

HIMAL

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June 1999

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BIKEPOWER

*The mobike mania
is on. Read all
about it inside*

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NIMBUPANI-COOL
AND REFRESHING**

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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

Indra Shrestha

Marketing

Suman Shakya

Anil Karki

Sambhu Guragain

Awadhesh K Das

Pranita Pradhan

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

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Ziauddin Ahmed Road

Karachi-74200

Tel: +92-21-567 0081

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Contributors to this issue

Ashis Nandy is a New Delhi-based psychologist and political scientist.

Bhaskar Menon, aka **Papa Menon**, went from *The Statesman* to the United Nations, where he worked as an editor, wrote speeches for two Secretaries-General and authored several books. He quit the UN a decade ago to put out an independent newsletter covering the organisation, *International Documents Review*. At present he also edits *Disarmament Times*.

C.Y. Gopinath is, so writes Jug Suraiya in his weekly column, a writer, explorer, accomplished chef, restaurateur, self-taught musician, advertising man, promoter of AIDS awareness, master of mimicry and masquerade, and much else besides, which includes being the author of a book called *Travels with the Fish*.

Dipak Gyawali is an engineer/economist and member of the Royal Nepal Academy of Science and Technology.

Dubby Bhagat looks after the sales and marketing department of the Everest Hotel, Kathmandu.

Edward Said, well-known cultural theorist, is author of *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*.

Jug Suraiya is a senior editor with *The Times of India*.

Khaled Ahmed is the consulting editor of *The Friday Times*, Lahore.

Mark Turin is associated with the Himalayan Languages Project of Leiden University in the Netherlands, where he is writing a grammar of the hitherto undescribed Tibeto-Burman language, Thami, spoken in the eastern hills of Nepal.

Paramjit Rai is finishing a DPhil on representations of women in Partition narratives at the University of Sussex.

Rajendra S. Khadka graduated from St Xavier's School, Kathmandu, in 1973. He is the editor of *Travellers' Tales Nepal* (Travelers' Tales Inc, 1998).

Rehan Ansari is a Lahore-based feature writer for the Internet magazine, *Chowk*.

Tri Pradhan is a computer professional from New York.

Zaigham Khan is a Lahore correspondent for *Herald*, Karachi.

Nuclear physicist and peace activist **Zia Mian** teaches at Princeton University.

Cover shows the last issue (13-26 August 1977) of *JS*. The photograph by **Taiyab Badshah** taken 22 years ago is still very contemporary.

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Sweden			Empatum AB, Box 26159, 100 41 Stockholm. Fax: +46-8-141088
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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			Suedasien-Büro, Redaktion 'Suedasien', Grosse Heimstr. 58, 44137 Dortmund. Tel: +49-231-136 633
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More to Sri Lanka than...

It was with interest I read the Himal issue on Sri Lanka (April 1999), in which your contributors have touched on many aspects of the pain that Sri Lankans have gone through and continue to experience. However, I find a problem with the focus of all the articles.

From the magazine, one would think that the only thing Sri Lankans do is engage in different forms of violence from election violence to civil war. Perhaps that is what we do best! But amidst all this turmoil, many people also try to lead a normal life. For instance, as a practising artist and sculptor, I practise my profession in spite of the violence. Often my own work and that of many other younger artists are reactions to violence, without using violence itself.

It is interesting to note that the recent revival in the visual arts in Sri Lanka has taken place against the backdrop of worsening inter-ethnic relations and the entrenchment of institutionalised hostilities between the Sri Lankan government forces and the Tamil guerrillas. Similarly, writers write, robbers rob, lovers fall in and out of love. All the time, the kind of political calamities and conflicts that your magazine has discussed also continue.

The point is that many of us still have not lost our humanity, which is why we may still have some hope regardless of the visionless politics of our leaders. I suggest that the next time you do a special issue on Sri Lanka, you also focus on these reservoirs of hope, the ordinary routine activities that make it possible for people to live amidst chaos.

Anoli Perera
Colombo

• It seems to me that you have given adequate attention in your special issue on Sri Lanka to those matters that are directly linked to the politics of violence in Sri Lanka. However, the articles failed to place in context the consequences of this war for the future. For it is in the future that the real chaos of Sri Lanka lies.

Consider the following: universi-

ties have lost their best academics to the West, the IQ levels of those who enter politics have steadily fallen, corruption in public life has been routinised, violence has become a pastime, and the list goes on and on. And just what will happen to all those individuals in the military, police, Tamil terrorist (or militant!) groups and the numerous gangs maintained by politicians, if the war and other kinds of violence in the country ends tomorrow? There will be so many people with a training to kill and with very low regard for human life roaming our streets.

If Sri Lankans do not address these issues and if the media does not highlight them, the end of violence when it happens may not mean the light at the end of the tunnel. It may in fact mean that the train is coming towards you, with the nation's children stuck in the tunnel.

Chanaka Weeratunge
Colombo

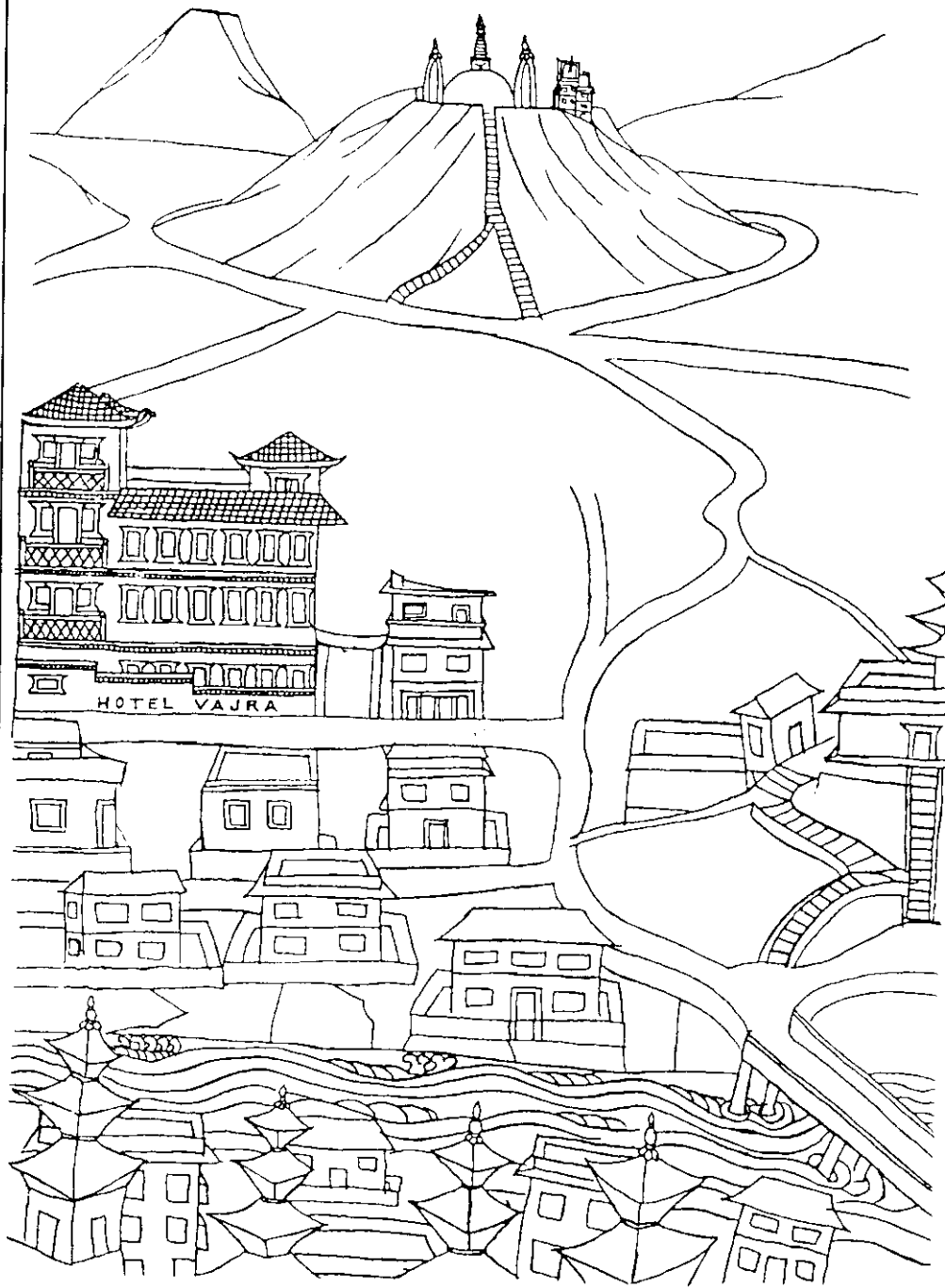


Not scientists

As an analyst of the Himalayan scene, and the mountain scene in general for over three decades, I find the letters to the editor (March 1999) from three members of NGOs or consultancies who criticise my review of *Mountains of the World: A Global Priority* (printed in Himal, September 1998) to be wide off the mark. Jack Ives and Bruno Messerli, the self-styled president and vice-president of their International Mountain Society, and Larry Hamilton of his highlands consultancy like to see themselves as "scientists" of mountains. Rather than deal with the irrelevant minutiae of their complaints, let me address their distorted gaze of the mountain scene.

Over the years I have come to believe that mountain folk are perfectly capable of ordering their own lives and creating their own productive landscapes without the intrusion of international busybodies, especially Europeans. If I have a personal agenda that is "destructive", as Ives and Messerli claim, it is to illuminate and destroy the social construction of hazard and disaster,





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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

Vajra, a serene assembly of brick buildings, grassy courtyards, ivy-covered walls and Hindu statuary is a calm oasis over looking, chaotic Kathmandu.

Time, February '99



in Kathmandu, the Vajra

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in mountains that has pervaded their work for decades. There is, however, a much larger issue at work here.

While Ives, Messerli and Hamilton — all biophysical scientists with expertise in Alpine geomorphology and forestry — might stand to gain financially from their advocacy of a global priority for mountain studies through the largesse of UN funding, their “science” of “Stability-Instability” in mountains or their “Theory of Environmental Degradation” is simply a contemporary social construction, or, worse yet, the environmental determinism of the 1920s. Whose science are we talking about? We are not talking about any debate of the legitimacy of plasma physics here, for example; we are talking about how three lowlanders from the West and their like-minded brethren view mountains and their populations. This is environmental perception by humans, not science.

All across the Himalaya there is abundant material in all the countries to provide some meta-analysis of what is going on in mountains. Ives, Messerli, and Hamilton have neglected it. If there is a problem in mountains today, it is a problem of politics, first, and secondly, economics, especially in the feeble macroeconomic policies at the nation-state level.

I recently started a talk about one place in the Himalaya, Himachal Pradesh — a relative “success” — by quoting from Marx (not Karl, but Groucho). He reportedly asked a woman, “How’s your husband?” to which she replied, “Compared to what?” Ives, Messerli and Hamilton need to spend more time in the field, not in gallivanting to international conferences, to learn that other places are worse off than mountain people and environments.

Anyone for Bihar?

*Nigel J. R. Allan
Truckee, California*

Guinness Everest

The month of May saw a remarkable juxtaposition of events on Everest: the discovery of George Leigh Mallory’s

body 75 years after he and his companion, Andrew Irvine, disappeared into the clouds high on the North face; 15-year-old Nepali climber Arvin Timilsina’s attempt to be the youngest person to climb it; and another Nepali, Babu Chhiri Sherpa’s endurance record of 21 hours on the summit.

What has changed in 75 years? Climbers now race up and down in a day, parachute, ski, or camp on the top. Base camp has become an international city with dozens of expeditions attempting the climb. Where once an elite few on national expeditions vied for the summit, there is now a worldwide growth in high



Arvin and Babu.

risk sports with thousands of potential Everest climbers.

In the early days, mountaineers brought the news down from the mountains themselves and the public might eventually get to see a slide lecture or read an official expedition account. Now email, satellite phones and light-weight video cameras bring the most poignant and immediate news to an insatiable public. The combination of money, instant fame and the life-or-death machismo on a glamorous mountain is a heady one.

It looks like a circus and one can almost hear the pundits and old-timers groaning at more attention seeking and record setting, and wishing for the good old days when climbers were reluctant heroes and an expedition had the mountain to itself.

Since Mallory’s answer of “because it’s there” to the quintessential question “why do you climb Everest?”, how much has changed in the mountaineers’ motivation? Though it may seem that time has diluted the purity of what goes on, it

still takes great skill, courage and commitment to risk one’s life on the big mountains. There may be a huge difference in the clothing worn by Mallory and the high-tech fabrics of the modern mountaineer, but I believe that the motivation remains unchanged. Certainly, they experience the same degree of risk and uncertainty when the wind picks up and the temperature plummets.

When young Arvin turned back from just below the summit, his sense of disappointment would have been as keen as any pre-war mountaineer giving up high on the mountain. Youthful dreams and aspirations are the stuff of life. However, there are concerns. If more and more young people are going to attempt the climb, sooner or later some child mountaineer is going to die. Perhaps it is time to consider a minimum age limit for expeditioners.

Babu Chhiri’s incredible achievement, unthinkable a few years ago, extends our knowledge of the limits of human physiology. Though no measurements were taken, just the fact that he survived 21 hours at such an altitude tells us that at least it is possible. It would be interesting to know if Babu used supplementary oxygen during his stay and if anyone intends to check him for possible brain damage.

One thing we can be sure of is the slopes of Everest will be the scene of even more acts of individual derring-do as human ingenuity and thirst for adventure spur them on. If Mallory had been around to see the action now, would he have laughed or cried? The paradox for the explorer is that his love of the remote destroys the very thing he cherishes by paving the way for others to follow.

*James MacGregor Duff
Repton, NSW, Australia*

(Jim Duff, MD, was on Chris Bonnington’s 1975 ascent of Everest by the southwest face and in 1984 he was on the Australian ascent of the North face of Everest and made the first crossing of the North Col.)

DIPENDRA BAURACHARYA

COURTESY: NARESH SHRESTHA

NEPAL

VOTER POWER

The first surprise was the turnout. About 65 percent of Nepal's 13.5 million voters cast ballots in the country's general elections held this May. Conventional wisdom was that since Nepalis were fed up with non-performance and corruption, incited by a Maoist boycott and threats of violence, and uninspired by an issue-less campaign, they would stay away from the booths in large numbers.

Instead, the turnout was as high as in the last elections five years ago. Not only that, Nepali voters surprised everyone by showing more maturity in their collective judgement than the politicians they had elected. They decided that the Nepali Congress will form a majority government, and the Communist Party of Nepal United Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) will provide the main opposition.

Another surprise was the rejection of many of the old faces in all parties who had been associated with horse-trading and various other scandals. Voters also rejected linguo- or ethno-opportunist politicians bent on promoting their own brand of narrow communalism, such as 'independent' communist Padma Ratna Tuladhar and Hindi protagonist Gajendra Narayan Singh, who has been minister in every horse-traded coalition cabinet of the second parliament. Singh's defeat (along with Bam Dev Gautam's, of whom more below) was a sign that Nepali voters do not buy pro- or anti-Indian arguments. They have their own national worries aplenty.

The biggest surprise of all, however, was the complete decimation of the Communist Party of Nepal Marxist-Leninist (CPN-ML). A similar fate met the Lokendra Bahadur Chand faction of the rightist Rashtriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), known as a party of "all chiefs and no Indians". The CPN-ML separated from the parent CPN-UML in 1998, while the RPP (Chand) broke away from the Surya Bahadur Thapa faction of the party of the same name. Neither won a single seat in the 205-member House of Representatives.

