse of water formed by the barrage has created marshes, lagoons, and mudflats which has favored to create one of the best and finest bird sanctuaries in Asia.

The camp with 12 large deluxe safari tents with comfortable twin beds has simple but modern toilet amenities including hot and cold shower, restaurant with fully stocked Bar. Simple but tasty Nepali and western cuisine is served on all occasion. An excellent alternative for nature lovers who have already visited Royal Chitwan National Park and Royal Bardia Hunting Reserve.

Special offer for local resident and expatriats. For further information and reservation contact:



## Koshi Tappu Wildlife Camp

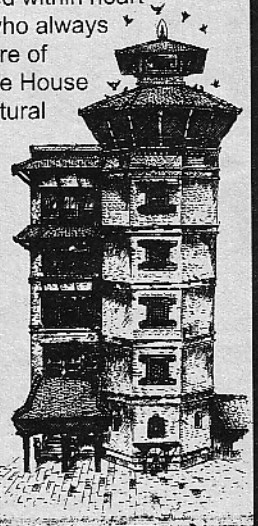
P.O. Box 536, Kamaladi, Kathmandu  
Phone: 247081, 247079, 248942 & 226130  
Fax: +977-1-224237 & 243250  
E-mail: explore@pramok.wlink.com.np

- Boating • Fishing • Jungle Hikes • Jungle Drive
- Cultural Excursions • Photographs • Sun Bathing • Swimming



## Kantipur Temple House

A unique property has been created within heart of Thamel, Jyatha Tol for visitors who always appreciate and love the art & culture of Kathmandu Valley. Kantipur Temple House has been built with typical architectural blend of ethnic Newari Temple at the center of cultural environs of Thamel Tol, where for centuries ornate temples and curious street shrines have thrived to this day. Kantipur Temple House has 32 rooms all delicately furnished in true traditional decor with simple but modern amenities, cozy restaurant and roof-top terraced garden with picturesque views of Royal Palace against the backdrop of mountains beyond the northern horizon. A true cultural experience with warm hospitality...



For reservation and inquiry contact:

### Kantipur Temple House

Jyatha Tol, Post Box 536  
Phone: 250131, 248942  
Fax: +977-1-250078  
E-mail: kantipur@tmplhouse.wlink.com.np

## LIKE A SMILE IN THE SKY



## AUSTRIAN AIRLINES

THE MOST FRIENDLY AIRLINE

One of the major airlines of Europe has started direct flight from Vienna, Austria to Kathmandu, Nepal since 24th September 1998. The Airbus (A310-324) with 213 seat configuration arrives 11:40 hrs. and departs 1300 hrs twice a week.

Austrian Airlines has excellent connections for both Europe and USA with impeccable inflight services.

For details and inquiries contact:

### Austrian Airlines

GSA The Explore Nepal Ltd.  
P.O. Box 536, Kamaladi, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Phone: 241470, 247078 Fax: +977-1-243250, 224237  
E-mail: explore@mos.com.np

\*Note: No Saturday flights from December '98 till February '99

SUMMER SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE FROM 24TH SEPTEMBER 1998					
FLIGHTNO	DAY	FROM	TO	DEP	ARR
OS4444	Thursday	KTM	VIENNA	1200	1900
OS4446	Saturday	KTM	VIENNA	1200	1900
WINTER SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE FROM 28TH OCTOBER 1998/1999					
FLIGHTNO	DAY	FROM	TO	DEP	ARR
OS4444	Thursday	KTM	VIENNA	1300	1900
OS4446	Saturday	KTM	VIENNA	1300	1900



are given cars, houses and monthly allowances by the government. Dharsha, for instance, will get a cash reward of SLR 500,000 (USD 8000) and a car for winning the gold. She will also be entitled to a house in Colombo and a monthly allowance of SLR 25,000 for at least the next 18 months.

Almost the entire Sri Lankan track-and-field squad come from villages, and the material rewards given to champion athletes has served as a major motivator. Besides the financial inducements, the government has also developed a training structure to find young talent in villages and bring them to Colombo for training in the three training streams—Olympic, Asian and national.

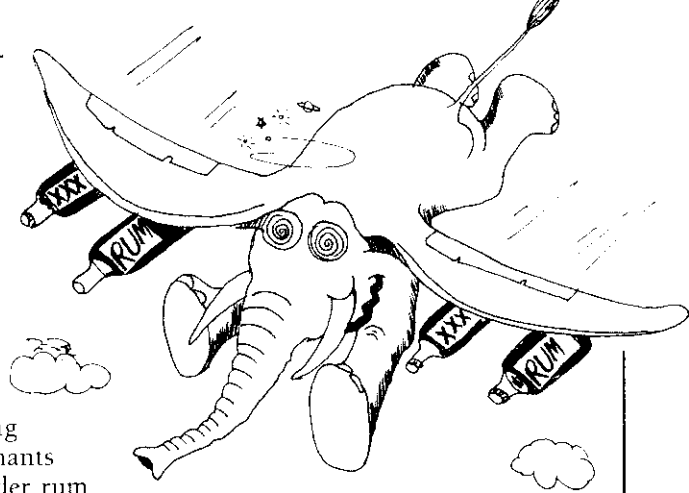
According to sports commentator Haritha Perera, the hosting of the 1991 South Asian Federation (SAF) Games in Colombo was the turning point for Sri Lankan athletics. For these Games, Sri Lanka laid a new tartan track at the Sugathadasa Sports Complex in Colombo and also installed equipment such as electronic clocks and distance measures. Coaches were also upgraded and sports, in general, de-centralised.

The Sri Lankan victory in the 1996 cricket world cup too provided a great boost to the island's non-cricketing sportsmen and women. "They all started to think that if the cricketers can become world champions, why can't we. The incentives the cricketers got for winning the World Cup spurred the athletes," says Haritha.

Cooperation with India has also helped improved the islanders' athletics standards. India sent a strong athletics team to take part in Sri Lanka's national championships last year, while Sri Lankan coaches have been trained in Indian sports academies.

The target the Lankan athletes have set for themselves is a first gold for their country at the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Given the way they bored down the Bangkok tracks, that may not be an unrealistic goal. ▲

# Tusk, tusk



**THE INDIAN** army is fighting a losing battle against elephants who regularly plunder rum, sugar and flour from their supply base in northern West Bengal. Army officials say the marauding animals douse fires lit to scare them away with water stored in their trunks. They also short circuit the electric fencing around the base by dropping uprooted trees on them. Thus, they get to the food and drink meant for soldiers serving along the Chinese border.

Once inside the base, the thin steel railing and wooden windows of the storage godowns splinter like match wood as the elephants advance. The beasts then roam about the base at will, drinking and feasting, says an officer who had served in the base and suffered an elephant offensive.

The elephants have developed an ingenious method of downing rum: they skilfully break open the bottles by knocking them against a hard surface and, curling their trunks around the bottom end, empty the contents down their gullet. Thereafter they stagger around the compound, uproariously drunk. After 'partying' for hours, they return to the jungle. They rarely ever harm the humans, so long as no one attacks or irritates them. One of the camp residents who made the mistake of splashing hot water on an elephant has never heard the end of it. On all subsequent raids, that elephant demolished this resident's hut and sprayed him with cold water.

The army's frequent pleas to the forest department for help in controlling the beasts have been to no avail, but it can take consolation from the fact that it is not the only Indian military force targeted by the elephants. Some months ago, a herd of wild elephants broke into the Indian air force base at Kalaikunda destroying numerous structures and uprooting cables over the course of an entire day, before zeroing in on a couple of fighter jets. Since air force officials had neither tranquiliser guns nor training in dealing with elephants, and forest officials were difficult to locate, the entire base was left with little choice but to wait and watch the rampage from behind closed doors.

District forest officials say that wild elephants, faced with a shrinking habitat, frequently go on a rampage. In the nearby states of Assam and Nagaland, motorists frequently have to 'bribe' herds of elephants blocking highways with bananas to get past safely. Assamese road officials advise truckers and motorists to carry large stocks of bananas to ease their way through tusk road blocks. For the forgetful or the uninitiated, a row of banana stalls has sprung up along the main highways servicing Assam's famous tea gardens.

While the wild elephants of India's Northeast are having a rum of a time, their tame cousins employed by the forest department in Uttar Pradesh are not doing so badly either. Forest department elephants will now be entitled to a government 'pension' of sugar cane, bananas, flour and fodder, when they complete their years of duty. Deputy conservator of forests, Atibal Singh, says that the elephants, normally recruited at the age of 10, had no retirement age till now. But under the revised rules, whenever any official in charge of an elephant feels that it is too weak and old to work, it can be pensioned off. Pregnant elephants are eligible for a maternity leave of nearly two years.

▲  
-Rahul Bedi



**Are you ready to Experience the journey of a lifetime?**

**Specialist in tours and treks in Nepal, Tibet holy Mount Kailash, Sikkim Ladakh & Bhutan.**



**Karnali Excursions (P) Ltd.**

P.O. Box: 4583, Thamel, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: 430383, 257748 Fax: +977-1-410583  
E-mail: excel@wlink.com.np  
A full-service trekking and travel company

**THE STATE OF THE WORLD**

The prestigious flagship publication of the World-watch Institute, Washington is available for the first time in India at aspecial price  
(Pb Rs.175/-)

**COMMUNAL THREAT SECULAR CHALLENGE**

by *K.N.Panikkar*  
(Pb Rs.125/-) (Hb Rs.225/-)

**HINDUTVA THE EMERGENCE OF THE RIGHT**

by *Jayant Lele*  
(Pb Rs.140/-)

**STORIES THEY TELL**

A dialogue among environmentalists, scientists and philosophers  
(Pb Rs.125/-)

**Earthworm Books Pvt Ltd**



12 Appadurai street  
Thiruvalluvar Salai  
Teynampet, Chennai - 18  
Tamilnadu, India

**Unique Adventure International**



**Unique Adventure International** is a team of professionals with more than a decade's experience in the tourism trade & we offer you unique opportunities to enjoy yourself. We specialize in nature and cultural tours, trekking, climbing, wildlife excursions, river rafting and ticketing. From the rivers up to the high Himalayas, we take care of you with a new experience in the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal. We provide you with all kind of trek and tour related services in Nepal, Tibet and Bhutan.

**We believe in quality service.**



**Unique Adventure International (P) Ltd.**  
P.O.Box 10649, Thamel, Kathmandu Nepal  
Tel: 428912 Fax: +977 1 423958  
E-mail: unique@ccsl.com.np

**ECO TREK**

A leading TREKKING & TOURING company in the Himalaya



Offering a fresh, intelligent, environmentally sound approach to modern adventures since 1992.

(Nepal, Tibet, including Mt. Kailash and Bhutan)

email: ecotrek@wlink.com.np  
Fax: (00977 1) 413118 Tel: 424 112, 424 113  
P.O.Box 6438 Thamel, Kathmandu

Eco Trek's specialities all in one well trained staff, high equipment, highly reliable & personalized service

A unique place for the perfect holiday



**Hotel Bharat**  
And Taj Restaurant

**Facilities**

International telephone and call transfer • Air and bus ticketing • Sight seeing • Laundry service • Parking and camping • Fully furnished room with private bath, T.V. special discount for groups rooms are at your choice US\$ 4 to 25 Govt. tax. 10% extra. We accept credit cards.

Phewa Lake Side, Pardi, Pokhara 17, Nepal  
Tel: 61-26495



**FLATFILE INVITES**

CONTRIBUTORS TO SEND IN ORIGINAL ESSAYS, FICTION, POETRY, OTHER WRITINGS AND ARTWORK FOR PUBLICATIONS. MESSAGES SHOULD BE LEGIBLY TYPED ON SINGLE-SIDED FOOLSCAP. THEY WILL NOT BE RETURNED UNLESS ACCOMPANIED BY POSTAL REQUISITES.

SEND YOUR PIECE TO:

**Flatfile**

RADHAMOHAN HOUSE, RELLI ROAD, KALIMPON 734301, DGHC, INDIA  
TEL: (03552) 56014/55134  
E-MAIL: MOLE@SIKKIM.ORG

Distributor in Nepal; Patan Dhoka Kitapasal, Patan Dhoka, Lalitpur, Nepal

**Shangrila's river journeys...**



High Mountain Waoc Trekking Pvt. Ltd.



**Rafting, treks & expeditions, Tibet and Bhutan tour Including Mt. Kailash Trek.**

P.O.Box 10115, Thamel, Kathmandu  
Tel: 425770 Fax: +977-1-425769

E-mail: mountain@mos.com.np  
<http://www.visitnepal.com/highmountain>



A centrally located hotel offering traditional Tibetan hospitality. Well-appointed guest rooms with multi channel TV, telephone and the only rooftop restaurant in the valley. Come feel the warmth of TIBETAN hospitality.....

**Tibet Resort**

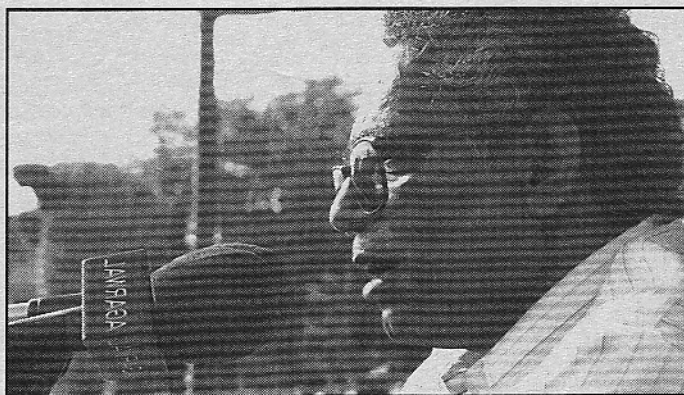


Lakeside, Pardi, P.O.Box No. 101, Pokhara, Nepal  
Tel: +977-61-20853, 24553 Fax: +977-1-25206  
Email: sangpo@vishnu.ccsl.com.np



Vinod Mishra (1947-98)

# Free radical

by **Irfan Ahmed**

What Mao Tse-Tung was to the Chinese, Vinod Mishra, general secretary of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was for millions in Bihar. And when he died in late December 1998, more than 50,000 of them gathered in Patna to bid goodbye to their leader: journalists, poets, academics, activists, politicians and thousands of peasants and landless labourers.

It had been a long time since Patna had seen such a large turnout at a funeral. The long route from the CPI (ML) Liberation office at Veer Chand Patel Marg to Bans Ghat, the cremation spot, was a sea of humanity. And when the crematorium was switched on at 4:45 pm amidst the slogan of "Comrade Vinod Mishra Ko Lal Salaam [Red Salute]", the setting sun also turned a deep crimson.

Born in Ghazipur, Uttar Pradesh, "VM", as he was commonly addressed, became involved in the communist movement in his college days. It was the decade of the 1960s, a time of great turmoil for the Left in India. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) had split from the Communist Party of India in 1964. But soon there was dissension within the CPI (M) as well, over the question of Maoist strategies and their application in India. In 1967, Charu Mazumdar led a rebellion against the official line of CPI (M) and began the Naxalbari upris-

ing in West Bengal.

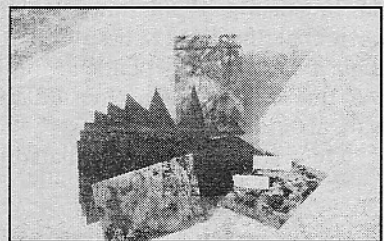
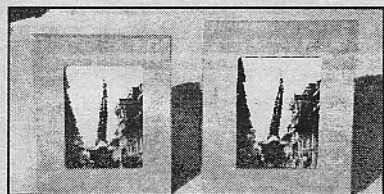
The flames of Naxalbari soon reached the Regional Engineering College at Durgapur in Bihar, where Mishra was enrolled. Together with two friends, VM launched a student magazine to spread Maoist thought. The college authorities were alarmed, and promptly expelled all three. VM's saga of resistance had begun.

By 1969, the rebels within the CPI (M) had formed the CPI (ML) Liberation group. The Naxalbari revolt was brutally suppressed by the state in West Bengal, but the group found a new lease of life in Bihar under the leadership of Subrata Dutt (known as Jauhar), a close associate of Charu Mazumdar. VM joined the CPI (ML) in 1973 and, following Jauhar's death in 1975, became its General Secretary.

The most important initiative taken under VM's leadership was abandoning the path of 'annihilation' with which most Naxalite streams are identified. In 1992, VM prepared the CPI (ML) to come aboveground to participate in parliamentary politics. This historic decision was a major point of departure for a party that had its origins in the Naxalite movement. VM's death can, in a way, be said to mark the end of an era of a particular brand of red politics in India in general and in Bihar in particular.

## Snowdrop International

*International market since 1984*



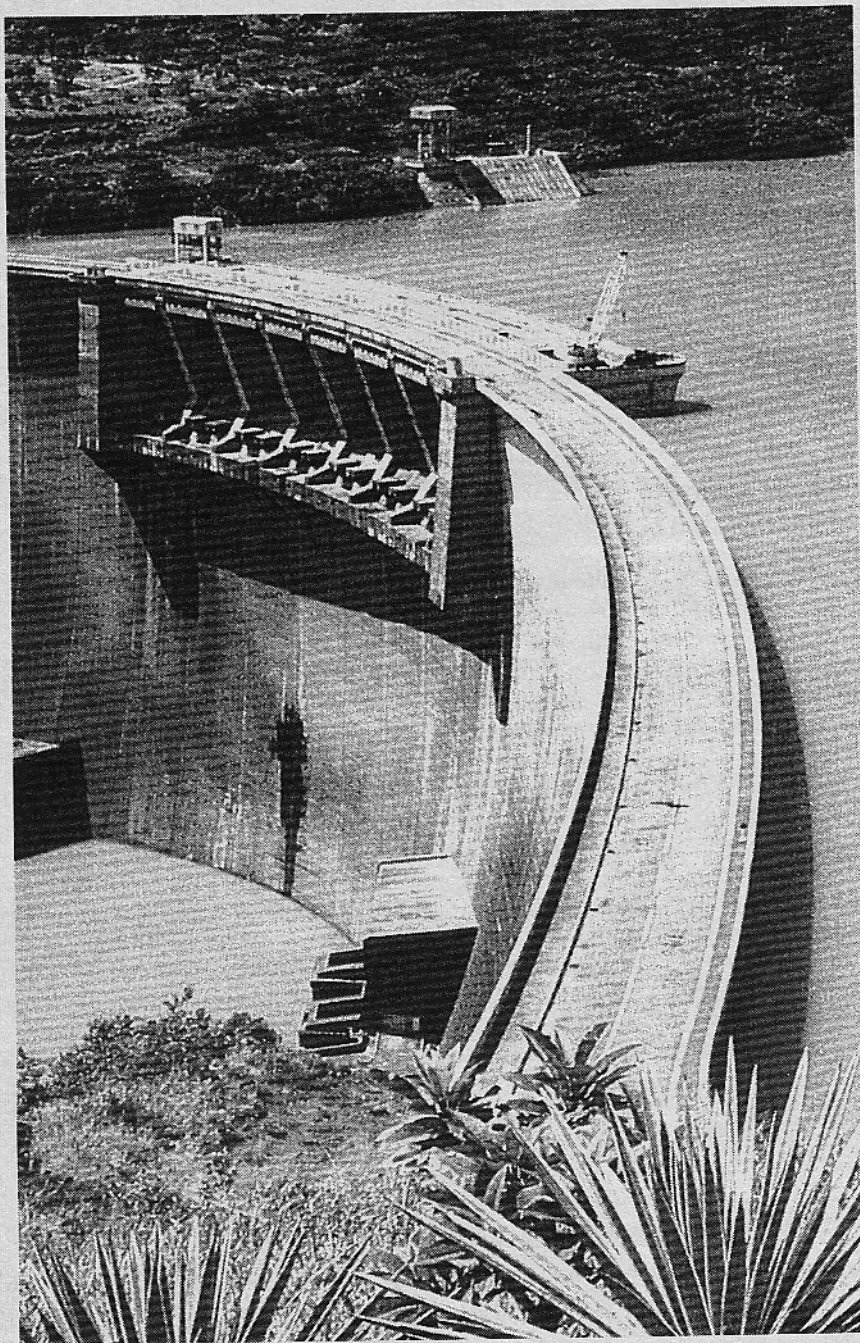
**Manufacturer and  
exporter of  
metal handicrafts &  
handmade Nepali paper.**