One reason for the CPN-ML rout was that its leadership was not able to explain to the people why it went for a split. The party's strongman

Bam Dev Gautam had tried to push a draconian "anti-terrorist" pro-police bill directed at quelling the Maoist insurgency when he was deputy prime minister and home minister in Chand's short-lived government. And then, there he was in the election campaign projecting himself and his party as ideologically close to the Maoists—with the hope of pulling pro-Maoist sympathy votes. But neither the voters nor the Maoists fell for it.

After the split, the CPN-ML had also tried to distance itself from the "Pajero scandal" by requiring its MP's to surrender the luxury vehicles they, along with MP's of other parties, had imported duty free without disclosing their source of income. This late attempt at party purification ended in a farce, leaving the voters to turn to known older devils rather than to sanctimonious new ones.

A constant refrain during the poll campaign had been that a hung parliament and small parties prone to horse-trading are the cause of all ills. This seems to have turned voters away from smaller parties and independents in favour of large potential winners. Major exceptions were two extreme left parties which did much better than the last time, and together managed to send six vociferous comrades to the new House of Representatives.

Before the split in the CPN-UML, the communists were the largest party in the second parliament and had even formed a minority government for nine months in 1994-1995. It is widely believed that, had they remained united (and relatively clean), they could have formed a majority government this time around. After the split—a result of personality clashes, differences over the Mahakali Treaty with India and spoils of office as well as arcane Marxist hairsplitting—the two groups spent all their energies in fratricidal warfare instead of challenging their real opponent, the Nepali Congress.

As a public radio commentator saw it, both communists came out winners in this election. The CPN-ML's real objective was to prevent the CPN-UML from winning the elections, in which it succeeded admirably by dividing the left vote and allowing the Congress its margin of victory in close contests. The CPN-UML, in turn, was only interested in decimating the CPN-ML, which it has done with brilliance.

Nurtured in the underground egalitarian comradeship of secrecy and conspiracies, the Nepali Left is having a difficult time adjusting to the dynamics of parliamentary practices and the open polity of mass-based democratic upsurges. The erstwhile underground comrades seem unable to accept another communist as a



Bhattarai celebrates.

MIN. BALBACHARYA

senior in the overground party hierarchy without feeling a threat of annihilation. An underground culture is also a poor school to teach the virtues of accommodation and compromise, with the result that the slightest difference of opinion is magnified into a global ideological warfare with no prisoners taken.

For a change, the Nepali Congress was able to present a united front after Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala announced that he would campaign to have his main rival in the party, Krishna Prasad Bhattarai, as the next prime minister. So far, Koirala has stuck to his promise, although the experience of the past leaves voters suspicious that dormant fratricidal tendencies among the supporters of the two will break into the open once the fish and loaves of office begin to be distributed.

This was essentially an issue-less election, and there are several big challenges in the days ahead that will strain the cohesion of the ruling and opposition parties as well as the future of parliamentary democracy in Nepal. The Congress has to stay relatively united and disciplined to actually deliver some development to the people, and the CPN-UML should provide an effective parliamentary opposition taking all the other opposition parties of the right and the left along with it.

A reason for nervousness and impatience in the opposition benches will be the high cost of elections that has just been completed. Based on public admissions by candidates in previous elections, a candidate of a major party spends at least a million rupees in his or her constituency. This amounts to more than 200 million rupees (USD 3 million) countrywide per major party, and this is a conservative estimate. While it can be waggishly argued that this is a more effective socialist wealth re-distribution programme than mentioned in any of the party manifestoes, there is still a need to replenish the party coffers for the next round.

The CPN-UML may find it very difficult to be content with staying in the opposition benches for five years with little chance of meeting those internal needs. It will also have few perks to deliver to its restless and expectant supporters. The Congress, with its hands in the till, could do better but not much more so. Issues of governance and past neglect will haunt it. Predictably, the opposition will be tempted to make political capital out of every lapse and if it manages this with savvy, even if its coffers may not match the ruling party's, the next time around the CPN-UML may get its chance to sit on the hot seat. ▲

— *Dipak Gyawali*

PAKISTAN

TACKLING CIVIL COMMOTION

The Nawaz Sharif government has armed itself with yet another imaginative law, enabling it to declare virtually any Pakistani a terrorist. Under the new Anti-Terrorist (Amendment) Ordinance promulgated on 27 April as a presidential decree, "...go slows, lock-outs...distributing publishing or pasting of a handbill or making a graffiti or wall-chalking intended to create unrest or fear or create a threat to the security of law and order or to incite the commission of (certain) offence(s)...", all fall under the term "civil commotion", the punishment for which is up to seven years' rigorous imprisonment or fine, or both.

The new law is the latest in a series of ventures undertaken by the Pakistan Muslim League government to impose 'quick justice' on the hapless nation. Almost obsessed with the idea of "justice at the doorstep", the prime minister of Pakistan has been systematically introducing quick-fixes to the judicial system despite the many setbacks he has suffered.

Soon after coming to power, Sharif began holding a Moghul-style open court outside his Lahore residence where he listened to people's complaints every Sunday and passed urgent orders. The images of a benevolent ruler directly dispensing justice to the masses were given much play by the official electronic media even as newspapers carried stories of miserable people who could not get justice even after travelling hundreds of kilometres, sometimes spending fortunes. However, the prime minister soon lost interest in his court and after a desperate supplicant committed suicide by setting himself ablaze in front of his residence, the court was shifted to another area where it continues under the supervision of a provincial legislator as a mere ghost of its earlier magnificence.

Next, in September 1997, came the introduction of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), which aimed to provide speedy justice in terrorism-related incidents. Cases, mainly involving activists of ethnic parties in Karachi and sectarian groups in Punjab, had been dragging on in the courts for years. Neither did the police seem interested in serious investigations, nor were the judges keen on dispensing with these cases, arguably for fear of reprisals. Sharif said that "the terrorists are either released on bail or acquitted" and declared that he wanted such cases to be decided

within hours. However, instead of reforming the investigating agencies or the judiciary, he used the Act to set up a parallel system of justice which led to a serious conflict with the superior judiciary that resulted in the storming of the Supreme Court building by activists of the ruling party and finally in the ouster of the chief justice in early 1998.

Sharif succeeded in setting up his favourite anti-terrorist courts (ATCs). Sixteen such courts were set up in Sindh and Punjab provinces and more than 1500 cases were referred to them, including a murder case against opposition leader Benazir Bhutto's husband, Asif Ali Zardari.

In more than a year and a half of working, these courts have decided only 400 cases. However, most of these decisions have been overturned by the superior courts. It is more than obvious that even the ATCs are helpless, relying, as they have to, on investigations carried out by the extremely criminalised, politicised and corrupt police force.

Then, in December 1998, Sharif came up with an even more ingenious solution to the problem of law and order. The

Armed Forces (Acting in Aid of Civil Power) Ordinance 1998 was promulgated to set up military courts to hear cases of civilian nature. Legal experts reminded the government that military courts were normally established either during martial law or after wars to deal with war crimes and cannot be considered as a substitute to ordinary courts under a democratic dispensation. But Sharif seemed convinced that the norms of justice and civil society must be suspended if the

worsening law and order problem was to be brought under control. A number of military courts were set up in Karachi which gave verdicts on numerous cases, including a death sentence to a 13-year-old boy.

On 17 February 1999, the Supreme Court dealt a big blow to Sharif when a nine-member bench of the court unanimously declared that setting up military courts to try civilians was unconstitutional and without lawful authority. The court also provided a mechanism for speedy trial of the cases relating to terrorism by way of which the government was to amend an earlier Anti-Terrorist Ordinance and come up with a new law to set up a new brand of speedy trial courts that were to work under the supervision of the higher judiciary. But while promulgating the latest law—the Anti-Terrorist (Amendment) Ordinance—the government ignored many of the Supreme Court's directives.

It is clear that the law, especially with the definition provided for "civil commotion", can be misused by the government to tame the unruly opposition. Legal experts say the Ordinance has been so loosely drafted that important terms such as "internal disturbance" and "intended to violate law" is open to the most subjective interpretation by state functionaries. Said Abid Hasan Manto, president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, "It brings all legitimate political and trade union activity into definition of civil commotion and thus invades fundamental rights of the citizens."

Political parties have unanimously opposed the law and the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami even held an all-party conference against its promulgation. Former president Farooq Leghari declared: "It is a black law aimed at crushing the opposition and establishing one-party rule in the country." An editorial in the English daily *Dawn* stated that the law was "in some ways more draconian in sweep than the martial law order and regulations which were aimed at suppressing political activities."

The law is open to challenge in the Supreme Court, a recourse which has yet to be considered seriously by political parties, human rights organisation or the ordinary people. But there is always the possibility that judicial intervention may once again provoke another row with the government. This can only lead to further damage to the judiciary which has already received almost irreparable damage at the hands of a government bent on destroying all democratic institutions.

—Zaigham Khan



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As sure as taking it there yourself



At a time when Marshal MacLuhan was talking about the global village, when *Rolling Stone* began publishing in America, *Melody Maker* started coming out in England and *Time-Out* happened in London, in Calcutta there was JS.

THE WORLD'S O

JS, or *Junior Statesman*, as it was first called, was the brainchild of Evan Charlton, the last British editor of *The Statesman*. Charlton's idea was to catch the readers early by inculcating brand loyalty towards *The Statesman* at a young age. For this he needed a youth magazine and to start it, he got hold of another Britisher—Desmond Doig.

At that time, Desmond was doing a number of things. He was a roving reporter. He was on a freewheeling assignment through India doing what he wanted. He used to head towards Nepal quite often. He was with Sir Edmund Hillary on the famous yeti-hunting expedition of 1960-61. And around the time JS was being thought of, he was doing a book of sketches on Calcutta.

Desmond was the perfect choice for JS. He was the ultimate renaissance man. He could paint as well as he could write as well as he could design. He did a number of things with equal fluency. He was a charming raconteur and a wit. He had a degree of humanity and compassion about him that drew people to him and with which he bound the magazine and all who worked in it with hoops of loyalty.



I was the first to join JS, in the sense that I was the first to join the team that brought out JS. I met Desmond for the first time in the corridors of the Statesman building. I was then a management trainee and 'in circulation', wandering around from floor to floor when I saw this florid Englishman who



This was the coming of age of Indian youth, a joining of hands across many oceans, an anthem of the young all over the world wanting to be heard. Dubby Bhagat recounts here the rise and fall of JS.

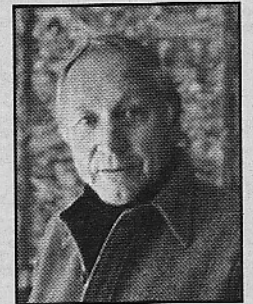
BEST TEENAGERS



started a magazine in college—St Xavier's, Calcutta. So, Papa was second in. I also wanted my best friend who I thought was a brilliant writer because we had written a book of poems together. This was Jug Suraiya.

Jug used to drink late into the night and get up equally late, which obviously was not good enough for us. So I conspired with his mother to get him to work with us. Jug thus became first a reluctant, then a very enthusiastic, member of the JS. That was the original JS team: Desmond, Papa, Jug and myself.

We used to operate out of Desmond's room. In fact the first issue was brought out of this office. Even afterwards, we would still meet in that office but it so happened that we ended up eating all of Desmond's lunch and he began getting thinner. So he asked for a larger space and we got a mezzanine floor in the Statesman building, an area soon to be filled with the most remarkable



*Renaissance man:
Desmond Doig*

talent that Calcutta and India had to offer, bringing out a magazine the like of which has not been seen since.

When we first started out, Desmond was in his mid-40s and the rest of us just out of college in our 20s. The initial issues after we began publishing in February 1967 were

stopped me and said, "I say, do you know anyone who would like to help me to start a youth magazine?"

"Yes. Me."

"Do you know anyone else who would be interested?"

And I thought of Papa Menon who had

aimed at a much younger audience—10 to 12-year-olds. This was in keeping with the dictates of Evan Charlton but Desmond soon changed its course and in about six months, we were bringing out the magazine people remember as *JS*. Desmond wanted a magazine for the young, about the young, by the young and that is what it turned out to be.

In a sense, *JS* was a coming of age of Indian youth, a joining of hands across many oceans, an anthem of the young all over the world wanting to be heard. It was the time when Marshal McLuhan was talking about the global village. It is no coincidence that *JS* came out at the same time the *Rolling Stone* began publishing in the US, the same time *Melody Maker* started coming out in England, the time when *Time-Out* happened in London. There was a renaissance of youthful ideas the world over and *JS* was there at the right time.

The late 60s urban Indian society was made up of children and adults. There was nothing in between. We, at *JS*, invented the Indian teenager, and it's an invention that has lasted all these years. This is the 'khadi curtain' age we're talking about, a time when India was completely insulated from the outside world. We were the first vehicle to

go global and were constantly accused of being pro-Western or bringing in 'disgusting' Western influences.

Those were very restrictive days. Partition was still a fresh memory. We'd just got rid of the British and here was a Britisher who was leading a magazine that was immensely popular and immensely outspoken. A magazine that said that jeans were all right, that the teenager had a place in society outside the family; a magazine that preached fun and preached identity, and everyone we were aiming at accepted that, but like I said, there was also rearguard action against us. It was a difficult time in that respect but it was also a joyous time.

We were addressing ourselves to those who had aspirations beyond their milieu, not necessarily a Western milieu but something beyond their immediate background. We began by appealing to the intellectual young person and then eventually to the intellectual in the young person to whom we said: "Look! There is more to life than mere studies. Studies do have a purpose but only to help you achieve many facets of what we're writing about." And we certainly covered a lot of ground. We wrote about science, we wrote about Mother Teresa, we wrote about Sir Edmund Hillary, adventure in Africa, the great outdoors, everything under the sun. That is where the magazine's intellectual and physical sustenance came from: variety and a constant search for newness.

For example, in my field, which was music, we would review the very latest from the West. We were the first in India to put the then ground-breaking Beatles' Sgt Pepper's on the cover and review it extensively. We got opinions from authorities in America and England and India. Among other things, we looked at the whole big band thing that had come in. And when flower power arrived, we were there writing about it.

But *JS* was anything but escapist. We represented the mass, not a subsection of the youth. Take the example of drugs. Those were times when doing drugs was really hep, but apart from the occasional pot smoked, no one at *JS* was really into

YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND

This column is to help you sort out your personal problems with a very special friend—Zeenat Aman.

Don't write to Zeenat direct; send your letters to "You've got a friend", *JS*, 4 Chowringhee Square, Calcutta-700001. Zeenat says she's sorry, but she cannot possibly reply to letters except on this page.