**We sell - Thankas, Woodcraft,  
Crystal Items, Silver Jewellery**

Location: Chh-3-718, Naya Bazaar  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
Mail Address: G.P.O. Box 3446, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Tel: +977-1-414391 Fax: +977-1-425685  
E-mail: [snwdrp@mos.com.np](mailto:snwdrp@mos.com.np)







Sri Lanka's Victoria Dam, which is part of the Mahaweli scheme.

# Not worth a dam

**Short report on a unique meeting in Colombo of people from both sides of the dam divide.**

by *Himanshu Thakkar*

For the first time in the region, and possibly anywhere in the world, speakers from both sides of the often-bitter development debate put their case at a public hearing on large dams and alternatives organised by the World Commission on Dams (WCD) in Colombo last December. The Commission was formed in January 1998 to review the development effectiveness of large dams and to evolve standards and criteria for their building, and is comprised of representatives from both sides of the dam debate.

The World Bank had sent in a speaker to argue its well-known case for building more large dams in South Asia, and there were representatives from the governments of Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. One would have expected the government of another South Asian nation, and the world's largest democracy, India, to play a key role in this unique affair. But the regional giant stood in isolation as self-defeating, escapist politics dictated that the Government of India would not only not allow any such debate on its own soil (*see Himal October 1998*), but would also refuse to send any participant to the public hearing.

This was in stark contrast to the Sri Lankan government's attitude. As the WCD hearings opened at the Bandarnaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH), it became apparent that the host government had whole-heartedly welcomed the hearings although it did not know what the Commission was likely to say either about large dams or about Sri Lanka's performance on that score.

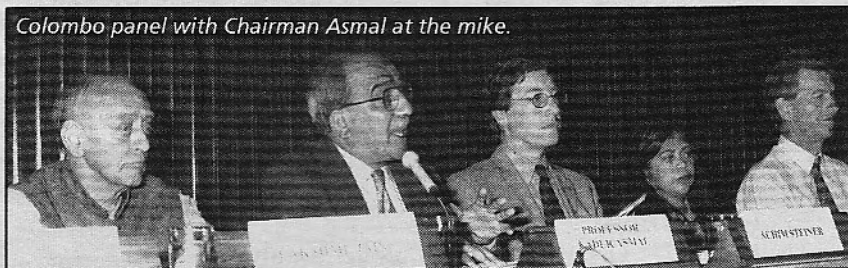
Sri Lanka's Secretary of the Ministry of Mahaweli Development, T. Ranaviraja, admitted that many of the decisions taken in the past were not based on consultation with communities affected by dam-building.

The big-dam lobby's main argument was that large dams are necessary to augment food production for the increasing populations. It held forth that the food self-sufficiency achieved in post-independence India was due to large dams like Bhakra Nangal.

This view was ably repudiated in



Colombo panel with Chairman Asmal at the mike.



two expert presentations. One of them was by Shaheen Rafi Khan of Pakistan, who showed how, if food sufficiency was the issue, the proposed Kalabagh dam in the North-Western Frontier Province was no solution. The New-Delhi-based Centre for Water Policy presented in detail how the contribution from large surface canal-based projects built after independence contributed less than 12 percent to India's food production today.

The second major justification forwarded in favour of large dams was that hydropower is a clean source of power. But India's Ashish Kothari recounted his experience of being on the Ministry of Environment's expert committee for river valley projects, and said the environmental guidelines or the conditions of the projects are systematically violated. Kothari said that in his experience, environmental safeguards were certainly not implementable in today's scheme of things.

Bikas Pandey of Nepal pointed out that big dams proposed in Nepal's mountains are not necessary for the country's power needs and that they are being pushed solely by international business on speculative, and often unjustified, projections of India's electricity demand. It is significant that the Nepali government presenters seemed to concede Pandey's view.

India's former water resources secretary M.S. Reddy agreed that unless the rehabilitation needs of displaced populations and environmental safeguards are provided for, and these criteria have not been fulfilled to date, no dam can be built in the Himalayan region. Reddy was echoing a statement made by Sripad Dharmadhikary of India's Narmada Bachao Andolan

the previous day. Even as the world was celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Dharmadhikary observed that if the governments do not have the will or the capacity to justly resettle displaced people, they have no right to displace anyone in the first place.

The one major argument in favour of large dams, that of control of flood, was forwarded by the representatives of the Bangladesh government. Having just faced the worst floods of the century earlier in the year, they reiterated their long-standing view that large dams in Nepal were necessary to control floods in the Ganga. However, this proposition was contested by Dinesh Kumar Mishra of Bihar's Barh Mukti Abhiyan. Narrating the harrowing experience of damming and embanking the Kosi river in North Bihar (*Himal, February 1999*), Mishra showed how such projects destroy the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people. Dams for flood control not only fail to control floods, but also permanently inundate large areas of land. When the floods do come, and they surely do, dam or not,

they are sudden and much more prolonged, thus more destructive, said Mishra.

India's former water resources secretary, Ramaswamy R. Iyer, author of India's 1987 water policy, said that without trying out alternative patterns, it would be blatantly dishonest to say that alternatives to the standard water control and use technologies do not exist. He urged the Commission to give sufficient attention to the issue of alternatives, as dams can, if at all, only be the instruments of last resort. Matters like "demand side management" and local rainwater systems have to be tried out first, he maintained.

One definite lesson that arose out of the Colombo meeting was that large dams have failed more often than they have succeeded. Meanwhile, it was also clear that all of the five South Asian governments to the last one, egged on by international business and aid, continue to push for more, ever more large dams. ▲

## Can you afford to trek without a PORTABLE ALTITUDE CHAMBER (PAC)

### INSURANCE and PEACE OF MIND

The proven and reliable Portable Altitude Chamber (PAC) is an affordable temporary treatment for Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS). It can mean the difference between survival and death in difficult situations.

- Low price (US\$ 1,000 plus freight)
- Low weight – 8 kilogrammes
- Easily used and repaired



Order directly from the manufacturer  
**C.E. BARTLETT PTY LTD**

International phone: 613 5339 3103 International fax: 613 5338 1241  
Email: [info@bartlett.net.au](mailto:info@bartlett.net.au) Web: [www.bartlett.net.au](http://www.bartlett.net.au)



I LIKE **Myanmarese press releases**, redolent with righteousness and, yes, hard data. And so, more was my happiness when I received this information regarding an attack on a Myanmarese patrol vessel by a Thai boat. The former was at North Latitude 9 degree 57 minutes and East Longitude 98 degrees 27 minutes, while the latter was located "well within Myanmar waters at North Latitude 9 degrees 55 minutes and East Longitude 98 degrees 27 minutes". A 40-mm Bofors shell made in Thailand and measuring 7 inches in length and 1.5 inches in circumference with the marks "HET BPD dated 1-4-78 40/70" was found on a heach on Salon island. "Moreover, a pagoda on the Salon island was hit at the second hand from the lower base of the pagoda's bell shape structure, causing damage measuring 21 inches in length, 5 inches in width and 3 inches in depth." Since I have already spent 703 characters, 149 words and five sentences on this item, it is time to move on.

JUST THOUGHT you would want to know, the **internet country codes** for the Subcontinental countries. Regard it as a service. Afghanistan *af*, Bangladesh *bg*, Bhutan *bt*, India *in*, Maldives *mv*, Myanmar *mm*, Nepal *np*, Pakistan *pk*, Sri Lanka *sl*.

ON A Patna thoroughfare, there is this **Air India billboard** announcing the flight to Los Angeles. Does the target audience really understand what the Maharaja is doing putting his imprint on cement? Is Hollywood lore really that well known in the Hindi heartland? Kooka, where are you?

TYPICAL STORY which explains very little, in *The Times of India*: "Jaipur: A falcon, bearing a transmitter in its wing, which strayed into Indian territory from Pakistan, is now in the custody of Jaisalmer police." Who says that it was a Pakistani falcon? Could it have been an Indian one? What was that transmitter up to? How did it come into the custody of the Jaisalmer police? Did it fall out of the sky? Does the Jaisalmer police have a transmitter-falcon-locating unit? If so, was the falcon brought down with anti-aircraft fire or escorted to the ground by an Indian **rapid-response falcon flying force**?