- Q. I want to become a racing driver in the States, but my parents are against it. Don't bother to tell me about the risks I'm taking in life, just give me a place where I can get a bit of information about racing.
- A. Okay, I won't harp on what's obviously a very sore point; but can you really blame your parents for wanting to see their son safe? Contact the Automobile Association in your area, or a motor sports club, if there is one—they might be able to help.
- Q. I want to join the Air Force or Indian Airlines. But will they accept an Arts graduate?
- A. Well, I suppose that depends on the kind of job you're after. Write to the Directorate of Personnel, Air Headquarters, New Delhi, for details regarding the Air Force; to the Personnel Manager, Indian Airlines, New Delhi for I.A.
- Q. I'm an Afghan boy studying in Dehra Dun. I'm in love with a Hindu girl and want to marry her, but I'm not sure she feels the same way. Besides her parents don't want to give their daughter to a foreigner. What should I do?
- A. Well, first, ask the girl outright whether she really does want to marry you. If she says yes, face the parents together. It's understandable they're a bit wary of your friendship with their daughter: you're from a different country and religion; and, since you're still studying, not able to support a wife, I'm sure they will be most understanding. If you can convince them you're serious about each other and prepared to wait till you're more settled.
- Q. Being of marriageable age, I received an offer about 10 months ago. The family came to visit me and showed interest, and so did the boy initially, though nothing was finalized because, we were told, he couldn't make up his mind. Since then things have been hanging fire. I like this boy a lot and feel he is interested in me, but I wish I could find out the real reason for his hesitation. Would you advise me to ask my father to write to his father to let the boy come down here so that we can clear all misunderstandings, or shall I just forget about it all?
- A. Yes, your suggestion's a good one; it could be that he's hesitating to marry a girl he scarcely knows. But of course you must be prepared for the possibility that he doesn't want to marry anyone just yet and that's the real reason behind the hold-up. Either way, it's best to get the whole thing cleared up, isn't it?
- Q. The way my fiance behaves when other girls are around I think I'm going to lose him. He's always flirting with girls, most of whom have better figures than I. How can I improve my figure?
- A. It's not your figure that's the problem, it's your fiance's behaviour that needs improving. What good's a relationship that hinges on the size of a girl's figure?
- Q. I'm in love with a relative of mine and feel I can't live without her. We meet only once or twice a year, but she knows I'm crazy about her. But I still don't know her feelings. When we're apart I make up my mind to ask her, but when we meet if I ask her anything it will make her annoyed. I don't care about the parents' problem or other social problems. I will overcome all that. So just suggest something to lead us to marriage in a few years.
- A. First of all, what is the relationship? And why should there be parent and social problems? You might brush them aside, but she might not, and quite justifiably, too. There is only one suggestion I can give: pluck up courage and ask her how she feels. Whether she says yes or no it will be the end of your uncertainty. If she says yes, tackle those problems together; if she says no accept it gracefully and don't go into a decline.

Zeenat



Images that accompany the cover articles in this issue are all taken from *JS*.

drugs. It was firmly grounded in reality. But there was a difference – it was projecting into the future. Look at the last *JS* cover (shown on the cover of this magazine). That is what the Indian teenager looks like today, but we put him on the cover back in the 70s.

We were fortune-telling in a way. And it affected a lot of people, not only our original target audience of the middle classes. There was a trickle-down effect, or trickle-up effect, depending on how you looked at it. We discovered that each magazine was read by seven people at least. Desmond used to say that *JS* was a magazine for the young of all ages, and so it was. We had letters to the editor even from grandmothers and grandfathers.

We were breaking new territory, and our only influence was in fact, what people accused us of, the West. To keep in touch with what was happening in the rest of the world, we had every possible magazine coming to us and we saw all kinds of films, both Western and Indian. But we adapted the ideas to Indian tastes. Even then we were far ahead of time.

Take the kind of stories we did. C.Y. Gopinath was the man on the street. He did incredible things. He used to dress up in different guises and write about his experiences. Once he dressed up as a sheikh, went to Bombay and bribed a hospital into emptying itself on the promise that he would fill it up with his relatives. He actually wrote about it.

Papa Menon was also a trenchant street reporter. He started a very good series called "We Took 10" and he'd take 10 filmmakers or 10 Naxalites or 10 whatever and do short interviews with them. **N o n d o n** Bagchi did

something similar. We had contributors from all over. Anurag Mathur and Sunil Sethi covered Delhi. Ivan Costa, who now writes in Canada, did Bombay as the chief there before I took over. I, of course, did a rock column and other articles.

We did not stick to the same thing only, however. I did music but that did not stop me from interviewing Mother Teresa. Desmond saw to it. That was his way of grooming us into being writers as against subject-oriented specialists. We were writers. We were that rare breed.

Desmond's compassion was incredible. Jug wanted to go to London and when he did get there, Desmond kept him writing from there even while he was doing his own thing. Amongst other things, Jug worked at Harrod's but he was writing for *JS* all the time.

When it was my turn in London, I worked for the advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson, but I also did articles for *JS* from there. This was the way we travelled and saw the places we wanted to see. It was all through Desmond we got to these places and once there, he opened doors for us.

Our editorial meetings were full of laughter, full of fun. These were held in Desmond's office. Ideas were thrown around and knocked down by each other. Of course, Desmond had the right of veto, but he seldom used it. What he did in fact do was elaborate the idea. Say, one said, 'Let's do London very soon'. He'd say, 'Sure but remember we have to cover Carnaby Street in London'. Or, 'Let's do fashion'. Then someone else would say, 'In that case we must do San Francisco, and a flower power issue.' Stories

JS columnist
Zeenat Aman.



THE FAMILY JS



JS PEOPLE had Calcutta ties but there were also people from all over India writing for us. India was represented right across the board, but it was a different kind of India—a younger, brighter, international India.

There were people like C.Y. Gopinath, and there was Deb Mahalobis, who used to bunk his school, La Martiniere, to come and paint for us. There was Ratan Pradhan, and there was Louis Godhino who did psychedelic painting. Deb is now settled and very famous in the US. Louis is in Dubai with his own design studio. There was Shadon Banerjee, nicknamed Charlie. He was Desmond's deputy—a short, round, tubby fellow who always looked very happy. There was a girl called Julie de Santos who used to come in and hand him articles for a column called "Just Fings". They fell in love and got married and she is now Julie Banerjee and they are both in Australia, and Charlie is working in a very senior position in a newspaper there.

There was Nondon Bagchi, who was a drummer for a band as well as a brilliant writer. He is now with yet another band and teaches mathematics. There was Anurag Mathur who was a regular contributor. He has since written books and articles. His first book was a very wry look at America, *The Inscrutable Americans*. Sunil Sethi was our Delhi bureau chief. Sunil now has his own television programme.

There was young M.J. Akbar who used to contribute a lot and many years later, returned the favour by asking Desmond, when he was living in Kathmandu, to contribute to *The Telegraph* and *Sunday*, which Akbar was editing. And now he has asked me too to contribute to his present paper *The Asian Age*.

Kofi Annan's right hand, Shashi Tharoor, was another regular. Shashi's father was the advertising manager for *The Statesman*. Shashi was still very young when he started a series with a character called Reginald Bellows who was a spy, and Jug used to edit him. I was in New York last year and I rang Shashi's office up and his secretary told me he was on a long-distance line and asked who was speaking. I said, "Reginald Bellows." Shashi dropped the other line at once and spoke to me. There was a bonding that still exists among JS people.

There were people like Taiyab Badshah who is now a famous photographer in Bombay. Patranobis, who is now the chief photographer of *The Statesman*. Another photographer, Raghu Rai, is, of course, more well-known.

Utpal Sengupta joined as writer-cum-head of the then fledgling JS design studio. Utpal was a go-getter and he got us various accounts. We got movie publicity advertising and poster designing. The "Heera Panna" and the "Ishk, Ishk, Ishk" posters were done by us. We designed shirts. The JS design studio even designed and executed the coronation of King Jigme Singye Wangchuk of Bhutan. We did the collateral for the coronation of the present king of Nepal and devoted an issue of JS to the festivities.

Today Utpal is vice-president of the Shangrila Group of Companies in Kathmandu, and just recently designed

the Shangrila Village in Pokhara. One would like to think there is a little of Desmond in him.

JS was revolutionary in many other ways. Besides the JS studio, we used to have what were called JS happenings all over India where film stars for example would come and perform for us. People such as Rajesh Khanna and the young Amitabh Bachchan would fly over and do skits, dance, songs. Or we'd have a vintage car rally or stage an original play. They were all, all, JS happenings.

In the magazine itself, we had Zeenat Aman writing a column for us, a sort of agony-aunt column. Simi did a beauty column and Rekha did something else. It was a very full paper. The masthead said it was a magazine that thinks young and that is what we strove for. Our layout artist was Ratan Pradhan and between he and Desmond, they made sure that the layout contained as much movement as possible, to reflect the content.

There was Bimal and Nikhil. Nikhil used to work with Desmond in *The Statesman* drawing advertisements. Bimal was a brilliant artist who came to Kathmandu after JS folded up. Desmond, Utpal, Kalyan and I designed Malla Hotel and Hotel Shangrila. The whole renaissance man thing cannot be removed from Desmond.

Then there was the larger JS family which had in it people like Indira Gandhi, Edmund Hillary, Mother Teresa and singer Ajit Singh and a host of others who all supported us morally even after JS closed down. They kept an eye on us, looked after us, mentored us.

Working with Desmond we all became mentor-oriented in two senses of the word. We searched for mentors and in our own strange ways, we became mentors. Jug, for example, mentors (which is a new management term) the editorial page people of *The Times of India*. In a way, his mentor is Sameer Jain, owner of *The Times of India*, who he thinks is a genius. I myself have found unconditional acceptance and love which I reciprocate to the Laris who own the Everest Hotel in Kathmandu where I work and where I have a small department of sales people to whom I am devoted to and try and mentor. And so it moves through all of us. Shashi Tharoor mentoring the whole of the UN...

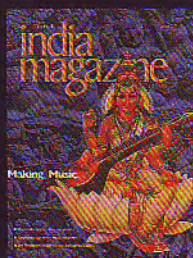
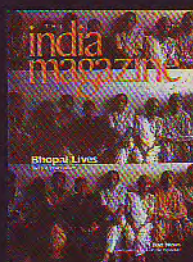
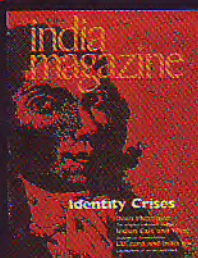
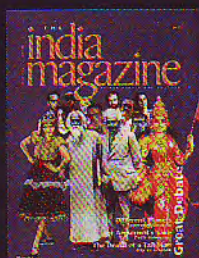
Some years ago was published *My Kind of Kathmandu*, Desmond's tribute to the city where he lived the last years of his life. There are still 150 Desmond watercolours waiting to be made into a book on Delhi, the working title of which is *These Moving Stones*, named so because one city of Delhi gave way to build another city. There are still Desmond's sketches of Goa, and there is still Desmond's biography to be told. There is still the possibility of someone bringing out another JS for another millennium. In that sense, JS will live on, as it does in the minds of the generation that moves and shakes India today.

Legends like the JS don't die, they rest, only to rise phoenix-like from the ashes of our memory.



—Dubby Bhagat

Columbus didn't read it you should



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literary south asia

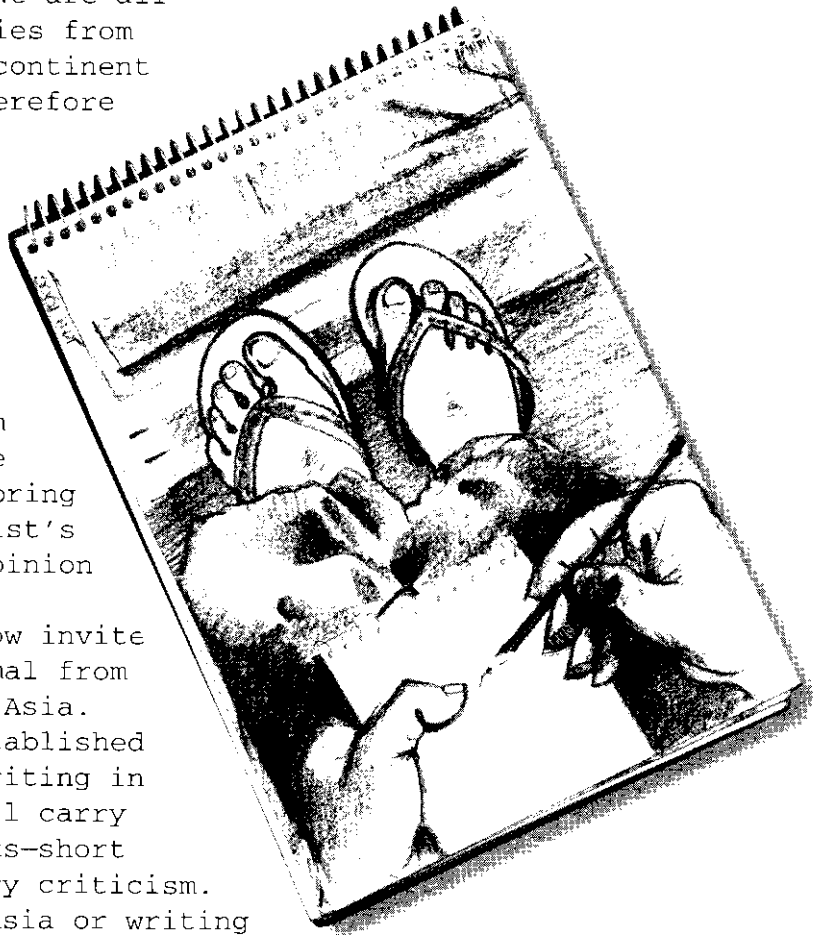
litSA

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.

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evolved in that way.

That was how Desmond worked. He encouraged you. He made you sound terrific and moulded you until in the end he didn't have to read anyone's article.

I remember my first article. I was fresh out of English honours in college, and I thought I was wonderful. I thought there was nothing for me to learn and it was just this magazine that I was just going to write for. My first assignment was to interview Satyajit Ray, a calm and helpful genius he turned out to be. I came back, wrote the article and flounced into Desmond's office and said, "Here it is!" I thought it was a masterpiece, Pulitzer Prize material. Desmond read it and said, "This is very good, la" – Desmond called everyone 'la', the Tibetan honorific – "Change the first paragraph a bit." So I changed the first paragraph. "Now change the second paragraph." I had to re-write that article 32 times.

Jug used to do a very popular column called "Rear Window". It was a think piece for young people with discussions on Sartre, Nietzsche and others, but told in Jug's inimitable way. Desmond once asked me, "La, why does he use such big words?" I said because that's what Jug does. And that was that.

One can say he did not teach, and if he did it was by example, because he himself was writing for papers like the *National Geographic* and *Time-Life*, and we'd read him and we'd learn.

JS was Camelot. It was Shangrila. Nothing like it has ever happened since. When it was forced to close down, we all regretted the passing of that bright and shining moment – the crumbling of a dream.

The original idea of creating brand loyalty towards *The Statesman*, then still going strong, obviously was not working. The people who grew up with JS wanted something bright and wonderful and by no means would the JS crowd ever be drawn to *The Statesman*, which is a fuddy-duddy paper. I think the closest that's come to what the JS grown-up would read is *The Times of India* as it has become now, or *The Asian Age*.

But that was not the reason JS closed, and neither did it have anything to do with economics although that was the story given out. The magazine was doing very well and it was growing. Its circulation of 60,000 at that time was a huge figure. The amount of time it took to print the magazine was so long that from a weekly, we made it a

fortnightly in 1976.

What actually happened, and I can place it on record now since Desmond is no more, was that Cushroo Irani had taken over as managing editor of *The Statesman* (he still owns it) and he couldn't stand Desmond's growing fame. Desmond, in the meantime while with the JS, had written the book specially commissioned by Collins Books, *Mother Teresa: Her Work and Her People*, which helped Mother Teresa get the Nobel Peace Prize. It was rushed out into Swedish first, but she missed that year and got it the next. The book became a bestseller (although Desmond did not make a single paisa from it because he donated it all to *The Statesman*).

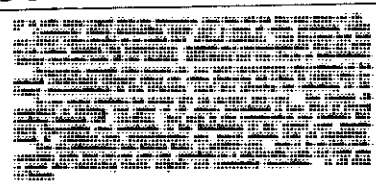
Cushroo became more and more envious of Desmond, thinking he was a one-man personality cult. This was far from true. Desmond wouldn't ever take credit for anything. It was always "we chaps" who did that. To justify the closure, JS had to be shown losing money and this was achieved by the phenomenal inter-departmental rates The Statesman press charged for printing the magazine.

It happened all at once, the shutdown. Most of us wrote rude letters to Cushroo Irani before leaving. Some time ago he was after Gopinath to try and start something like JS, and Gopinath's reply was expectedly to the effect "F... off".

After JS closed down, it did not occur to us to start something similar elsewhere. Desmond thought we were the world's oldest teenagers and we didn't want to do that anymore. It was time to move on. So we went into designing and things like that. We designed books. Some from the JS team moved to Kathmandu. Desmond had always loved Kathmandu and the Gurkhas, he was an ex-British Gurkha officer. Utpal was our business manager, Desmond's business manager, and he found us lots of work and we lived happily ever after in Kathmandu.

Desmond believed that reincarnation was people talking about those who had departed. If that is true, JS lives on. ▲

**GOODBYE
BUT NOT TO ALL THAT**



Desmond



C.Y. Gopinath marvels at the revival of a city that loves itself too much to let itself die.

CALCUTTA ONCE MORE

Bandopadhyaya was definitely following me. He had been on to me since I got off the tram at Dalhousie Square. Of course, he might have been a Chattopadhyaya. Or a Ganguly. Or a Sanyal, for all I knew. The only sure thing was that he was as Bengali as they come: a mustardy old man in a starched panjabi and dhoti, with straight black-framed glasses, skin supple and shining from the morning's oil bath, lips reddened by paan. And mind, by the way, clearly riveted by the confused-looking stranger from the western half of the country.

It was my first trip to Calcutta since crossing into legal adulthood. College was behind me, but employment still somewhere ahead. To pass the uneasy interval in between, I had taken on a part-time project with a Bombay market research firm which wanted, of all things, a survey done of letterpress printing presses in Calcutta. I had a list of about 30 of these dark, clangorous establishments, worked no doubt by ancient bent-backed men with thick glasses and nimble fingers that deftly assembled the leaded messages of revolutions and indefinite strikes on composing trays.

It was the perfect opportunity—revisiting the city of my boyhood with all expenses paid, but more importantly, a chance to pay homage at my generation's holiest of holies, the offices of the stupendous *JS* magazine, which fed the spirit and imagination of the entire flower-power generation in India.

But first things first, and that meant finding my way to the New India Press in Dalhousie Square. In the crowded tram, I had anxiously pestered a half dozen Calcuttans to tell me when the stop arrived. A chorus of voices ushered me out of the tram. And now

that I was peering anxiously around on the hard pavement of the business end of the city, I knew I was being watched. It was Bandopadhyaya, who had definitely been on the tram with me.

I walked away briskly; any direction would do. Bandopadhyaya hitched up his dhoti and followed, full of determination but always 20 paces behind. Presently, he hissed at me.

"Laift!" I heard.

Laift?

I turned back, and there he was, frantically jabbing leftwards into the air. I should turn left. I did. He continued following me. "Rhite!!" he said presently. Right. I was now in a lane.

Forward. Laift again. Another rHITE. The directions were crisp and authoritative. Bandopadhyaya knew where I should go, even if I didn't. Navigating me thus by remote control through a warren of lanes, he led me to the gate to the New India Press. I turned back to thank my benefactor, but he was already hobbling away, throwing a crooked smile at me over a crooked shoulder.

This is the avuncular Calcutta that I now know will never change no matter what else





does. In my many years there, Calcutta has transformed itself from the misty and warm cloister of my childhood to a teeming, helter-skelter metropolis shorn of self-respect. Thence, from the bottom of hell, it has risen of late like some invincible minor deity, smiling, disciplined and ready to re-launch itself into its future.

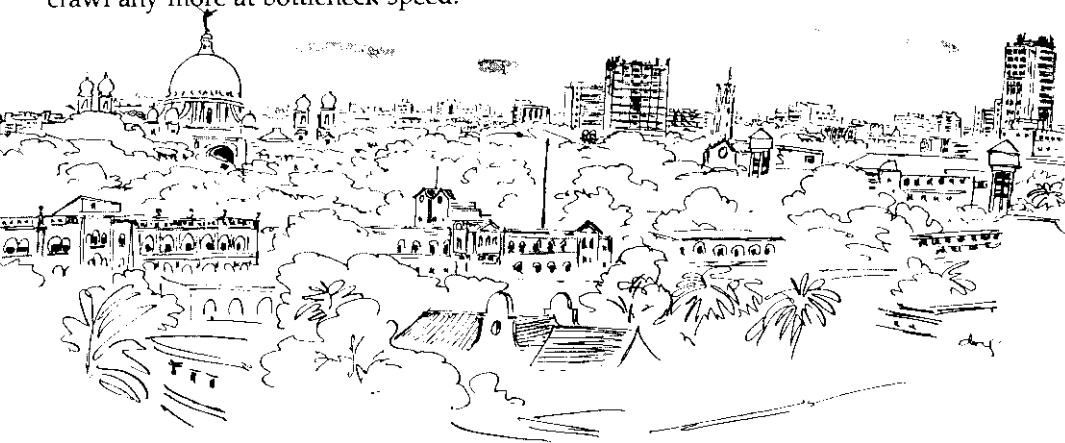
There was a time, in the 80s, long after JS had closed down, when I would say a small prayer that Calcutta was a part of my past. Its chronic power cuts, its mounting garbage hills, its tiresome lethargy and its hollow rhetoric about its own glory. What a city! Fit only for Mother Teresa, I would think. Even the *muri masala* shops that used to put together Calcutta's addictive spicy puffed rice snack had died in passage from father to son. Then, miraculously, I heard travellers' tales about the improving power situation. Fewer electricity cuts, it was rumoured; and then one day, an end to them. Calcutta was now lit at all times. Uncleared garbage became first a rarity, then an impossibility. The streets were actually not merely cleaner, but clean.

In my few stray trips there, I would walk the tried and tested pathways of memory, to assay the changes. And sure enough, I found them. On Rash Behari Avenue, the south Indian enclave with its bustling Deshapriya Park, some things were forever but others had changed. The smell of jasmined evenings by Lake Market, with the tolling of the bell from the nearby Kali bari, flower sellers, Kundu Pharmacy (no doubt in the hands of the younger Kundu now), Komala Vilas with its perfectly set curds, scrubbed families taking the air—these were constants. But Operation Sunshine, the government's determined project to clear hawkers from the sidewalks had suddenly freed the avenue. Shopkeepers could **look out and see** the world instead of a **melee**. People did not crawl any more at bottleneck speed.

On Park Street, once so gloriously unattainable, the music and the musicians had long gone to the recording studios of Bombay, and for a while Moulin Rouge, the Sky Room (now closed) and Trinca's had stood like the only survivors in a ghost town. But now, even if the music was not back, the leisure was. A new generation sat on the steps of the church. Families ambled with nowhere to go and lots of time to do it in. And wonder of wonders, within Flury's, the freshly baked bread had not changed a whit, and the grilled chicken sandwich, kissed with French mustard, was as perfect as it had ever been. I recognised the toothless old waiter grinning at me, though I doubt he remembered the young JS reporter who would stop by for a cuppa on his trudge home after work. He shuffled about, seeing only another tipper who might add another few rupees to his old Calcutta life.

And, of course, Calcutta's Metro Railway, maintained resplendent and spotless by an unexpectedly vigilant Calcutta. Even a casual ticket crumpled on the platform could start a public lynching, and woe betide the casual spitter of paan. By the time JS closed down, forcing all us devotees to seek less luscious pastures, Calcutta's underground project had become a joke, a project the city should never have undertaken, one that would never end, one that would always slide back two steps for each advance. It was a monumental icon to the city's fading glory.

I retract everything we said then. Like old Bandopadhyaya, whose affection embraces everyone in distress, Calcutta loves itself too much to let itself die. And this is why, I think, after all the years and days, when the rest of the country is crashing about our ears, Calcutta **smiles, stirs itself**, and stands up, bright, **fresh and newly born**, ready for another thousand years.



DESMOND DODD/CALCUTTA: AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



In his quest for a label for the people of Calcutta, Jug Suraiya says that while all honorary

CALCUTTEES A

What do you call someone who is from Calcutta? This question was posed to me by a former editor of *The Statesman* several years ago when I was working for that paper and handling "Calcutta Notebook".

"I'd call a person from Calcutta a Calcuttan," I replied.

"I know you would. But 'Calcuttan' sounds horrible. Try and think of something else," said the editor.

"Any ideas?" I asked.

"What about Calcatian?" he suggested. But I shook my head. Calcatian sounded like a calcium deficiency found in Alsations and was even worse than Calcuttan.

"Well, find some other word then," said the editor and went back to doing more important things than figuring out new names to call people who live in Calcutta.

I did a round of my colleagues, eliciting help. One suggested Calcatite.

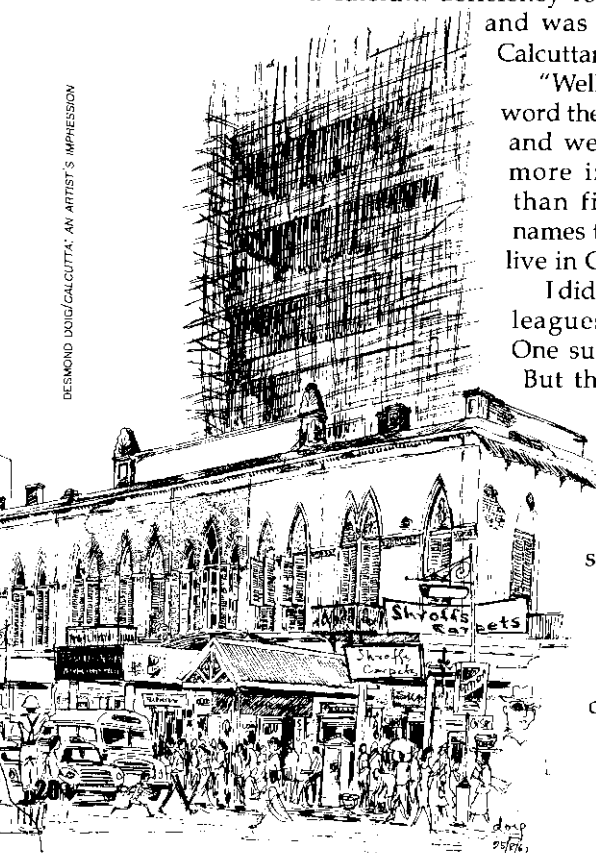
But though it sounded good, we reluctantly decided against it as the "tite" part conveyed an impression of inebriation, which while not entirely out of keeping with the character of the city, wasn't quite

appropriate for the distinctly sober columns of *The Statesman*. Calcuttees sounded very down-market, like cut-piece oddments of the social fabric. Someone suggested Ditcher, a reference to the early days of the city when Calcutta was ringed by a circular dry moat known as the Maratha Ditch dug to keep out the marauding Marathas. Anyone who lived within the charmed circle of the ditch was known as a Ditcher. But in the present-day context the term was felt to be politically incorrect, not least because of the displeasure it might evoke in Bal Thackeray, a force to be reckoned with even then.

In the end, Calcutta Notebook stuck to Calcuttans, editorial disapproval notwithstanding. But the problem remained naggingly at the back of my mind. What does one call someone who comes from Calcutta? The question gained urgency, curiously enough, when I shifted — temporarily — from Calcutta to Delhi, where people are Dilliwallas or Delhi-ites, no questions asked. Except, of course, in the case of obviously out-of-place strangers like me.

"You don't look a Dilliwalla. So what are you?" people would ask accusingly. I'd try and explain that I was originally from Calcutta, and was here in Delhi for an indefinite stint after which I hoped to get back to Calcutta. Even to me this sounded circumlocutory if not downright evasive. What I'd been asked to furnish was an identity, not an itinerary. What was the strange and sublime address that my soul called its own?

Exile is the key to the enigma of arrival. And one day I arrived at what I was: I was an hon Bong. Hon Bong, I explained for the benefit of my mystified Delhi interrogators,



DESMOND DOUG/CALCUTTA: AN ARTIST'S IMPRESSION



Bengalis are Calcuttees at heart,
all Calcuttans are not necessarily
hon Bongs.

ND HON BONGS

was short for honorary Bengali and referred to anyone, anywhere, who chose Calcutta as the sheet-anchor of existence, past, present or hopeful future.

The British, who cobbled together the three villages of Kalighat, Govindpur and Sutanuti and invented Calcutta, could claim to be the first hon Bongs. Almost 300 years later, a no-longer unknown autobiographical Indian called Nirad Chaudhuri set up shop in Britain where he billed himself as the last Englishman — which of course made him a pioneer hon Bong, in a roundabout way. Britain is full of hon Bongs. So is Delhi, particularly in the region of Chittaranjan Park, better known as Chitto Park.

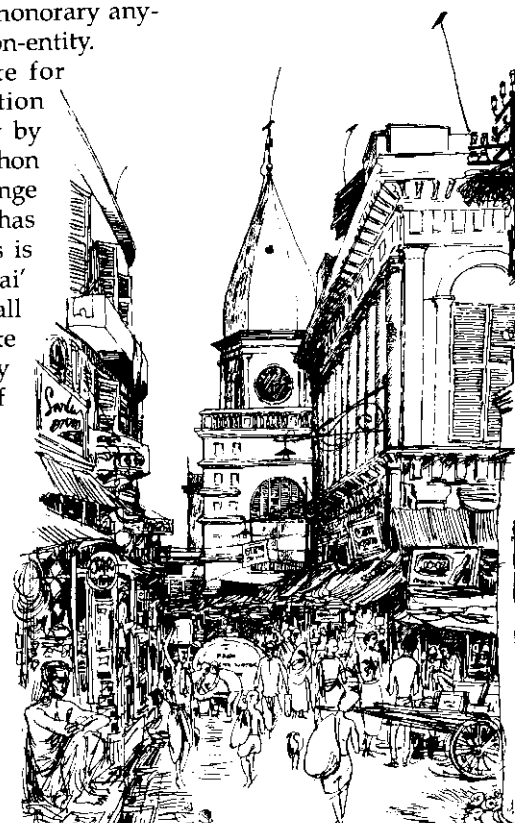
Calcutta naturally has its share of hon Bongs. Mother Teresa, whose mission embraced the world, was an hon Bong, as is Jyoti Basu, regional representative of an MNC called Marxism. Satyajit Ray, ultimate renaissance man and cosmopolite, was the quintessential hon Bong. Almost anyone worth knowing is an hon Bong. Including Khushwant Singh who whenever he runs out of controversial steam says disparaging things about Rabindranath Tagore — colossus of hon Bongdom — thereby ensuring himself a warm welcome in Calcutta where his effigy is ceremoniously burnt.