THE **TOBACCO Institute of India** is up to something deep and insidious, teaching etiquette to smokers so that they do not raise the hackles of non-smokers, and asking smokers to stick up for their rights. Now, why would the cigarette peddlers who fund the TII be suddenly so concerned about "promoting courtesy and mutual accommodation"?

Of course, they want smoking to be seen in a more kindly and gentler light, which would in a back-door way continue to increase the pool of smokers. It is all part of the plan to sell those packs. I would much rather if they came directly out and told children not to smoke. Would they dare do that?

ON 1 December, **Colonel Suraiya Rahman** was promoted to the rank of Brigadier in the Bangla army. She was born 1944, and is into gynaecology and obstetrics at the Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka. Congratulations to the Brigadier, but what a comedown for Bangladeshi womanhood that it was not a member of the erstwhile Mukti Bahini that made the grade.



IT HAPPENS to the **best of snb-editors**, but not twice on the same page! Directions to the computer in-putter get carried as headline or words are missed out. Feel sorry for the sub, then, more than for the reader, when on the front page

**kotla pitch story 34 pt bold head**



of *The Indian Express* of 10 January (city edition, New Delhi) one headline states, "kotla pitch story 34 pt hold head", and another says, "No one came when Dangs burnt but for PM, the". Huh? And then to cap it all off, there was

**No one came when Dangs burnt but for PM, the**

another shoddy one across the bottom: "Dravid passes Test after Test but why his selectors keep flunking". Huh?

WHILE WE are all taken aback, and very pleasantly so, with the Nepali government's order banning cigarette and liquor advertising in electronic media (the bulk of them, mind you, government-owned) with effect from 19 February, I will be even more pleasantly surprised if the "total **ban on pan masala**" comes through, as has been recommended by the Central Committee for Food Standards to the Indian government. Where would we all be without chewing tobacco? Somewhere nice.

BANGLADESH AND India have **4000 kilometres of land border** between them, and the latter plans to complete fencing this border by March 2001. So says Indian Home Secretary B.P. Singh, and the Bangladeshis are none too happy. Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad complains that this would be an unfriendly act, and would affect the creation of SAPTA. I think Bangladesh should let the Indians pay for the fencing, for there is a time not too far off when the flow of economic migrants will begin to go the



other way, Bangladesh will not forever be a basket case, and is already in the process of climbing out.

THE ANTI-REGIONAL of the month is Bal Thackeray of Boomhai, for this about **Yusuf Khan**, the Indian actor otherwise known as Dilip Kumar: "I have not been in the mood to keep friendship with Dilip ever since he accepted the award Nishan-e-Pakistan."



CHRISTINA HYLINER and her daughters, Lotta and Jennie, of Sweden has decided to embark on a 4500-km **camel-back journey** through Paki-

BRAVO, PHARMACEUTICAL professionals of Bangladesh, for at long last organising a topical seminar on a matter of great interest for South Asians everywhere. Poet Sufia Kamal Auditorium (at the ground floor of the National Museum auditorium in Dhaka), on 1 December 1998, saw the organisation of a seminar titled "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's **No Hartal** Announcement and Its Positive Impact on the Health Sector" The seminar was organised by the Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Society, and a large number of pharmacists from different parts of the country attended it.

I DID not know that women's physiques differed that much from Latin America to "Asia" (read China). The AFP story on the Chinese volleyball team's reluctance to don "**leotard-like one-pieces**" reports head coach Lang Ping as saying, "It's good for Cubans, whose bodies look pretty, but not for Asian teams because the shape of the body is different." Ahem, now let's take a look at this. Cubans are supposed to look pretty, but Asian women are supposed to look fat and lumpy in leotard-like one-pieces? Which Asians are we talking about?



IF YOU are from these here parts, seeking asylum in a European country makes your motives suspect, according to the executive director of the Bhutan Broadcasting Service, Sonam Tshong. The head of the **lhotsham** (Nepali language) section of the radio station, Nandalal Gautam, apparently, "absconded" while on a radio training course in the Netherlands and applied for asylum. Mr Tshong was "surprised and perplexed" by the development as Gautam's "request for asylum" did not make any sense, reports *Kuensel*: "The Royal government and BBS provided every opportunity for Gautam to develop as a person." Said Mr Tshong, "The fact that he chose to seek asylum in the Netherlands makes his real motives obvious. If he really felt the need for asylum he could have done so either in India or in any country in the region." What I say is that thank the lord for an authentic Bhutanese applying for political asylum in The Netherlands, for the immigration rosters in North America and Europe are full of Nepalis of Nepal and Nepalis of India masquerading as Bhutanese Lhotsham-pas and applying for asylum. Given that their applications are being rejected, much better for these same fake Bhutanese to apply as fake Nepali Maoist insurgents.

stan and India to commemorate the saga of Alexander of Macedonia. They do not look too happy. I would not either, if I had those many kms to look forward to on hump-back.

THIS STORY should not have been **buried in the inside pages** of *The Asian Age*, for its economic implication as far as Bangladesh and the Indian Northeast are concerned. If the Tripura Chief Secretary V. Thulasidas is to be believed, when he returned from a Indo-Bangla trade review meeting in Dhaka in mid-December, the Bangladesh government has agreed to extend use of its port and rail facilities to allow transport of goods and passengers between the land-locked northeastern Indian states and the Bay of Bengal. The commerce, tourism and transport secretaries from Dhaka would soon be visiting the Northeast to explore the potential of economic linkages between the Northeast and Bangladesh, Thulasidas said. I am just waiting for the Bangla papers to confirm this before becoming too ecstatic.

I shall repeat this story from *The Asian Age* **without a word of commentary**:

*According to the FIR lodged at the Najafgarh police station, Dharamvar, a resident of Roshanpura, went to stay at Randhir Singh's house on the night of October 26. The complainant lives with his family. Dharamvir approached Randhir Singh to ask him for a room to spend the night. As the accused was Randhir Singh's friend, the latter allowed him to stay overnight in his house. According to sources, when Dharamvir and his family were asleep during the night, at around 10:30 pm, Dharamvir got up from his bed and made a sexual assault on Randhir Singh's buffalo. Randhir Singh woke up in the night and caught Dharamvir red-handed during the act. He raised an alarm and called his neighbours to show them what Dharamvir was up to. His neighbours caught Dharamvir and after beating him up handed him over to the Najafgarh police station. A case under Section 377 (unnatural offences) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered at the Najafgarh police station. Section 377 states whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman and animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine. The buffalo has been sent for medical examination, the reports of the test are still awaited.*

- **Chhetria Patrakar**



## Interviewing Benazir

WITH A last proud flourish at Benazir's chandeliers, my minder let me out of the Prime Minister's Residence and into the garden, where the interview was to take place. There we sat for ten minutes in mock-Regency chairs beneath the mock-Mexican *hacienda*, before the familiar silhouette appeared at the top of the lawns. On instinct, like schoolboys waiting for the headmistress, we stood up.

If Benazir's campaigning style verges on the frenzied—all hectoring speeches and raucous motorcades—her manner face-to-face is deliberately measured and regal. She took a full three minutes to float down the hundred yards of lawn separating the house from the chairs where we had been sitting. Her eyebrows were heavily darkened, and scarlet lipstick had been generously applied to her lips; her hair was arranged in a sort of haroque beehive topped by a white gauze dupatta. The whole painted vision, wrapped in folds of orange silk, reminded me of one of those haughty Roman princesses in *Caligula* or *I Claudius*. After such a majestic entrance it seemed only right, when I enquired about her new *hacienda*, that, Thatcher-like, she should answer using the Royal "we". "We didn't want the design to be too palatial," she said, in a slow, heavily accented purr that managed to make the word *palatial* sound as if it had about five syllables. "The original [architect's] design was extremely grand—so we modified it, *tremendously*."

There followed an interlude when Benazir found the sun was not shining in quite the way she wanted to: "The sun is in the wrong direction," she announced. We all rose encircled [sic] one stop around the table, which left her press secretary in the prime ministerial throne, squinting into the sun. Once Benazir had indicated that she was ready, I opened by asking if, after her time at Oxford, she still regarded herself as an Anglophile.

"Oh yes," she said brightly. "London is like a second home for me. I know London well. I know where the theatres are, I know where the shops are, I know where the *hairdressers* are. I love to browse through Harrods and W.H. Smith in Sloane Square. I know all my favourite ice cream parlours: I used to particularly love going to the one at Marble Arch: Baskin Robbins. Sometimes I used to drive all the way down from Oxford just for an ice cream, and then drive back again. That was my idea of sin."

"So you enjoyed your time at Oxford?"

"I suppose in retrospect it was a happy time, because it was free from responsibility and so it had an air of innocence about it..."

"Innoc...?"

"...It was free from all the Machiavellian twists that life can take, free of deception. I think at university one doesn't have the deception or the betrayal which comes about in every career..."

"You think...?"

"...Moreover for me it was a time of security because

my father was alive, and he was the anchor in my life. I felt that there was no problem that would be too great for him to solve so I was not worried ever, or too anxious, because I always felt I had my father to fall back on."

From the beginning of the interview it was clear that trying to halt Benazir in mid-flow was no easier than stopping Lady Thatcher, whom she has frequently cited as her role model... She has clearly studied her mentor's interview manner. There was no question of any dialogue: Benazir conducts an interview in much the same manner as she might a public rally, pointedly ignoring all attempts to interrupt her, and treating the interviewer as if he were some persistent heckler.

WILLIAM DALRYMPLE IN *AT THE COURT OF THE FISH-EYED GODDESS*

## Honouring Qadeer

ONE WAY of showing reverence towards the country's founder, Quaid-e-Azam, and poet, Allama Iqbal, has been to name major building or roads after them. There is hardly a city in Pakistan which does not have an educational institution, a library, road, airport or park which does not carry Jinnah or Iqbal's name.