It is in the nature of the hon Bong to be inclusive, not exclusive. Which is why it surprised me when in a recent British TV programme on Calcutta, commentator Kishore Bhimani described Calcutta as having become a Marwari city. Kishore, like me, is a Kutchi. Again like me, he is also an hon Bong. How could he then make such a statement? Calcutta is no more a Marwari

city than it is a Kutchi city or a Gujarati city or a Punjabi city — though I'm told that Calcutta's Punjab Club is the only establishment in the known world where chicken chow mein is customarily served with *aam-ka-achar* as accompaniment — or even a Bengali city. Or rather Calcutta is all these, plus itself which uniquely is none of them. Primarily, Calcutta is the imaginary homeland of the hon Bong.

This, however, does not answer the original question: What does one call someone who is from Calcutta? Such a person cannot strictly be called an hon Bong for while all hon Bongs are Calcuttans at heart, all Calcuttans are not necessarily hon Bongs. A case in point is Chandan Basu who, unlike his father, is not an hon Bong. Some might say that the junior Basu is not an honorary anything, not even an honorary non-entity.

What then is a substitute for Calcuttans? A possible solution was suggested the other day by Bunny, my wife and staunch hon Bong. Her solution entails a change of name for Calcutta. Bombay has become Mumbai and Madras is now Chennai. Keeping this 'ai' suffix in mind, Delhi might call itself Mughlai, to reflect its taste for tandoori fare. Similarly Calcutta could rename itself Roshomalai, in honour of the sweetmeat its residents are so partial to. And Calcuttans and hon Bongs alike could commonly rejoice in the sobriquet of Roshomalites and feel that in name, if nothing else, they had at last got their just desserts. ▲





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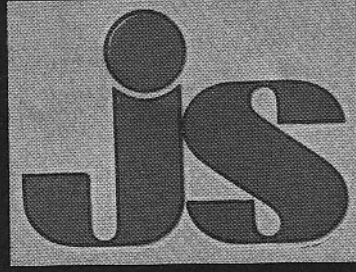
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JS on



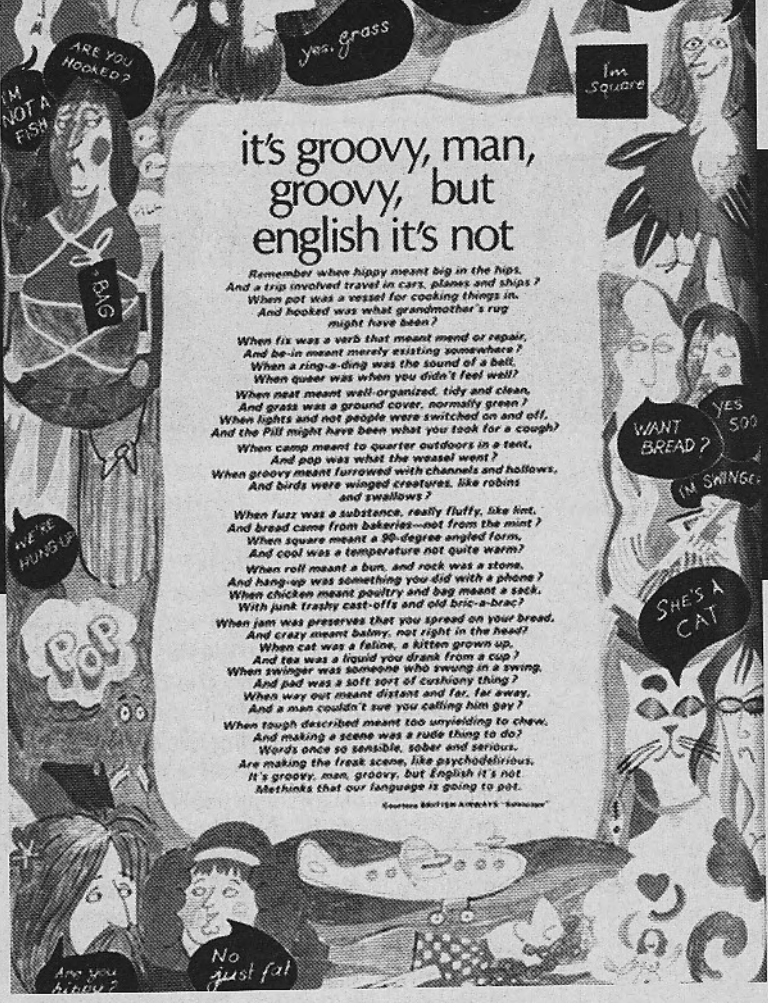
The funniest thing about the closure of JS is that it hasn't really closed down. It is one of the best-kept secrets of Indian publishing, because, ever since the magazine stopped coming out in August 1977, it hasn't closed in people's minds.

I think it is incredible that it has survived in everyone's memories, and I still have people coming up to me and saying, "Why did JS close down?" and I say, "For you it obviously hasn't because you still remember it." They remember it vividly enough to ask me: "Do you recall that article you wrote?" or such-and-such-a-piece that Dubby did? I worked on these pieces, but even I can't remember them.

The important thing about JS wasn't its closure, but its impact. It is hard to describe what working on JS was like, but it certainly was a euphoric experience. There wasn't a single moment when you could sit back and think of what you were doing—it was one crazy, roller-coaster ride.

Initially, there were four of us working on JS: Papa Menon, Dubby Bhagat, myself, and of course, Desmond Doig, who was the great godfather. We were just out of college, I had just turned 20, and we did everything ourselves. In between writing and editing, we'd be lugging these huge zinc blocks around—we didn't even have a peon then. We used to work for fairly long hours, and for the first six weeks that I was employed there, I didn't even get paid! But that didn't seem to matter much.

We received tremendous response to whatever we did, and JS magazine in its own special way helped to form the Indian teenager. We did not have readers, we had fans. It has become a sort of cliché since then—but JS invented that cliché: "JS wasn't just a magazine, it was a happening." People really got involved, mainly because it pro-



it's groovy, man, groovy, but english it's not

Remember when *hippy* meant big in the hips,
And a *trip* involved travel in cars, planes and ships?
When *pot* was a vessel for cooking things in,
And *hooked* was what grandmother's rug
might have been?

When *fix* was a verb that meant mend or repair,
And *be-in* meant merely existing somewhere?
When a *zing-a-ding* was the sound of a belt,
When *queer* was when you didn't feel well?

When *neat* meant well-organized, tidy and clean,
And *grass* was a ground cover, normally green?
When *lights* and *not* people were switched on and off,
And *the Pill* might have been what you took for a cough?

When *camp* meant to quarter outdoors in a tent,
And *pop* was what the weasel went?
When *groovy* meant furrowed with channels and hollows,
And birds were winged creatures, like robins
and swallows?

When *fuzz* was a substance, really fluffy, like lint,
And *bread* came from bakeries—not from the mint?
When *square* meant a 90-degree angled form,
And *cool* was a temperature not quite warm?

When *roll* meant a bun, and *rock* was a stone,
And *hang-up* was something you did with a phone?
When *chicken* meant poultry and *bag* meant a sack,
With *junk* trashy cast-offs and old *bric-a-brac*?

When *jam* was preserves that you spread on your bread,
And *creaky* meant baby, not right in the head?
When *cat* was a feline, a kitten grown up,
And *tea* was a liquid you drank from a cup?
When *swinger* was someone who swung in a swing,
And *pad* was a soft sort of cushiony thing?

When *way out* meant distant and far, far away,
And a man couldn't see you calling him gay?
When *tough* described meat too unyielding to chew,
And making a scene was a rude thing to do?
Words once so sensible, sober and serious,
Are making the freak scene, like psychodelirious.
It's groovy, man, groovy, but English it's not.
Methinks that our language is going to pot.

Sources: BRITISH AIRWAYS "SOLUTION"

vided a platform for young people. For the first time, young adults could read and talk to themselves through the pages of a magazine. We welcomed contributions from everyone. These were young people who were getting their first break in professional journalism.

For example, Shashi Tharoor was one of our discoveries. When he was 12 years old, he contributed his first short story. And I still remember M.J. Akbar when he came to me in his short pants—he was on his way home from Calcutta Boys School. He had a sparse moustache that barely covered his acne, and he said: "I have a short story for you, sir." He was clutching his exercise book in which he had written the story, and he tore it out and handed it to me.

Advertising, too, was no problem, as companies had just discovered the buying power of young people. That buying power has of course increased by leaps and bounds over the past two decades.

JS was ahead of its time. With *The Statesman* already showing signs of age, I don't think it was the right launching pad for a revolutionary product like JS. In the end, it was simply bad management that brought the curtain down.

—Jug Suraiya

CALCUTTA DAYS

New Yorker Bhaskar ('Papa') Menon looks back at the city he grew up in and his entry into JS.

At six, the world is focused on small things, a fragrant mango and a black-handled knife, dripping sweetly onto the dust of a railway compartment, the coal-dust and occasional burning cinder from the steam engine in front, the singsong rise and fall of the telegraph wires, little whirlwinds in the arid fields, shimmering heat pools in the dry distance. Through the shutter cracks, a cow gallops away, tail straight up, the tassel hanging down, parrots wheel in the bronze sky.

In the lower berth my brother lies, breathing hard, restless in his bedclothes, delirious. Double pneumonia Dr Singhi said, his stethoscope held up in warning. Careful. Careful. Medicine bottles in a little basket slide in and out from under the green berth. Quiet in the compartment. All of you be quiet. And keep the shutters down. The little black ceiling fans whir and whir and whir. The train rumbles day and night, stopping sometimes unexpectedly in the still afternoon heat or the stiller darkness. The guard goes by, metal strikes metal as wheels are tested, signals set. Tea vendors calling on platforms. Sudden loud crossings over trestle bridges. Thermometer out every hour. Ama looks grim. Ice packs, soup, low voices. From the upper berth, thoughts of a tiger. One could jump in when the train is stopped. But there's safety in the upper berth. Surely, a tiger couldn't get up there.

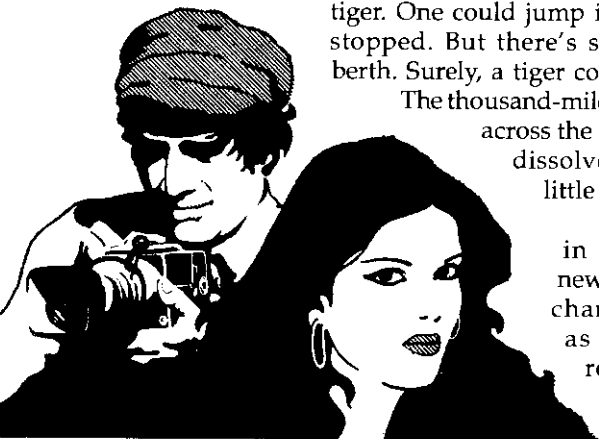
The thousand-mile journey to Calcutta across the great northern plain dissolves into a thousand little details.

A new rhythm in the wheels, a new swaying, clacking, changing of tracks as they branch and rebranch, cross and recross, clackety clackety clack,

smoothly, the train slides past the yellow sign, Howrah Station, into a vast echoing gloom of pigeons in the air and on the long broad platform, pools of coolies in crimson shirts, food carts and fresh, receiving faces. The train stops with a final shake. Two men from Achan's office await, a thin one with a woman's voice, a fat one all muffled grunts and smiles. They pat us on the head, supervise the coolies with the luggage. Down the emptying platform we scurry, following the crimson shirts, Ama carrying brother, father chatting with the thin man and fat man. "All arranged, sir. Taxis are for the luggage. Temporary housing." A black DeSoto wagon with taxis in pursuit, across echoing Howrah bridge, into the roar of Calcutta.

Strange new place with new rules. Water only for four hours in the morning. Fill up the overhead tanks in the bathrooms. You are not to open the taps till I tell you. You are not to drink water till it is boiled. You are not to eat any fruit till I've washed it! Washing fruit is suddenly a ritual. First soap and water. Then a bath of potassium permanganate. The black crystals fall from a white packet into the enamel basin, swirling banners of purple in the water. Die germs! Everything goes in the purple bath. Fat juicy mangoes, tiny tangy bananas, shiny little oranges, pomegranates lustrous as pearls within, fragrant jackfruit with gorgeous bluebottles humming songs of praise, swat, thock, no flies ever on a fruit. Throw it out! Cholera. There's cholera out there.

At Ms B. Hartley's Elementary School on Lansdowne Road, where we go by rickshaw every morning at eight, the strictures on not eating outside the home fall quickly to the temptations of tangy fireballs of *amchur*, paper cones filled with *mosla-muri*, mix of puffed rice, onion, hot chilli, tamarind sauce and mustard oil, and crisp little wafer balls stuffed with spicy potato and watery sauce. We get ill, but not from Calcutta-specific





germs. Measles, then chicken pox. As the thunderous monsoon rages outside, there are sulphurous potions in our dank rooms, neem leaves to scratch the suppurating skin, healing turmeric baths. The flooded streets redistribute garbage. Cars stall, buses die. Rickshaws are all that move, and pedestrians hip-deep in dirty water. Street urchins swim and spout the water from their mouths. Will they live the year out?

Permanent housing a year later, in a high-walled compound on Park Street, epicentre once of the departed British Raj. Park Street once led to the Viceroy's Deer Park, rolling expanse of green Maidan now, but still bordered by icons to the past. Ungainly Victoria Memorial, mottled white marble symbol of imperial glory, meant to be evocative of the soaring Taj, but more a Viennese palace, weighed down by its own self-conscious grandeur. Gothic St Paul's Cathedral, strangely at home two miles from Kali-Ghat and the temple that gave Calcutta its name. The Royal Calcutta Turf Club and Calcutta Club (both still then, Whites-only institutions), Ochterlony Tower and Fort William on the Hooghly. At the other end of Park Street, in the British cemetery, lies 18-year-old Rose Aylmer, of whose sudden death Walter Savage Landor wrote:

*Ah what avails the sceptred race
Ah what the form divine!
What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer all were thine.
Rose Aylmer whom these wakeful eyes
May weep but never see,
A night of memories and sighs
I consecrate to thee.*

At 87 B, we are behind the Park Street Thana, from where, in the still of the night there come sounds like the shriek of distant peacocks. Royintan, skinny eight-year old, says what it is. He knows. His father, drunk, beats the same sounds out of him. The old English lady on the ground floor of 87 C has taken charge of the gardening for the whole compound. Blue eyes rheumy with age, frizzled white hair, loose liver-spotty skin, tent-like frocks, irascible, she leads two stick-thin *malis* to their work, dig there, water here, *Ullu! Jaldi!* They bend and scrape at her command, spray muddy Hooghly water (and unknown toxins) onto dusty croton and stunted rhododendron. A donkey strays into the yard, a quiet, meditative animal, interested in the old lady's cherished herbs.

She chases it with an umbrella, wheezing. It circles around and comes at the herbs again. She marshals her forces, the old *bawarchi* (cook), the two *malis*, her grandchildren visiting from England. The donkey is driven out. The next day we tempt it back in, hoping to ride it. "*Junglis!*" she yells. "*Junglis!*" It becomes an English-Indian thing. Ama emerges to fix her with a frigid stare.

A few days later there's fisticuffs between brother and one of the visiting boys. They end up rolling in the dust, wrestling. One of the other boys comes up with a Daisy airgun, object of our envy. "I wish I could use this," he mutters, looking at the grunting stalemate at his feet. "Better not," I warn. The girls run off to tell what is happening. Over the rest of the summer, a hostile truce. Brother gets a Daisy airgun for his birthday. He shoots a tiny bird, and Ama goes stony silent. The gun laid aside, we retreat into compound cricket, the wickets charcoal marks on the wall. Another English boy, Ian, also visiting, is umpire, sucking prunes, fat cheeks, amiable. The hostile English camp would like to join in, but holds aloof, circling on bicycles. In the tired evenings, there is French cricket, the ball thrown to hit the immobile legs, the bat the only defence. Or marbles under the guava tree. The girls play endless hopscotch, tea parties with their dolls, under the hibiscus.