A few narcissist politicians though have attempted to break this tradition. During Zia-ul-Haq's martial law days, a few sports stadiums in the Punjab were named after him; Benazir Bhutto named the Awami Markaz in Islamahad after her late father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto; the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (SZABIST) was established in Sindh; the Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute of Science and Technology was set up in NWFP; while in the Punjab, one can find several Nawaz Sharif government colleges and hospitals built at state expense.

Lately, however, a newly nuclearised Pakistan has discovered another hero—Dr Abdul Qadeer Khan. Practically within days of the tests, Khan's name monopolised nearly half a dozen billboards in the federal capital. Whereas it took years to change Islamabad University to Quaid-e-Azam University and the People's Open University to Allama Iqbal Open University, Dr Qadeer's name has begun to appear with alarming regularity in the federal capital.

First it was Bani Gala—an illegal residential locality on the banks of Rawal Lake—that was renamed Gulshan-e-Qadeer. Dr Qadeer owns a house there, and when the Capital Development Authority tried to demolish houses in the area in 1992, he contested for the ownership rights of the residents of Bani Gala. Then traders in Islamahad changed the name of the Markaz in F-10 to Qadeer City Shopping Centre. Later, the traders demanded that Fatima Jinnah Park—which only three years ago was named Capital Park—be renamed Qadeer Park, and stickers carrying this demand, along with the picture of the doctor, were distributed throughout the capital.

Pakistan's nuclear hero has become an able and willing chief guest and guest speaker at several state func-



tions in Islamabad where he never fails to eulogise the "brave and bold decision of Nawaz Sharif to detonate the nuclear device".

At least two new monuments have also been constructed in Islamabad during the last few weeks. The first one, a model of the Ghauri missile, has been erected on the way to the Islamabad International Airport. The second, at Lok Virsa, is a replica of the Raskoo Mountain, where Pakistan detonated its nuclear devices. While there is much official noise about the country's cash-strapped exchequer, the public's money is being wasted on constructing useless monuments. There are already a few redundant tanks and warplanes, from the 1956 war on display in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sialkot and Sargodha.

ZAFFARULLAH KHAN IN "ODE TO THE BOMB"  
FROM NEWSLINE, KARACHI.

## Voice of South Asia

FROM THE Voice of America 1999 Calendar, for those who want to give faces to the voices on short wave.



## Blocking Suu Kyi

EVERY MORNING a soldier placed a fresh flower on the plastic picnic table which Burma's military authorities had ordered to be set up on an abandoned bridge, 32 kilometres outside the capital, Rangoon. If it was an attempt to woo Burma's democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, sitting just a few metres away inside a grey Toyota TownAce van with its curtains drawn, it was a rare sign of subtlety from a regime which only two weeks earlier had taken a much more violent stand against her during a 6-day confrontation at exactly the same spot.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner is known for the stunning floral displays she wears in her hair, but the regime's offering of flowers, along with the table, chairs and umbrella, were ignored by Suu Kyi and her party.

So too was the musical selection sent over by the authorities—Michael Jackson's "Beat It" and Madonna's "Material Girl" did not appeal to the 53-year-old general secretary of the NLD.

"They have no idea of my taste," she later said. "Even my sons don't listen to that sort of music." More to her liking were the Buddhist sermons which the authorities ordered played over speakers at night.

In the van with her was 74-year-old U Hla Pe, the NLD executive committee member responsible for Irrawaddy Division, and two young drivers. It was their second attempt to make the five-hour drive to the Irrawaddy delta city of Bassein.

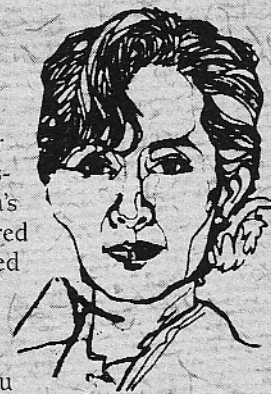
...From the start, the military commander at the roadblock took a hard line. Suu Kyi's car was carried by soldiers onto a disused bridge with no direct shelter or any protection from the elements. Her driver twice drove the vehicle off the bridge into some shade, twice more the soldiers carried it back to its exposed position.

...By the time the authorities allowed NLD colleagues and her doctors to visit the site, the group was already running out of food and water.

Soldiers refused to allow the visitors to deliver the biscuits and bottles of water they had brought with them. Some essential medicines were permitted, but others were confiscated, along with sweets, vitamins and anything categorised as food, even throat lozenges containing honey.

The visitors were body-searched and a government statement later proudly announced that authorities at the roadblock discovered Suu Kyi's female doctor was wearing a second longyi and blouse under her clothes. The clothing was intended for Suu Kyi, it was removed from her doctor's body by two policewomen.

SHIRLEY HARRIS IN "ON THE ROAD WITH SUU KYI"  
FROM THE IRRAWADDY.



## Sanskrit Madonna

RESIDENTS OF the overcrowded, ancient, pot-holed, and filthy bylanes of Shivala in the holy city of Varanasi are not aware of the fact that international singing sensation and sex goddess Madonna will be staying in a house there for at least a week. She will be learning Sanskrit, the mother of all languages.

It all began when Professor Bhagirath Prasad Tripathi, better known as Bageesh Shastri, detected faulty Sanskrit pronunciations in a song in the pop star's latest album, "Ray of Light".

Although foreigners are a common sight in Varanasi—one can see them in the lanes and bylanes as well as the five-star hotels, learning music, mysticism, and many other things Indian—the arrival of a hot star like Madonna is something altogether different.

Most people in Varanasi still live in a traditional, religious atmosphere unaffected by Western culture. For them, Madonna might as well be on another planet. But there are some who enjoy Western music, dance, lifestyles, and fashion. Among them is the renowned Sanskrit scholar, Acharya Bageesh Shastri. He happened to hear Madonna's album in which she sings a Sanskrit *shloka*, and found that her rendition contained many mistakes in pronunciation.

Says Shastri: "Sanskrit is a language in which pronunciation is the essence, even a minor deviation can change the meaning altogether, and that is exactly what has happened with Madonna's song Shanti/Ashtangi, written by Shankaracharya 1200 years ago in his Yoga Taravali."

Madonna sings:

*Vande Gurunam Charanaravinde, Sandashita Syatma  
Sukhev Abodhe*

*Nihashrey Ase Jangalikayamane, Sansara Halahala  
Moha Shanti*

*Ahahu Purushakaram Sankha Chakrasi, Ahahu  
Purushakaram Sankha Chakrasi*

*Dharinam Dharinam Sahasra Sirasam, Dharinam  
Dharinam Sahasra Sirasam*

*Om Shanti, Om Shanti, Om  
Shanti.*

Shastri appreciates Madonna's effort in adopting the Sanskrit *shloka* and is also pleased with the tune, but he objects to the pronunciation saying there are several mistakes which change the meaning of the entire *shloka*.

In fact, he says, each and

every *shloka* is a mantra and any change in it can ruin the language, its meaning, and effect. For example, *shanti* and *shanthai* are different and this has been repeated in Madonna's song. "Even the consonants like *gha*, *dha* and *bha* are very difficult to pronounce for foreigners, and that has been the problem for the pop star. But I am pleased with her eagerness to learn. In fact it will give the language a boost at the international level."

"Though the local people are still unaware of Madonna's impending visit, the media is very excited about it. The media is crazy and I am keeping my fingers crossed about the media blitz when she comes here," he says. He refuses to disclose the dates, but his family members say the star will be staying for a week and will arrive in the last week of January or the first week of February.

She will stay at Shastri's house. Which has driven his daughter-in-law and her daughters wild with excitement. But the family is trying to keep the matter a secret because they fear two things: rowdiness by the locals, and the media publicity.

RUPAN BHATTACHARYA IN "MADONNA COMES TO VARANASI.  
GOAL: LEARN SANSKRIT PRONUNCIATION!"  
FROM THE ASIAN ONLINE MAGAZINE.

## LAT vs WP

WHEN A search was made in the Lixis-Nexis database for the news from the South Asian nations between January 1, 1992 and December 31, 1996, a total of 1399 stories were found. The *Los Angeles Times* carried almost twice as many as stories in the *Washington Post*. While the *Los Angeles Times* carried 928 stories *Washington Post* carried only 471 stories. The *Los Angeles Times* appears to have taken more interest in the South Asian events.

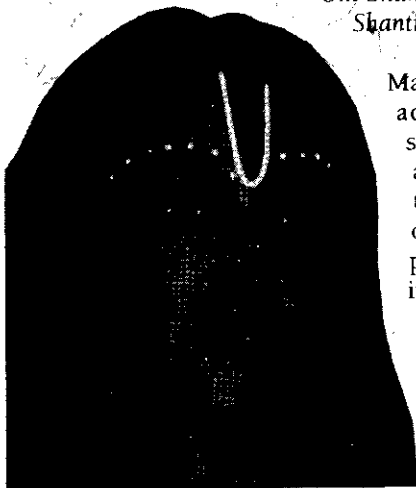
### Number of news stories

Countries	Los Angeles Times	Washington Post	Total
India	579	277	856
Pakistan	177	104	281
Bangladesh	56	25	81
Nepal	44	16	60
Sri Lanka	97	42	139
Bhutan	5	6	11
Maldives	0	1	1

The average length of the news stories from India is greater than the length of news stories from other countries. Though Pakistan ranks second in terms of number of stories, the length of the news stories is shorter when compared to other countries.

Although the *Los Angeles Times* carries more number of stories, the length of news stories is shorter compared to the *Washington Post*. But the lengths of the news stories in the *Los Angeles Times* do not show any significant variation with regard to nations. The difference is less than 50 words.