At the height of summer, a cholera epidemic. The permanganate fruit bath is deeper purple, flies are the enemy, sprayed with Flit, smashed with newspapers, caught in mid-air, dashed against the floor. As evening falls one day, the old *bawarchi* next door is carried out on a *charpoy*, invisible under a cloth except for a bony motionless hand.

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There is a stir from the servant's quarters, along the wall in the back, a small crowd gathers round the charpoy, then disappears. Ama is in a quiet boil on the phone. We are forbidden to watch but peer through shuttered windows. Nothing to see in the swift dusk. We do homework in the yellow light by the unused fireplace, pack knapsacks for school next day. The old man is still there, motionless, when we sneak out to look before bed, but gone the next morning. Did he die? Was he taken away. Cholera, says Ama.

New rules for playing outside, new rules against wandering off from the compound. Not without a servant. Ever. Kidnappers are about. The newspaper had an article. They do horrible things to children. Cut them up, make them beg for money. The rules soon relax. We wander all over the


neighbourhood, on foot, on bikes. Down to the Maidan, up to the cemetery. Across Park Street is St. Xavier's School and College, its long, flat corridors ideal for roller skates, but white-frosted Jesuits can emerge suddenly with stern commands to disappear. Not far away, nuns in full habit preside over Loreto College, where the girls wear white dresses, black shoes and little red ties. They gather at Trinca's Confectionery, giggling over plates of sausage rolls and chocolate pastry and at Oxford Book House, with a lending library in its back stacks. No one complains if you read in the narrow aisles.

Favourite books: Enid Blyton's series on the Five Find-Outers. Richmal Crompton's William series. Few American books for children here. Nearby, on a side street, by the house that declares itself the birthplace of William Makepeace Thackeray, the Americans dominate the comic book stacks, all with the Dell Pledge to Parents, promising wholesome fun, Donald Duck and Goofy,

Superman, Batman and Green Lantern, Archie and Jughead. Only rarely, a British comic book, fustian stories of Biggles, unfunny Norman Wisdom funnies. New comics are a rupee; with the top of their front cover sliced off, they are four annas—25 paise. On Theatre Road the British Council Library, breathing chilled air every time its doors open, has an air-conditioned reading room, lends out books free, and has an amateur theatre group. On the green lawn, on warm dry evenings, the sounds of *Henry V*, *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*. In the larger city beyond our small remnant of Empire in aspic, there is a rich Bengali theatre—Calcutta has more theatre companies than London or New York—but we on Park Street are oblivious. Our world is distinctly post-colonial.

On nearby Moira Street is Hindi High School, founded by Birla the industrialist, to be consciously Indian, a departure from the English convent-school tradition, and it attracts the children of the wealthiest Calcutta families. Classes are filled with Goenkas, Birlas and Dalmias. Every morning we march to the long assembly hall, class by class, two abreast, in step to the rousing tunes of the school band, arms swinging wide. Sarwan Singh, ex-Indian Army, keeps watch. Anyone out of step is given a quick corrective thump on the head. In the hall we line up by house. I am in Jawahar House, which is in close rivalry with Gandhi House and Tagore House in sports, academics and general good behaviour. Behaviour is judged on the basis of Stars and Bars—slips of paper—given out by teachers and school monitors. Every morning, the assembly begins with inspection. The long house lines stand at ease, and monitors pass down their length, stepping sideways. Each student snaps to attention when the monitor steps in front, hands raised to the shoulders. Nails must be clean, school uniform in order: blue shirt with lotus monogram on the pocket, grey shorts, white socks, black shoes. The principal, an Englishman, leaves announcements to the house masters. After that, a Sanskrit hymn to Laxmi; periodically, the diminutive Sanskrit teacher explains what the words mean, but few understand. We mouth the words, march back. The school band plays the same rousing tune every day, year in and year out. Once, I sidle up to the music teacher, a broiled Italian with yellow, red-veined eyes, to ask if I can take up the saxophone or the drums. He tries me out with different instruments, is gently dis-

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couraging. To make conversation I ask brightly what tune they play every morning for Assembly. Blue Danube, he says. Long afterwards, in America, I find it was the Stars and Stripes Forever.

Everyone has to study advanced Hindi at Hindi High, and I find it impossible. There is no neuter gender in Hindi; everything has to be either male or female, and the rules that govern the division have many exceptions. I cannot get it right, and without passing Hindi, there is no hope of getting the school to send me up for the public examination. I deal with it as everyone deals with Sanskrit, also a compulsory subject: memorisation. My final year Hindi teacher, a khadi-clad man with a jeering sense of humour, says he had a student once who memorised an essay about coal but had to write about Raja Ram Mohun Roy. He solved the problem by sending Ram Mohun Roy to a coal field. For the final exam, I have four full-length essays memorised from a mug book written expressly for students like me. One of them is set, and I get through.

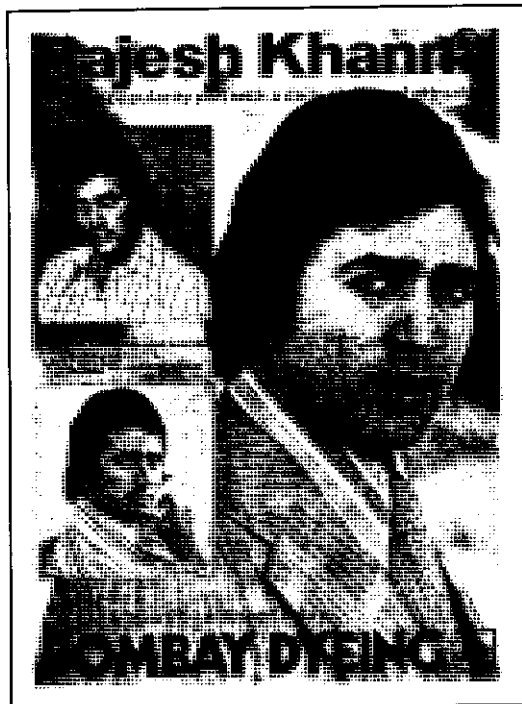
At St Xavier's College, where I go to enroll myself, the administrative office is under a toothy Dutchman in a white cassock, Father Huart. "Father Huart in Heaven" intones the guy behind me in the line waiting to register. He has an endless series of similar quips. As the line inches forward, and each person gets a number, he asks if he can jump two up in the queue, to be number 50. It is an appropriate number for him, for his name is Hafesji. Father Huart asks what I want to study. English literature. Secondary subject? Economics. It is a choice Achan has questioned. What will you do with English? Characteristically, he does not try to force his view. Anyway, I have known what I wanted to be from about the age of seven. A journalist.

The ambitions of others in the large English (Hons) class vary. Rana, a tubercular young man in frayed clothes, is an object of general wonder. He can barely speak modern English, but sits intently through Father Gomez's enormously erudite class on Old English, scribbling copious notes in a microscopic hand. Why did he choose to do English at the honours level? "I am pasination," he says. At lunch he disappears urgently down the street and reappears two hours later, sweating. Where has he been? "The mills." You work in a mill? Dickensian thoughts. Dark satanic mills. No. He shakes his narrow head. Mills. Mills. He points to

his mouth. Meals. He's been home for lunch; cheaper that way. Rana is at the door when the library opens and stays there when most of us are hanging out on Park Street, looking out for Loreto girls. He pores over books which the librarian, Melvyn, is sure he does not understand. "I don't know what he's doing here, man," Melvyn says admiringly, "but you've got to hand it to him." Melvyn, just over five feet tall, wears lizard-skin boots with high heels, "drainpipe" slacks, and combs his hair back in a rakish curve. Occasionally, there are flyers advertising "Uncle Melvyn, story-teller". He entertains at children's birthday parties.

Another regular in the library is Saha, eyes beady behind bottle-thick glasses, resplendent in dhoti and kurta. His English is only a level above that of gentle, questing Rana, but it comes with an air of self-importance. "I am poet," he announces. Oh yes? Can I see something you've written? Notebooks spill from a cotton shoulder bag. Fountain pen on ruled paper. Tight, curled writing. Long words, sky colours, clouds, heated emotions. I judge it bad, but there is a uniqueness to it, a definite personality, and over the next three years, he makes it into print several times, even gets one picked for inclusion in a Writer's Workshop anthology of "Indo-Anglian" writing.

Professor P. (for Purushottam) Lal, who runs The Writer's Workshop, is the inventor of "Indo-Anglian" writing. Anglo-Indian, the traditional word for the mixing of Indian and British is too loaded with negative emotions, too political, too *de classe* in its association with what the British, being no more or less racist than Indians, termed "half-breeds". P. Lal, crewcut, usually arrayed in raw silk kurta, riding a motorcycle with sidcar, holds us spellbound in class with a throwaway manner, a chiding wit, an easy assumption of excellence and elegance. I soon pass from



admiration to iconoclasm, challenge one of his statements in class and win a bet he offers. Admitting loss gracefully, he speaks of the ancient Chinese master calligraphers who always made one little error in their work, deliberately, to give readers the satisfaction of finding it out.

I am given a Writer's Workshop book. P. Lal is translating the *Mahabharata* into English, an elegant fascicle every few months, handbound in colourful Indian sari cloth. Sinuous English, particularly Indian, the tales familiar from Achan's bedtime recitals of the Sanskrit. But new detail. Why do you think Bhima ties Draupadi's hair with Dushasana's blood? No one in the class knows. Find out. A book for whoever finds out. Fascinating research. It is because Draupadi was menstruating when, in the Kuru court, Dushasana tries to strip her. Krishna prevents her exposure by making the sari an endless one, but her blood shows through the cloth. P. Lal teaches English, but

he instructs in life, the first example I have of an Indian who occupies our shattered cultural world easily, elegantly, comfortable with himself.

P. Lal welcomes discussion, allows the personalities in his class to be on display, and the most vivid of these is undoubtedly Dubby Bhagat, all scaly skin and bone and bristling military moustache, ostentatiously and amusingly loud, who everyone soon learns (by what osmotic process of public relations remains a mystery) is the son of General

Bhagat, the first person to win a Victoria Cross in the Second World War. I look it up; indeed, he did win the award for clearing mine-fields. The citation speaks of cold courage over an extended period of time. Dubby, sounding rather pleased with himself, says he has been a disappointment to his father in not wanting to follow in the "old man's footsteps", and even more of a disappointment to his mother, of whom he speaks with an even mix of awe and loathing.

Dubby has been expelled from a number of schools, is proud of it, presents himself as an aesthete the world does not understand or appreciate. Soon there is a little group in orbit around him. Jitu, standard-issue brag, but interesting because he dates Margarethe, all soft curves, dark curls and limpid eyes, undoubtedly the loveliest girl in our visible universe. "Gang", spectacled essence of boarding school boy, impeccable manners and just the right well-worn turn of phrase for every occasion. (After college he maintains that persona for a while, rises in the hierarchy of Philips, the transnational corporation, but then decides to be someone else entirely, dumps everything to go wandering for several years through Africa and the Americas, teaching English, returns with an extremely laidback view of the world, symbolised by a pony tail.) Quiet and retiring Jug Suraiya, so into body-building that he is shaped like a genie emerging from a lamp, is entirely unlike Dubby, but the two become a pair, date friends from Loreto, Bunny and Chinky, write a book of poetry, *Anguish and the City*, an exaggeratedly world-weary paean to their misspent lives. Meanwhile, the Vietnam war is on.

In Calcutta, the Congress party is losing power to the communists, the streets are in periodic turmoil. I start up a satirical magazine, *DeBunker*, looking quite through the deeds of men. It is an unexpected success, copies go to Delhi, Bombay and even Washington, to the Indian ambassador there from one of his relatives in Calcutta. In the library a new experience: the writings of Tagore and Gandhi. Fresh water. A sudden singing of the soul.

Sunanda Datta-Ray notices *DeBunker* in *The Sunday Statesman*, Smith, the News Editor offers a job, and the day after I sit my last college exam, the English Essay, I report for work. The smell of printing ink is aphrodisiacal. My charmed magic casement leads not to songs of the nightingale but to the thrum of the giant offset presses. From *The Statesman's* high-ceilinged lobby, a turbaned peon with a red cummerbund and walrus moustache whirs me up in a brass-doored elevator to the second floor. Smith the News Editor tells me I will be getting one hundred rupees as a trainee journalist. I discover later they deduct money for lunch in the Executive Dining Room, and I get about 60 rupees in hand, just enough for a meal for two at one of the restaurants on Park Street. But a

we love
you so much
we're
going to see
you every
fortnight
instead of
every week

JS
THE
MAGAZINE
THAT THINKS
YOUNG



bonus for me—I would have worked for free. Smith takes me to see Evan Charlton, the editor, a grey Englishman, fatigued but cheerful, then Management, on the first floor, also English, representing the interests of Andrew Yule and Company, the proprietors of the paper. Old Mrs Yule, I am told, takes a personal interest.

Six months blur by in alternating weeks of night shifts as Sub-Editor. There are three Chief Subs. Ellis Abraham, an “Armenian Jew” as he calls himself, a steady uncomplicated workhorse, the first person I know in India who defends the American role in Vietnam. “They’re fighting our war there!” He declares, munching down the “agram-bagram” —his word for pakoras— and slurping down the numerous cups of tea *The Statesman* kitchen provides. Sachi Sahay, the other Chief Sub, as darkly convoluted and complex as Ellis is open, expresses opinions in elliptical *non sequiturs*. The third Chief Sub, N.C. Menon, is again a contrast, filled with bonhomie and good cheer till he suddenly disappears from *The Statesman* and Calcutta, leaving a complex tangle of relationships behind. Others on the newsdesk include Burra and Chota Mullick, descendants of the Mullick with whom the British struck a deal early in their imperium in Bengal, making him, I am told, Zamindar of a wide stretch of the 24 Parganas.

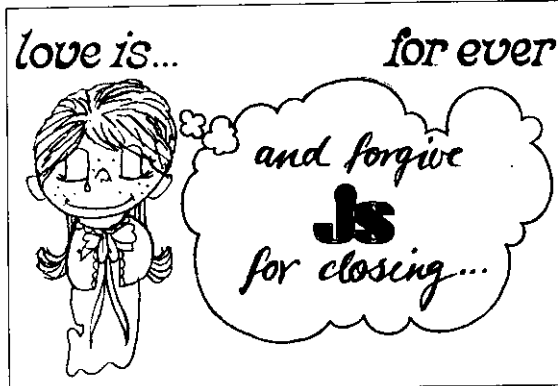
Dubby Bhagat comes into the newsroom one day, unannounced, smelling of aftershave and curry, to say he is now a Statesman Management Trainee. A week later he returns, scruffy as ever, to say I should meet Desmond Doig, who is starting up a new publication for teenagers, *Junior Statesman*. Desmond sits on the Management floor, in the Graphics Department, a large, hearty Englishman in a wash-and-wear bush shirt, feet up on a cluttered desk. He swings his feet down when I enter, offers a large pink paw of a hand. Yeshe, a long, cool Tibetan in boots and a colourful shirt, sitting at the side of the desk, does not take his feet off it but swings his chair back to contemplate me. He drives Desmond’s car, supervises his household, occupies a special place in his heart. Within a week I join the staff that will put out *Junior Statesman*, *JS*, as it comes to be called. A month later, Dubby inducts Jug Suraiya into the new venture.