The news from South Asian countries rarely appears on the front pages of the newspapers. Less than 4 per-





cent of the news stories appeared on the front pages of the two newspapers. Only seven out of a total of 180 stories made it to the front page. There were four front page stories from Indian and two from Pakistan. For all the other five nations there was only one story on the front page. The *Washington Post* carried four front page stories whereas the *Los Angeles Times* carried three stories on its front page.

## Type of news story by newspaper

Story type	Los Angeles Times	Washington Post	Total
News	60.0%	56.7%	58.3%
Article	31.3	28.9	30.0
Editorial	0	3.3	1.7
Feature	8.9	5.6	7.2
Letters to the editor	0	5.6	2.8

D.S. POORNANANDA IN "COVERAGE OF SOUTH ASIA IN TWO LEADING US NEWSPAPERS" FROM MEDIA ASIA, SINGAPORE.

## Foreign racket

OF COURSE, Christianity is foreign to India. So what? Also foreign to India are the telephone, the car, the calendar, this language you are reading right now, cricket, tennis...need I go on? Exactly why has the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its on-again, off-again brothers not pronounced that those who observe a holiday on that foreign import, Sunday, are anti-national? Or that when Rahul Dravid and Mahesh Bhupathi wield their implements of slashing destruction—bats and rackets first designed abroad—they are attacking Indian culture? Or that when you make an STD call on Alexander Graham Bell's amazing invention, you betray India?

All ludicrous questions from this man with the foreign name, correct? No more ludicrous, may I suggest, than using Christianity's foreign origin to make insinuations about Indians. If the 'origin' of something in our lives is to be a benchmark, there are insinuations to be made about nearly every Indian. Let's leave it there:

DILIP D'SOUZA IN "FOREIGN FAITH, HOMEGROWN HATRED"  
FROM THE TIMES OF INDIA.

## Re-inventing Snow White

WESTERN FAIRY tales are the staple of the modern child's reading. These tales are as had as nursery rhymes, if not worse. When there are countless loving mothers and many kind stepmothers too, why should we tell children about Hansel and Gretel being sent to the forest by a wicked stepmother, why so much ado about the odd cruel step sisters of Cinderella?

And to what sadistic tendency in its author do we owe the torment of Snow White? Why should an innocent Red Riding Hood, collecting flowers in a sunny meadow, on a happy visit to her equally innocent grandmother, be devoured by a wolf to begin with and why should the wolf be given such a deceitful character and

later be killed in such a gruesome manner?

Why so much exposure to cruelty? Why should children be exposed to evil? Why should we awaken in them, through familiarity, an expectation of evil and make them believe in the inevitability of evil? Do we not aggrandise the evils of the world by giving them unwarranted importance and exposure?

As it is, every child faces many real and imaginary fears. Children are afraid of the dark and of ghosts, they are terrified of teachers who beat them because even today corporeal punishment is regularly meted out to students in many prestigious institutions.

Children are terrified of the bullies in their schools, they are afraid of not being liked, or of failing in their examinations. To small children a hilllock seems a mountain, a street dog a tiger, a busy thoroughfare a battlefield. Children are afraid of their grandparents and parents dying and of having no one to turn to.

They are afraid of missing their way and never reaching home, afraid of falling from a tree or even down the staircase. They are afraid of getting caught on the horns of a bull or being trampled under the hooves of a cow or a horse, or of being overrun by speeding cars and motorbikes. They are afraid of being alone and even afraid of being afraid.

To all the million things that children dread why add new dimensions? Each scary tale becomes an additional load on the overburdened heart of the helpless child. What wanton streak in humanity's character has prompted it to people its children's literature with such fearful phenomena?...

A friend who, in his youth, could recite poetry for hours laments that he has forgotten most of it in his sixties but the horrible, nonsensical nursery rhymes which he had learnt when three or four years old, still pop up in his mind like a Jack in the box. He cannot forget those inanities, even if he tries.

SHYAM KUMARI IN "POISON RHYMES AND SCARY TALES:  
GORY WORLD OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE"  
IN THIRD WORLD NETWORK FEATURES.



"... not a 16th century fort—that's the cricket stadium..."

THE HINDU, MADRAS

literary south asia

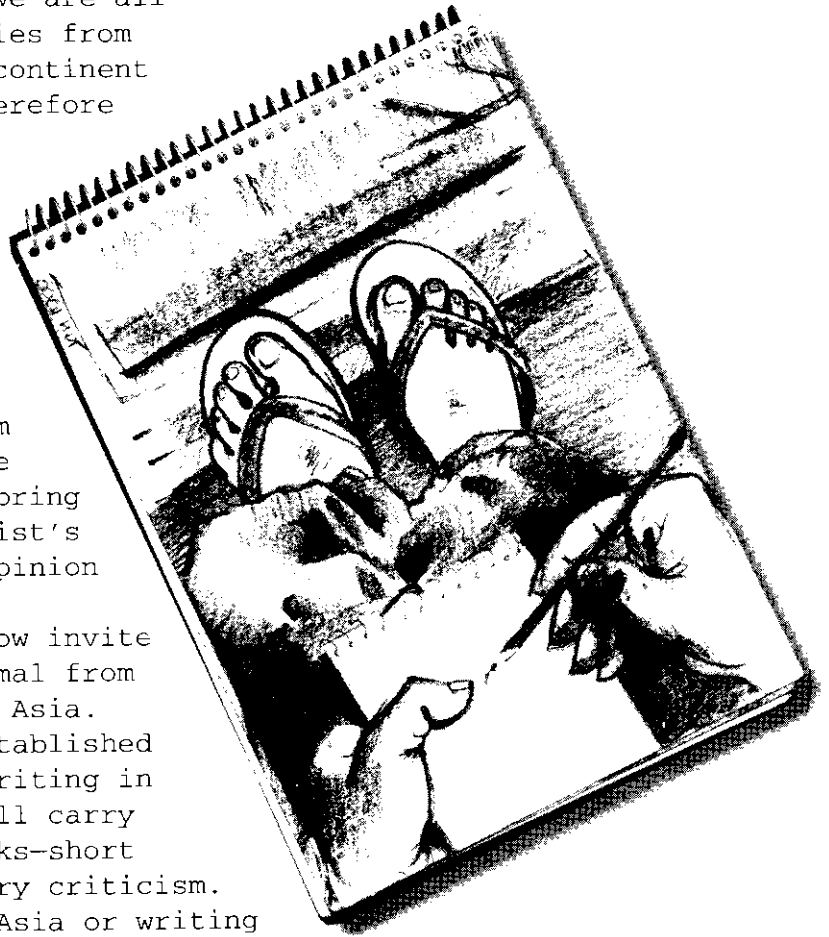
# litSA

short fiction and poetry in Himal

At Himal, we believe that we are all losing something when stories from different parts of the Subcontinent are not shared. We have therefore decided to start a new department in this magazine, **litSA**, Literary South Asia, which seeks to bring together the literary rivers of South Asia in these pages. The creative voice of women and men from across the Subcontinent, we feel, are as necessary to bring to the fore as the journalist's presentation of news and opinion or the social scientist's analysis. This is why we now invite literary submissions to Himal from writers and poets of South Asia. **litSA** will feature both established writers and newer talent writing in English. The department will carry original or translated works—short fiction, poetry and literary criticism. Writers may be from South Asia or writing about South Asia.

**When will** the new department begin in Himal? As soon as we gather exception submissions to get started. Watch this space.

Or better still, send in your manuscript to:  
Literary Editor, litSA, Himal, Radhamohan House, Relli Road, Kalimpong,  
Darjeeling District, West Bengal, India - 734301  
or email: mole@kalimpong.com



Manuscripts will not be returned unless requested and accompanied by self-addressed postal requisites. Translations should preferably be accompanied by a copy of the original work and (where possible) the author's permission.



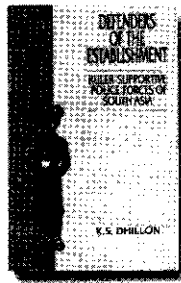
# The Subcontinent's police forces

A new book tries to find out why India's police force has historically had an image problem.

Of the three agencies which constitute the criminal justice system, the police is perhaps the most controversial, criticised for not living up to expectations. This is not surprising because it is to the police that a citizen in distress turns to first to seek redressal. The court comes later. It is therefore encouraging that those in the business of enforcing law and order are willing to introspect and put their perceptions down on paper in fairly readable language.

K.S. Dhillon, retired from the Indian Police Service (IPS), traces the history of the Indian Police, especially under British rule, though the title of this well-written book is somewhat deceptive. It conceals the fact that there is little in the hook—an epilogue to be precise—that speaks of the current state of policing. Also, the author confines himself to India, whereas the subtitle *Ruler-Supportive Police Forces of South Asia* misleads you into believing that a larger geographical area has been covered.

Even within police ranks there is an awareness that they are part of a system that promotes crass partisanship. Policemen also understand that they operate in an atmosphere that encourages and rewards conformity, as promptly as it frowns on dissent, and insists on playing by the book. Let me hasten to set the record straight. The situation exists because of those who took charge of the police after Independence. I would go with Dhillon when he says that the ills of the Indian Police are an inheritance of our British past. It is an entirely different matter, however, when it comes to the issue of why there has been no major initiative in free India to pull the police out of the quagmire it had got into under an alien master. Dhillon's assessment of the scene is



## Defenders of the Establishment: Ruler-Supportive Police Forces of South Asia

by K.S. Dhillon  
Indian Institute of  
Advanced Study,  
Shimla, 199\_  
pp 290, INR 300  
ISBN 81 85952 52 3

reviewed by R.K. Raghavan

in tune with the popular belief that the clinically objective reports of the National Police Commission (1977)—the only national-level reform body set up since Independence to survey the world of policing—deserves a more intense scrutiny than it has been subjected to until now.

Dhillon begins with the Vedic period. A semblance of policing did exist then, as revealed by allusions in the literature of the time of functionaries such as *nagaradhyaksha* (city prefect) and *durgapal* (warden of the fort). Later, under the Mauryas, the police acquired a more formal identity. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is replete with references to officials of the state, including an urban officer called *nagarika*, later known as *kotwal* under the Mughals and the British. Rural policing was in the hands of *zamindars*, an arrangement that continued well into the days of the Raj. Unfortunately, after the Mauryan Age and right up to the Medieval Age, there is precious little information available on the state of policing.

We, however, know of a *muhtasib* under the Delhi Sultans who, according to Sir Percival Griffiths (*To Guard My People: History of the Indian Police*, 1971), was "an Inspector-General of Police, Chief Engineer of Public Works, as well as an Inspector of

Morals, all rolled into one". He depended heavily on the *kotwal* for the discharge of his police duties. No doubt the *kotwal* became very powerful and corrupt during the course of the Mughal rule.

The East India Company, and later, the British Crown, continued with the *kotwal* system. Appalled by the cruelty and dishonest practices of the lower level functionaries, especially in the villages, the Britishers unsuccessfully tried several experiments but ultimately chose to persevere with the age-old village-based policing and contented themselves with cosmetic changes. One significant reform was the introduction of the Royal Irish Constabulary model in Sindh in 1843. The 1861 Police Act saw the introduction of an analogous system in other British territories of the Subcontinent. Dhillon rightly questions why, instead of bringing in the London Metropolitan Police model, the Britishers sought to impose one that prevailed in another of its colonies. Obviously, they wanted a system that was suited to subjugating a population, rather than one which would promote better relations between the ruler and the ruled (see *box*).

The 1861 Police Act, an offspring of the 1860 Police Commission that drew up lines on what kind of police reforms were to take place under British India has been the subject of animated debate and has invited sharp criticism in police forums which demand a revamped Act for sharpening police performance. The Act's main shortcoming is the rigid rank structure it creates within the police, a feature that militates against modern concepts of management. Another aberration is the kind of supervisory authority the government has over

police work. The National Police Commission in its second report (August 1979) was extremely caustic when it said that the Act was "specifically designed to make the police totally subordinate to the executive government in the discharge of its duties. No reference was made at all to the role of the police as a servant of the law as such". Significantly, Section 23(v) of the Act says that the police are required to "obey and execute all orders and warrants lawfully issued to them by any competent authority". A draft Police Act framed by the Police Commission, which would make the police more accountable to law than to the executive, is yet to find favour with the governments both at the centre and in the states.

Dhillon is not overly confident of the ability and the willingness of the executive, and of policemen themselves, to usher in radical reforms which alone can make the system more professional and people-friendly. His views can be easily dismissed as the voice of a superannuated policeman who probably did not get all the fruits of office. There is grave danger in making such perfunctory and abrasive judgements. He is a scholar who has laboured to assemble cogently all the material otherwise consigned to the archives.

A nation that ignores history is liable to commit avoidable mistakes. But then, are only governments to blame? Not at all. A major portion of the blame for current ills probably lies at the door of police leadership, especially of the IPS variety. A well-paid corps with enormous privileges and assured career opportunities, the IPS owes it to the community to be more sensitive and law abiding. The pressure of popular opinion will have to be applied relentlessly on them for things to happen. Taking recourse to the alibi of an antiquated Police Act will not hoodwink the common people for ever. ▲

(THIS ARTICLE IS REPRINTED IN ARRANGEMENT WITH THE INDIAN REVIEW OF BOOKS, WHERE IT FIRST APPEARED.)

## Colonial cop

...the Indian Police was never meant to be a citizen-friendly agency. At no time in history was it expressly required to fulfil any role other than defending and safeguarding the ruling establishment. Its design, structure, attitudes, values, functional modes and legal backdrop were all geared to serve the government in power and maintain status quo in society. If in the process the mass of the people come to grief, so be it. The British Indian authorities merely gave it a modern shape, formalising its age-old objectives without, in the least, changing its basic character and direction. Every fresh set of reforms and changes in law and procedure created a new chasm between them and their countrymen.

An instrument of oppression is likely to lose its edge, if it is allowed to come too close or become too friendly with its possible victims. The colonial character of the police in India continued to take on more glaring contours with every fresh outburst of nationalist upsurge and agitational activity. Strangely, the requirements of economy too did not slacken and continued to block real progress and efficiency. Retrenchments effected periodically in the civilian police reduced their effective strength still further and inadequacy in numbers was sought to be made up by more brutal methods, concoction of evidence, padding, burking of crime and other undesirable practices.

Armed reserves, however, were strengthened and located and re-located at centres considered vulnerable and strategic. Emphasis on creation of armed police battalions trained on semi-military lines gained more acceptance as conditions of social stability became subject to frequent civil unrest and agitations—a trend which would survive and become even more marked after Independence of the Subcontinent in 1947, in all the three successor countries of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

From *Defenders of the Establishment*.





# QATAR AIRWAYS

# القطرية



Excellence in the sky

Four weekly flights from Kathmandu on Sunday,  
Monday, Wednesday & Friday to Doha & London  
With convenient connection to  
Middle East, Europe and USA

*2 WEEKLY FLIGHTS TO MUNICH WITH CONNECTION  
TO MAJOR CITIES IN EUROPE AND WITHIN GERMANY*

For reservations or sales enquiries, please call your Travel Agent or Qatar Airways, Kantipath, Kathmandu

Tel: 257712, 256579; Fax: 227132

GSA: Zenith Travels (P) Ltd., P.O.Box 4163, Kathmandu, Nepal Fax: +977-1-227132; Telex: 2414 Zenith Np

e-mail: Zenith@ktmpc.mos.com.np

## GET HIGH ON . . .



*Himalayan Balloning*

*Price US\$ 195 per person*

**What's included**

**Transfers, Flight Certificate &  
Sumptuous breakfast**

*Call your travel agent now or contact us directly at...*



P.O.Box. 1273, Lazimpat, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 424131, Fax: (977-1-) 424157 E-mail : balloon@sunrise.mos.com.np

Website : [www.travel.nepal.com/other/balloonsunrise](http://www.travel.nepal.com/other/balloonsunrise)



# On a gun and a prayer

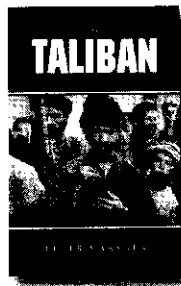
**Peter Marsden's book on the Taliban helps unravel some of the chaos in Afghanistan, and provides lessons for a Subcontinent awash in jingoism.**

After two decades of conflict, Afghans wanted peace, and some security. It was hardly surprising then, that in the October of 1994, "a small group of students from religious schools decided to rise against these leaders in order to alleviate the sufferings of the residents of Kandahar Province". There was no lack of recruits for the cause, as the Taliban marched onwards. Before the appearance of the young, fervent warriors in white turbans, a typical Taliban recruit would have been attempting to eke out an existence on a farm, and hoping that Allah or a miracle would intervene to alleviate his miseries. Put a gun and a cause in a man's hand, combine it with a promise of regular food and hope, and you have a winning combination.

The mujahidin government of the Islamic State of Afghanistan, which came to power after the Soviet troops withdrew, was itself a minority government purporting to replace the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Because of the constant power struggles within the mujahidin, they lost face with the people, especially in the Pushtun belt, leaving the way open for the Taliban to create a popular movement.

Despite the stability the Taliban brought to lawless provinces like Kandahar, they are regarded as extremists because their views on how women should live are considered radical by Western standards, and indeed by much of South Asia's. It is little consolation to a young Afghani girl who wants to grow up to build bridges and dams to know that the Taliban has banned female education until such time as a "suitable curriculum" is developed.

Their time-line depends on how



**The Taliban: War, Religion and the New Order in Afghanistan**

by Peter Marsden  
Oxford University Press, Karachi/Zed Books, London & New York, 1998  
pp x+162, PKR 395  
ISBN 1 85649 522 1

reviewed by **Patricia Herft**

quickly they can rule the entire country, because that is their primary objective. It has taken the Taliban more than four years to form an Islamic state with law and order, and they have no illusions regarding the difficulty of the venture. Their ambitions lie only within Afghanistan's borders. The movement is clearly puritanical in nature, and this has served to alienate some of the international community, mainly for its treatment of women and their obsession with destroying television sets and video tapes.

Peter Marsden's book on the Taliban helps unravel some of the chaos in Afghanistan. With clarity and precision, backed by a masterful rendering of the country's chequered history, he shows us the Taliban as they are seen by international agencies, by regional powers, by rural Afghans and urbanites in Kabul and Herat.

Drawing no great conclusions, or predictions for what lies ahead, the author presents a balanced analysis of the current situation. He discusses the divergence of perspectives on gender and other issues, both within the Taliban and the humanitarian agencies interacting with them, and shows that inconsistencies from both sides have intensified the sufferings of this

beleaguered population.

Marsden lays out very clearly the choices that humanitarian aid agencies have faced during the past few years. As Unicef did with their education programme, the aid agencies can stop their activities. Or, as Save the Children Fund (UK) did in Herat, they can suspend them. But, they can also, after expressing concern about and drawing attention to the human rights violations, continue to operate on the grounds of severe humanitarian need. There are grave implications to be drawn from each course of action. When dealing with a force like the Taliban, who are preoccupied with military matters, the aid agency needs to realise that the authorities may not particularly care whether it stays or not.