Desmond’s conception of the *JS* is innovative and radical. He tries to marry East and West at their extremes, carrying features about Swinging London’s Carnaby Street as

well as the Maoist revolution in Naxalbari. This marriage of extremes is not unnatural to Desmond; he personifies it, lives it every day. His apartment, in a new luxury high-rise in Alipore, is resplendent with Tibetan artifacts, Indian art, his own splendid photography and drawings of old Calcutta. It is a thoroughfare of visitors from far and near. Ratan Pradhan and his musical troupe from Nepal perform at his parties, mingle easily with guests that reflect his eclectic interests: Edmund Hillary (with whom he went searching for the Yeti in the snows of Solukhumbu), Shirley Maclaine (who has adopted an orphanage just outside of Calcutta), the editors of *National Geographic* for whom he has written. He knows Mother Teresa well and takes me to meet her early one morning at “Nirmal Hriday” in Kalighat, the house of the dying. It is the first time I face the worst of Calcutta’s raw despair and the shock of it chokes me with unspilt tears. Quietly perceptive of my state, Desmond steers Mother and his friend Joy away, allows me time to recover.

Getting *JS* out every week is fun, and it develops a devoted following. But circulation is never really very high. Management is no longer fully supportive of the project. Andrew Yule has sold its interests, the last English editor has left, C.R. Irani, a local insurance executive, is now in charge, backed with Tata money. Pran Chopra, the Editor of the main paper, is kind but incapable of dealing with Irani, who undermines and then fires him, beginning the process of decline that in a few years destroys the quality of one of the finest newspapers in Asia.

When I leave *The Statesman* in 1969, Desmond is gloomy. Things are not going his way, either in the paper or in the city. The communist government is paranoid about an Englishman in his position. He is followed everywhere. “I know because all the secret police wear the same colour tennis shoes. Even the egg wallah!” he jokes. From New York, *JS* has stopped publication. Desmond has moved to Kathmandu. Then comes word of his early and unexpected death. It is a loss I mourn still. ▲



EDITORIAL VOY- EURISM exists in a mass scale, and the sensibility is the same all over. And for once, the topic is not women's flesh. Show men flagellating themselves around Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram, to mourn the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, and it's guaranteed that any editor who has the budget to pay the photo agency will carry pictures. And so, they all did, Shia men in Karachi, Kashmiri boy in Srinagar, in Beirut, in Aligarh, wherever.



■
MISS IMF? Does that mean the venerable policeman of the international monetary markets has decided to go for swimsuit-clad international civil servants in a bid for a better image? Anything can happen if Clinton can smoke but not inhale, and NATO can fight a war without using a single infantryman. And so I thought of surfing the IMF site looking for their chosen beauty when the Dhaka *Independent* reminded me, in an editorial no less, that Miss IMF is actually short for Miss I'm Fat, a contest held in the Nakorn Prathom province near Bangkok, for women who are stout and weighty and do not mind strutting their stuff.

■
NAWAZ SHARIF'S government decided to celebrate the one-year-old "**nuclear test day**" by announcing an award of one lakh PKR for the person suggesting the best name for the day? How about Chagai Chagrin? Or South Asian Annihilation Day II. (II for the fact that I was the Indian tests of Pokharan.)

■
MUCH WRITTEN about Najam Sethi's dastardly arrest by the **government of Information Minister Mushahid Hussain**, former upright journalist. And all the coverage was for the good. Especially interesting was the amount of attention that the arrest got in the Indian press, something unprecedented in the level of interest in Pakistani affairs this indicates in India. It did help that Sethi was hounded for what he allegedly said at a speech given in Delhi, but I would nevertheless say that the continuous coverage of his travails by the mainstream English press in India indicates the success, firstly, of *Outlook* and *The Asian Age*, which have been focussing more on Pakistan over the past few years than their peers. Which goes to prove Chhetria Patrakar's view that there is latent cross-border interest in South Asia about what goes on in the neighbouring country. It only requires a bit of continuous coverage to make this demand obvious.

WHILE STILL on Najam Sethi, let us not forget that as far as assorted West-based Committees to Protect Journalists and other such are concerned, they should not feel nice and satisfied by raising a hullabaloo on his arrest by Nawaz Sharif's regime. South Asia's English journalists have a higher profile because of their membership in the higher socio-economic categories, whereas as newspapers and magazines in local (vernacular) languages begin to practise real journalism, it will be these vernacular journalists who will increasingly be in need of professional protection. It is because largely the vernacular landscape of South Asia has not tried real journalism that you do not hear of more arrests, but when it starts happening, it will be more vicious.

■
BHUTAN IS a country blest, surely, when you have situations where **expat donor chiefs of mission** depart with letters to the editor in the only newspaper *Kuensel* in which they weep rivers of tears for having been transferred out of that enchanted land. The latest was a Vladimir Stehlik, ex-Coordinator of ACB (whatever that be), who writes of his experience in Druk Yul as: "...an interlude that stood for just anything that my life is usually not about: being a high flyer, a (small) VIP, rubbing shoulders with the mighty, having to decide about a lot of money, about what other people have to do, and what they can not do. I hope that I have not erred too much from the rightful path by doing that, and that I have not impaired the karma of the lives to come."



■
SAY IT ain't so, Raj! Chengappa that is, well-known science and environmental writer of India Today, whose book is announced in a flyer from HarperCollins India (Clothbound, IRs 295). The headline Chengappa has given his opus is "**Weapons of Peace**". What? This may well be the "stunning story behind India's quest to build nuclear bombs and missiles" but the headline pretty much tells me what the author thinks. In all likelihood, then, this is apologia for the BJP and all that went before them, but let me get the book and read it before I say further.

■
DHAKA LADIES were out in force one day at Motijheel as part of the BNP's plans to gherao the PDB office on Thursday. On Saturday, they were out again, same place, to protest police attacks on the Thursday

protestors. Active, political, politicised ladies of Dhaka, bringing up the front in the fight against anarchy, corruption and mayhem. I like 'em. In the last issue, I remember being impressed by Pakistani (PPP) women activists' willingness to lay themselves down on the tarmac to bring things to a halt. The Bangla women's group seems to be larger, that's all.



ON 22 APRIL, Bangladesh's Chief of Police AYBI Siddiqui declared "war" against "terrorists" active in the southwest of the country, and Home Minister Mohammad Nasin said: "I'm not a Minister of Ramkrishna Mission that I will show sympathy to the criminals. I do not want to hear any more the names of Sarbahara and extremists. They will have to be crushed." All this was echoed some days later, when Nepal's prime minister-designate Krishna Prasad Bhattarai (one-time freedom fighter, Gandhian, what-have-you) said of the Maoist insurgents: "It is a law-and-order problem of criminals, and will be dealt with by the police and army." With such sentiments coming from the highest levels, may Allah and Pashupatinath save this region when the societal wounds of police action begin to fester and boil.

THE ECONOMIC Times, a paper from Dhaka proudly claiming its 11th year of publication, has a lead article which reports on how an English medium school teacher is teaching her young students to be drug addicts, providing them with phensedyl, and regularly showing them pornographic films on video at her residence. The way the report is presented leads me to question the story to begin with, but the headline, "Whip and burn the teacher alive" as a sort of an editorial suggestion, is enough for me to suggest that the editor be forwarded as a specimen if anyone ever organises a South Asian mediocrity conference.

CORONATION TIME in Bhutan, and anything and everything is now nationally or commercially related to the 25th anniversary of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk's rule of Druk Yul, warts and all. Whatever else, you cannot fault the Druk Gyalpo for not knowing exactly where he was going and taking his country every day of

these last 25 summers. Meanwhile, get me a visa to Bhutan and let me have a try at this Coronation Super Bumper prize of a Prado, all for a mere Ngultrum 300. Meanwhile, this just in: The 90 shopkeepers in Wangduephodrang (a name I have tried to spell correctly for a decade and not succeeded) dzongkhag have agreed to stop selling tobacco from June 2, coinciding with the silver jubilee celebrations. Writes Kuensel, "According to a shopkeeper, tobacco sale should be stopped because students, and even monks, were picking up the habit of smoking."

I DO not know whether to laugh or to cry when I see symbolic gestures, such as the accompanying one of an elephant, crushing pirated software. These are stage-managed events occasionally seen in China, but now in India as well, and what one needs to know is who wins and who loses. There is no question in my mind that pirated software is only used by those who are poor. Truly rich institutions and individuals would not deign to descend to buy pirated work. So, there has been a gentleman's agreement that since you cannot fight it, let it be. The breaking of software by pachydermic hooves means that the multinationals and subcontinentals are now confident enough to break this unstated agreement and to go for a slightly larger slice of the pie than what they were content with till now. My instinct says thus.



WHILE INDIA bombards awfully close to the LoC and Pakistan shoots down assorted flying machines of the IAF, the Pak-India Brotherhood Association is on to more important things, such as, in Hyderabad, proposing bus services linking Lahore, Delhi, Calcutta, Dhaka and Kathmandu and a ferry service linking Karachi, Bombay, Goa, Kanyakumari, Colombo and the Maldives. The president of the Association is an S.M. Imam, who is into pharmaceuticals in Karachi. Mr Imam, who should be made roving ambassador of SAARC rather than the convenor of the South Asian Association of Small Entrepreneurs, which in fact he is, was saying, "Those days, we used to have a Toofan Mail between Bombay and Peshawar. The track is there, the train is there; the only thing is that we have to lift is the barrier to allow the train to pass."

May 8, 1999

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Move over BTV

Bangladeshis may just get to see real television. Privately run.

by *Afsan Chowdhury*

When Ekushey Television (ETV) begins transmission on 16 December 1999, it will be the first private sector terrestrial TV station in Bangladesh, and also in South Asia. And the people at ETV are rather proud of it, not least because of this singular achievement.

The term *ekushey* (Bangla for 21) itself is a potent symbol. On 21 February 1952, students agitating in Dhaka for recognition of Bangla as one of the state languages of the then united Pakistan, were killed in police fire. The shooting ignited a series of protests that would last all the way to war and independence in 1971. (December 16 has been significantly chosen, as that is the day of victory over Pakistan in 1971.)

"Ekushey sums up what we are about and want to achieve. It's not just about a day in history which gave spirit to the nationalist movement based on culture and language, but the spirit which has driven the Bangla people to nationhood. It also means bridging the past with the future as well—this century's Ekushey spirit moving into the Ekushey [21st] century," says Simon Dring, one of the two managing directors of ETV.

Dring sees ETV as an opportunity to reach into the lives of the millions who can be positively influenced through a TV station driven by quality and meaningful broadcasting. "It's easy to produce programmes and just beam it down. We want more, we want to utilise the full potential of TV."

Dring is a legend in Bangladesh

in his own right. A Britisher, he was in Bangladesh during the liberation war as correspondent for *The Telegraph* of London. When all the foreign correspondents were driven out after the 1971 March massacre, he hid in the present Sheraton (then the Inter-Continental) Hotel and thereafter toured the city. His on-the-spot reports of the killings were flashed all over the world. This endeared him to all generations of Bangladeshis, including the late Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, and his



daughter Sheikh Hasina, now prime minister.

Tackling the market

While dreams are all right, does it make business sense? Is the Bangla viewership market, large as it is, robust enough for two terrestrials (the other being the state-owned BTV—Bangladesh Television)? ETV people are sure that it is possible for two to survive, but only two, not three. They are convinced that it is possible to make money and good programmes at the same time. Says

Dring, "It's possible to be public service-driven broadcasters and still make money. Our planning is very practical, and market research-driven. We have the investors making sure we are planning to make profit. We are accountable to them. And we believe South Asian broadcasting has to be different."

ETV enjoys the backing of some giant names. Apart from A.S. Mahmud as chairman—who was one-time managing director of Mediaworld, the group that brings

out *Daily Star*—ETV is supported by some big players including the Square group, the Rangs group, and others, mostly from the district of Sylhet, which is where most of the owners of 'Indian' restaurants in London come from. This community is one vast source of funds that Mahmud can tap into should he want to. The estimated project cost of ETV stands at around BDT 75-80 crore (c. USD 15 million).

Discussions on ETV began in early 1997 when Farhad Mahmud, son of A.S. Mahmud and the other managing director of the company, had a conversation with Dring who was staying at a local hotel. At that time, they were not the only ones talking. Some of Bangladesh's largest business and media houses were keen on starting a TV channel, and although there was no policy to allow private sector broadcasting, over a dozen unsolicited applications were lying with the prime minister, and soon ETV's proposal joined the pile. In March this year, ETV finished ahead of the pack and got a 15-year licence.

This has led to speculation that ETV enjoys official patronage. All the

more so because ETV will be using the five BTV earth stations for transmission. Both TV stations are to share the BTV towers which are being upgraded with ETV money. ETV bosses deny any shady deals. Says Dring, "The crucial difference was we had worked a lot to get a proper proposal complete with technical and financial analyses done by international experts."

Adds fellow director Mahmud, "Of course we lobbied intensively as did others but in the end we got the licence because we had a stronger offer. We were willing to commit millions of dollars. We had cooperation from BBC engineers. We have attracted direct foreign investment in a sector in Bangladesh which people would hardly rate as attractive or even possible."

Investors are being drawn to broadcasting in Bangla by the sheer size of the viewership in the country, now estimated at over 50 million. Market studies have shown a huge concentration of "small-time buyers". And the response to ATN Bangla—an entertainment cable channel that has practically wiped out Hindi cable viewing in Bangladesh—is one proof that local language programmes can indeed generate substantial viewership. The total advertisement market for television is approximately BDT 1 billion (USD

20.8 million), which is bound to soar if, as advertisers hope, ETV reaches rural viewers.

In the race between BTV and ETV, it is clear that the former will lose some of its market, if not most. And it may lose some more, if two more channels, which are in the pipeline, come through. They are Impress TV belonging to the country's largest TV software production house which has a turnover running into tens of millions, and Channel TEN, an outfit which plans to hit the Hindi market with entertainment programmes. Star Bangla, backed by the Star Group, may also step in.

The quality bottomline

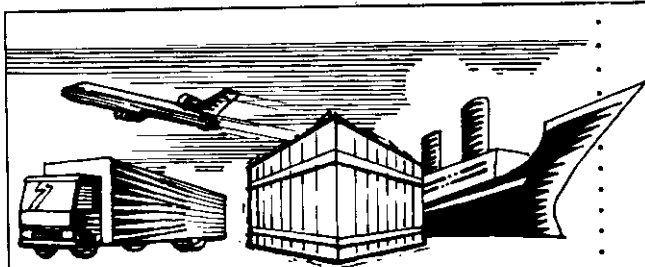
The one challenge facing ETV, which its management understands only too well, will be in the quality of programmes. Says Dring, "We may set up a separate outfit just to train our staff and contracted independents. That we hope will be a continuous activity and contribute to the overall increase of programme quality."

ETV plans to transmit 12 hours on weekdays and over 17 hours during the weekend. "Programming will be split into NCA [news and current affairs], entertainment and development programmes. We are committing at least two hours every day to development progra-

mmes," informs filmmaker Fuad Chowdhury, a non-resident Bangladeshi who has returned home to work with ETV as in-charge of the development programmes. Like Fuad, ETV may rope in some other NRBs. "For them this is mainstream work and not just a subsidised ethnic venture. That makes a lot of difference," says Fuad.