The temptation will be there, given the obvious extreme intolerance, for an agency to pull out, and divert its resources to a population which might appreciate its efforts more. But at the end of the day, if the situation is so bad that the aid agency cannot make things better for the suffering population by pulling out, then the agency should stay.

International media coverage of the situation in Afghanistan was mixed in the 1980s, they fed us a diet of simple stories of the glorious freedom fighters: the mujahidin always made it to the evening news as they mauled the Soviet army. In the early 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet government, the mujahidin became power hungry and fratricidal reactionaries. Things got more complex. Then, as often happens, the media lost interest. Now, largely due to their extremist puritanism and simple aims, the Taliban have succeeded in gaining back Afghanistan's share of inter-



national media spotlight. The Taliban have also gained all the positives and negatives that go along with increased and constant scrutiny of a conflict.

Newspapers in neighbouring South Asian countries usually report on the Taliban in one of several ways. Pakistani newspapers lament the "gun culture" that was perpetuated two decades ago by the conflict in Afghanistan and which supposedly has now turned Karachi into gangsta

paradise. They also laud the "Warriors of God" for their efforts towards changing the face of the next generation of Muslims, who will be brought up by mothers in *hejab*. Indian coverage, on the other hand, tends to exhibit a thinly veiled paranoia regarding Pakistan's supposed ambition to create an Islamic bloc which would stretch from a Taliban-controlled Afghanistan all the way to Central Asia.

Given such prejudices in report-

ing, this book becomes essential reading for media, academia and the general public. Furthermore, it is a good case study of the self-fulfilling prophecy of the "clash of civilisations". Jingoism and extremism in the Subcontinent, we now know, has an equal and opposite reaction. It is contagious and spreads across borders to polarise societies that have already enough and more problems to cope with. ▲

**Announcing . . .**

# Film South Asia '99

The second edition of the festival of South Asian documentaries  
**30 September - 3 October 1999**

Film South Asia, the competitive festival of documentary films, invites entries from filmmakers of the Subcontinent and the world. The biennial event brings together the best non-fiction films of South Asia. It provides a visible platform for new works and helps promote a sense of community among independent filmmakers. Film South Asia '99 is also committed to developing a larger audience and market for South Asian documentaries within and outside the region.

## Dates and Venue

FSA '99 will be held in Kathmandu for four days running, from 30 September to 3 October 1999 (Thursday-Sunday). Films will be screened back-to-back, and a three-member jury will announce awards at the closing ceremony. Time will be set aside for discussions following all screenings. Talk programmes and symposiums will be held concurrently.

## Criteria

Documentary films completed after 1 August 1997, if selected, will be admitted to the competitive category. (Entrants may ask not to be included

in competition.) Films made before the cut-off date will join the non-competitive category.

Entries will have to be on South Asian subjects, broadly understood. They can cover any subject in the range available to filmmakers, from people, culture, lifestyle and adventure to development, environment, politics, education, history and so on. Entries that have not been released publicly will receive priority. The filmmakers need not be South Asian.

Entry is free of cost. All entries must reach the Festival Secretariat in Kathmandu by 30 June 1999.

## Entry Forms

Contact the festival office for entry forms. Entry forms can also be downloaded from <http://www.himalmag.com/fsa>.

*For more information, contact*

Manesh Shrestha, Festival Director  
 GPO Box 7251, Kathmandu, Nepal  
 Tel: 977-1-543333/542544; Fax: 977-1-521013;  
 Email: [fsa@mos.com.np](mailto:fsa@mos.com.np).

**Film South Asia '99 is organised by Himal in association with International Television Trust for Environment (TVE).**

**ANNOUNCEMENT**

**TERMITE**, Household, garden, pests control, done by entomologist with 32 years overseas and local experience, call Salman Phone 280599.

AMS-269

**PEACOCKS** All sizes are available for sale, very low price contact 851715.

AMS-279

**WHITE WATER RAFTING**

1st time in Sri Lanka

High adrenaline adventure on the Kalani river.

Adventures Lanka (Pvt) Ltd, 17 A, Simon, Hewavittharana Road, Colombo 3, Sri Lanka. Tel: (94 74) 074 713334. Fax: 01 527961. e-mail: adventures@mail2.hankow.net

**Extraordinary will**

**Azhar Munir**

As part of my will, I have decided to donate my whole body for medical purpose. No part of it should be buried. My eyes, skin and other such organs, which can be transplanted, should be given to needy patients immediately after my death. The rest of my body may be used for medical experimental studies in a medical college or any institute.

Yet I do not know which reliable medical body or organisation I must contact for this. Also, I would like to know:

- Which organs need to be used within 24 hours, and which ones should be used or transplanted immediately after death?
- And if I die while travelling, how can those organs that need to be used immediately be preserved?
- And how to ensure that my will would be acted upon against all religious or social pressure on my family after my death?

The last part worries me the most.

Will the concerned organisations guide me on this and provide me with complete information?

**Lahore**

**Journalists asked to disseminate news truthfully**

Kathmandu, Jan. 17 (RSS): The second joint meeting of the Press Council and the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) held here with the objective of

Attract Money by Training Mind, Join **MONEY MIND** workshop

On 25th Nov 99 from 9 AM to 5 PM at Paha Shastri, Rawalpindi By International Renowned Teacher Prof. Muz Bhusan Ph. D.

Registration Available: Hotel Shalimar, Main Road, Rawalpindi Ph: 85251170. Contact: (99) 343-800000. 25th Nov. 99. 201-553-2432.com

**MOTI MAHAL**  
Cinema Rawalpindi

STARTING FROM 27TH NOVEMBER

Daily 3 Shows Saturday and Sunday 4 Shows

**Bounty Tracker**

A FILM FULL OF ACTION, THRILL AND SUSPENSE



His Majesty takes part in a "sheep race" a popular local sport in Samdrup Jongkhar.

**Free show of 'Titanic' for doctors criticised**

ISLAMABAD: Free show of 'Titanic' arranged by a multinational company Novartis Pharma Pakistan Limited (formerly Sandoz), to induce doctors for drug promotion, was unethical and unfortunate, said Health Minister Javed Hashmi.

Talking to APP on Wednesday about the booking of entire Nishat Cinema for free viewing of 'Titanic,' he said, the reported incident was surprising and stunning.

The health minister said, "I have just received a tip of the sad incident and have asked the relevant quarters to collect all details so that appropriate steps should be taken according to the Drug Act 1976. It lays down strict criteria for drug promotion and ethics."

Professor Fazal Haq criticised the MNC which had violated the Drug Act and immorally attempted to oblige doctors for seeking favour regarding prescription of their products.

He said that it was a new method of influencing doctors to get favour for prescription of their so-called magic products. "Do they use same kinds of illegal, unethical and immoral acts to promote drugs in the advanced countries?" he asked.

Dr Iran Masud said that the reported incident was not only startling but an eye-opener for the doctors, people and regulating body of the health ministry.

She said, "Why doctors who pledge to serve the ailing humanity fall prey to these pharmaceutical companies and promote their drugs irrespective of knowing their clinical trial, suitability and other required information including side-effects."

Dr Zafar Toor said the free show of 'Titanic' for doctors and their family members had served nothing but to boost their business. He said these companies were using present illegal means to earn more money from the poor countrymen.—AP

CLIPPINGS FROM THE NEWS ISLAMABAD, THE RISING NEWS KATHMANDU, EXPLORER SRI LANKA, KUENSEL, THIRUPILU.



*When everybody is talking about going international*



*we already have a head start.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOING INTERNATIONAL CANNOT BE UNDERESTIMATED. AFTER ALL THERE'S A WHOLE WORLD WAITING OUT THERE. BUT THE ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCE LIES IN MERELY TALKING ABOUT IT AND ACTUALLY DOING IT. WE AT NECON ARE PROUD TO BE NEPAL'S FIRST AND ONLY PRIVATE AIRLINE TO OPERATE INTERNATIONAL ROUTES. ALREADY LINKING PATNA WITH KATHMANDU, AND CALCUTTA WITH BIRATNAGAR, WE ARE IN THE PROCESS OF CONNECTING YOU TO VARANASI AND LUCKNOW AS WELL.

*And we're not just talking about it!*

**NECON AIR**

NECON Hamlet, Kalimatidole, Airport Area, P. O. Box 10038, Kathmandu, Nepal. Tel: 473860. Fax: (977 1) 471679

Biratnagar: Tel: (0 21) 23838/25987/25988. Calcutta: Tel: (91 33) 294958/292471. Fax: (91 33) 2450863. Patna: Tel: (91 612) 220322. Fax: (91 612) 224511

E-mail: Biratnagar: bir@necon.mos.com.np Kathmandu: resv@necon.mos.com.np Internet: www.nepalnet.com/neconair



# Like Lightning, Luck Strikes Without Warning.



**Casino  
Nepal**

Soaltee Compound  
Tahachal, Kathmandu  
Tel: 270244, Fax: (9771) 271244  
E-mail: rdt@mos.com.np

**Casino  
Anna**

Hotel de L' Annapurna  
Durbar Marg, Kathmandu  
Tel: 223479, Fax: (9771)225228  
E-mail: casanna@mos.com.np

**Casino  
Royale**

Hotel Yak & Yeti  
Durbar Marg  
Tel: 228481, Fax: (9771)223933  
E-mail: royal@mos.com.np

**CASINO  
EVEREST**

Hotel Everest  
New Baneshwor  
Tel: 488100, Fax: (9771)490284  
E-mail: everest@mos.com.np

Website: <http://www.casinosnepal.com>