But it is the news and current affairs section, into which heavy investment has gone, that will make or break ETV. And here it has a great opportunity given that BTV's news presentations have little credibility. "A lot of energy is going into planning the NCA which is not just about politics but which focusses on lives all over Bangladesh and on all the aspects. NCA has to be decentralised and should have a far more rural bias," says Dring, whose own experience of the last 35 years has been in news and current affairs.

Everything sounds upbeat right now, but that's how it is usually during the planning period. The broadcasters are promising the world, and in the first days of the *Ekushey* century, South Asia will get an inkling whether television can make a difference to the Bangladeshi's world. ▲



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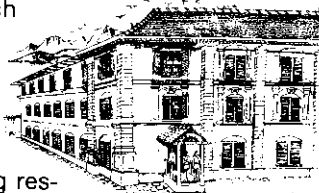


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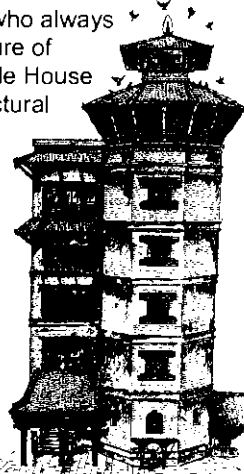
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SUMMER SCHEDULE EFFECTIVE FROM 24TH SEPTEMBER 1998

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

The news of a kidnapping

by **Rehan Ansari**

The house of Najam Sethi and Jugnu Mohsin, the couple who run *The Friday Times* newsweekly out of Lahore, was invaded on 8 May by men claiming to be from the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), even though many of them were in Punjab Police uniform. They beat up the private security guards, locked Jugnu Mohsin in the bathroom and took away Najam Sethi without indicating charges.

The next day, Asma Jehangir, the well-known human rights lawyer, approached the Lahore High Court on behalf of Jugnu Mohsin and was reported to have called the event a kidnapping by the state. The Lahore High Court directed the government to explain itself (but did not order it to produce the detainee). The advocate general of Punjab pleaded ignorance of the whereabouts of Sethi. Meanwhile, the federal government in Islamabad stated that the arrest had been made "in connection" with the report the Pakistani high commissioner to India had given on Sethi's speech in Delhi (see following pages). Subsequently, an interior ministry spokesman admitted that Sethi was in the custody of the ISI, whereupon it argued that since the ISI is a military agency, Sethi cannot be produced before a civilian court in a habeas corpus petition.

Such explanations apart, it is clear that what Najam Sethi said in Delhi before an India International Centre (IIC) crowd had very little to do with his being picked up. His address described Pakistan's ideological, economic, legal crises no better or worse than the daily debates in Pakistan's English-language editorial pages, and much of what he had said had already come out in his editorials, and in particular, at an address before the National Defence College earlier in the year.

The real reason can be traced to

the fact that *The Friday Times* has been stubbornly focusing on the financial shenanigans of the ruling Sharifs clan of Prime Minister Nawaz and his brother, Shahbaz, the chief minister of Punjab — unrepaid loans being the principal embarrassment. Najam Sethi had also given an interview to the BBC team preparing a documentary on the Sharifs. (Two other journalists who have spoken to the BBC have also been harassed: Imtiaz Alam of *The News* daily had his car set on fire, and Hussain Haqqani, also of *The Friday Times*, has been arrested. The magistrate's report said that Haqqani bore the marks of a beating.)

Lahore is one of the most insular cities of the Subcontinent, which is perhaps why Sethi's arrest and the invasion of his home and privacy, do not seem to have struck a chord. Najam Sethi and Jugnu Mohsin live in the upper-class enclave of Gulberg, which may be why the average Lahori found it easier to show unconcern.

Whatever the cause, few Lahoris seemed impressed with the argument that Najam Sethi's speech at Delhi's IIC was a double-edged re-

buke. It actually chided the Indian establishment for its less-than-great-power habit of picking fights with Pakistan, its Kashmiri repression and for its insane initiatives in the arms race, one that will create an economically unstable Pakistan, which is bound to evolve as a terrible threat to its neighbour. Sethi had made threadbare the hypocrisy of the Indian offer for a no-first-strike nuclear weapons agreement and the rejection of the no-war-pact offer of Pakistan. Nor was anyone impressed, including the prime minister it seems, with the compliments Najam paid to Nawaz Sharif for his peace initiatives with India.

The sentiment a lot of people did express was that it is fine for Najam Sethi to speak his mind in Lahore, but not in Delhi. This may have to do with the perception that Sethi is politically active (he was a minister in the last caretaker government in 1996) and not a dissident above the political fray. It also has to do with the peculiar notion of territorialism that persists even in this digital age in a South Asia which is moving back to the feudal. ▲

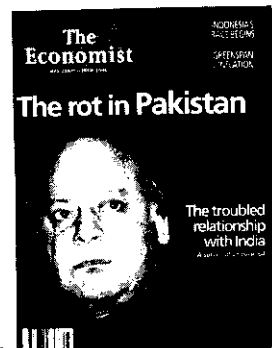
Sharif Scissorhands

NAWAZ SHARIF and his men are turning out to be South Asia's Great Scissorhands. Having had some prominent members of the domestic press pulled up for showing them and the nation in what they perceive to be an unsavoury light, their wrath turned international with the seizure of the widely read and respected *The Economist* (of 22-28 May), for carrying a cover-story titled "The rot in Pakistan".

The *Economist* story, with a fierce-looking Sharif peering out of the cover against a Gothic-green background, detailed the chaos that is Paki-

stan today, and even went on to tell donors like the IMF, which by end-May was supposed to loan USD 1.6 billion, not to release funds. "Pakistan under Mr Sharif is moving in the wrong direction. It seems perverse to give it more cash to speed it on its way," wrote the weekly.

The result: about 4000 copies of the magazine seized at Karachi airport.



"A State-Nation ra

Text of Najam Sethi's speech at the India International Centre in New Delhi, 30 April 1999



SEBASTIAN JOHN/OUTLOOK

Mr I.K. Gujral, Prof Satish Kumar, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to be here among such a distinguished gathering of Indian policy makers, scholars, senior journalists, analysts and keen Pakistan watchers. I will keep my lecture short so that we can spend time on questions and answers and benefit from an informal dialogue at the end of the lecture. I assume that most people here today are broadly familiar with political developments in Pakistan.

At the start, I should like to inform you that the gist of this lecture has been made at various Pakistani forums already. Indeed, the part relating to Pakistan was published almost word for word in my newspaper as an editorial some months ago. So it should not come as a surprise to my Pakistani compatriots here and at home. I do not practise double-standards, as will be evident in due course. I am deeply and passionately concerned about what is going on in my country and I am not afraid of speaking the truth at any forum in my quest for posing the problem.

Pakistan's socio-political environment is in the throes of a severe multi-dimensional crisis. I refer to six major crises which confront Pakistan on the eve of the new millennium:

- 1) the crisis of identity and ideology
- 2) the crisis of law, constitution and political system
- 3) the crisis of economy
- 4) the crisis of foreign policy

5) the crisis of civil society

6) the crisis of national security

These crises haven't suddenly emerged out of the blue. I have been talking and writing about the inexorable germination and development of these crises for many years. Now they are all upon Pakistan simultaneously, with greater or lesser intensity.

The **crisis of identity and ideology** refers to the fact that after 50 years, Pakistanis are still unable to collectively agree upon who we are as a nation, where we belong, what we believe in and where we want to go. In terms of our identity and our demands, are we Pakistanis first and then Punjabis, Sindhis, Baloch, Pathan or Mohajirs or vice versa? Do we belong—in the sense of our future bearings and anchors—do we belong to South Asia or do we belong to the Middle East? In terms of ideology, are we Muslims in a moderate Muslim state or Muslims in an orthodox Islamic state? In other words, are we supposed to be like Saudi Arabia or Iran—which are orthodox Islamic states—or are we supposed to be like Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, etc, which are supposed to be liberal Muslim states? And if none of these fit the bill, what then? Whose version and vision of Islam do we follow? The *Qur'an* and Sunnah, say some people. Well, if the Quaid-e-Azam and Allama Iqbal both had their own interpretations of how the *Qur'an* and Sunnah were to be applied in the real life of a modern state like Pakistan, the problem has been compounded by the myriad interpretations of their interpretations of an Islamic state. And the problem doesn't end there.

The Jamaat-i-Islami, the Sipah-i-Sahaba, the Jamiat-i-Ulema-i-Islam

and countless other Islamic parties and Islamic sects all have their so-called exclusive Islamic axes to grind. So there is no agreement, no consensus on this issue. Indeed, there is so much tension, violence and confusion associated with this issue that it has begun to hurt Pakistan considerably. It has assumed the form of an identity and ideological crisis.

The **crisis of law, constitution and political system** refers to the fact that: a) there is not one set of laws in Pakistan but two—the Anglo-Saxon tradition which we inherited from the past and the Islamic tradition which we have foisted in recent times. Most Pakistanis are trained and experienced in the former but some Pakistanis hanker for the latter. The two traditions co-exist in an environment of fear, corruption and hypocrisy. Increasingly, they seem to be at serious odds with each other, as for example on the question of how to treat interest rates in a modern capitalist economy, what status to grant to universal human and fundamental rights, how to treat women and minorities, etc.

b) The crisis is also reflected in the nature and extent to which the constitution has been mangled by democrats and dictators, lawyers and judges, all alike. The reference here is to several highly controversial constitutional amendments, past and pending; but it is also to highly contentious, even suspect, decisions by the courts acting as handmaidens to the executive; and to the motivations and actions of certain judges in pursuit of personal ambition, pecuniary gains or political advancement. Indeed, many lawmakers do not obey the law and some of our judges are perceived in contemptuous terms by

...ther than a Nation-State"

the public.

c) The crisis is manifest, above all, in the rapid public disenchantment with the political system of so-called democracy. Democracy is supposed to be about the supremacy of the law and constitution, about the necessity of checks and balances between the different organs of the state, about the on-going accountability of public office holders, and so on. But it has degenerated into a system based exclusively on elections which return deaf and dumb public representatives to rubber stamp parliaments. So we have the form of democracy but not its essence or content. We have the rituals of democracy but not its soul. I don't know what this system is, but it is certainly not democracy.

The **crisis of economy** refers to the fact that: a) Pakistan is well and truly bankrupt—indeed if the international community had not bailed out Pakistan recently, the country would have succumbed to financial default.

b) Worse, we appear to have no means left by which to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps without a massive convulsion in state and society. This is manifest in our total dependence on foreign assistance. Indeed, the crisis of economy is so severe that it has begun to impinge on our sovereignty as an independent state and is eroding our traditional construction of national security. The economic crisis is reflected in a crisis of growth, a crisis of distribution, a crisis of production and a crisis of finance. It is threatening massive and violent dislocations in state and society.

The **crisis of foreign policy** is now coming home to roost. We are not only friendless in the region in which we live, we are being blackballed and blackmailed by the international community to which we are indebted up to our ears. If

foreign policy is supposed to be rooted in and geared to domestic objectives and concerns, we have reversed the order of things. Our foreign policy seems to have a life of its own. It dictates our domestic policies rather than the other way round. This is why there is no long-term consistency or strength in it. One day, we say that Kashmir is the "core issue without whose prior settlement none of the other contentious issues with India can be resolved". The next day, we say that progress on the other issues can be made without a settlement of the Kashmir issue. One day we say that Kashmir is a multilateral issue, the next day we emphasise the urgency of bilateral dialogue with India. One day, we are quick to recognise the Taliban government in Kabul and exhort the other nations of the world to follow suit; the next day we give our blessings to the idea of a broad-based, multi-ethnic, multi-religious "consensus" government in Kabul. One day Iran is our historic and strategic friend, the next day we stand accused by Iran of unmentionable actions. One day, Central Asia is billed as the promised land. The next day, it is arrayed against us in hostile terms. One day, the United States is our godfather. The next day it is the ugly American. The worst has now come to pass. For 50 years we worried about the threat on our eastern borders with India. Today we are anxious about our western front with Iran and Afghanistan.

The **crisis of civil society** is demonstrated in many ways. In increasingly low turnouts for elections. In continuing deterioration of law and order. In rising sectarianism, ethnicity and regionalism. In the breakdown of civil utilities and amenities. In the erosion of the administrative system. In violence and armed conflict. In mass criminalisation and alienation

of the people. In a rising graph of disorders, suicides, drug abuse, rape, kidnappings and outright terrorism. The rise of criminal and religious mafias, *kabza* groups, extra-judicial killings, etc, testify to the breakdown of social connections and civil compacts between the Pakistani state and the Pakistani people.

These crises have all culminated into a severe **crisis of national security**. Pakistan's political system, its political leadership, its structure of law and constitution, its administrative framework, its economic stagnation, its ideological hypocrisy and its friendless foreign policy are no longer tenable. They have all contributed to a comprehensive erosion of National Security. If the tide is not reversed quickly, it will engulf Pakistan in its wake. Indeed, the argument that Pakistan is a "failing state" made by some people is based on perceptions of this multi-dimensional crisis.

Getting out of hell

So, if Pakistanis know what the hell is going on, and if Pakistanis know where the hell they are going, the question remains: how the hell do Pakistanis get out of this hell?

This question has two parts. First, what sort of agendas are required to be implemented to get out of this hell? Second, who will implement such agendas?

The answer to the first question is simple enough. Or at least it is simple enough for me. I ask my fellow Pakistanis to look at each of the crises referred to above and then I demand that the factors which have led to the crisis should be swiftly addressed. Let us take each of the crises and remark on how to resolve the crisis.

Crisis of ideology: In my view, there is only one modern-day ideology over whose application there can be no bitter or divisive

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controversy and which will be acceptable to all Pakistanis, irrespective of caste, creed, gender, region, ethnicity, sect, etc. And that is the ideology of economic growth, the ideology of full employment, the ideology of distributive justice and social welfare. I say Pakistan should make this ideology the ideology of the state and thereby bury all false consciousness and false ideologies.

Crisis of law, constitution and political system: I say Pakistan must revamp the political system and revise the constitution so that the political system and the constitution are made to serve the people below instead of the corrupt elites above.

Crisis of economy: I say that the Pakistani state should honour its international contracts; enforce its domestic loan repayments; tax the rich; dispossess the corrupt; live within its means; vitalise its human resources; export the value of its scientific talents; establish and enforce a genuine private-public partnership in which the private sector produces efficiently and the public sector regulates effectively.

Crisis of civil society: I say enforce the rule of law; disarm society; disband militias; decentralise decision-making and power; establish accountability; protect minorities and women; create social nets for the disadvantaged, poor and destitute; provide decentralised and quick justice.

Crisis of foreign policy: I say make friends, not masters or enemies; bury cold-war hatchets; renounce post-cold-war jihads; negotiate terms of trade, not territorial ambitions; redefine strategic depth to mean emphasis on internal will rather than external space.

Crisis of national security: I say redefine security to mean not only military defence but also economic vitality, social cohesion and international respect; and I say Pakistan should determine its minimal optimal defence deterrent but shun an arms race.

The answer to the second question—namely, who will pursue

and implement this agenda—is difficult only for one reason: I cannot see even one leader or institution in Pakistan who or which personifies National Power and has the three virtues or elements which are required to get Pakistan out of this mess. These are: vision, courage and integrity. The vision to chart a particular course; the courage to implement it ruthlessly; and the integrity to ensure that it doesn't get derailed. My hope, of course, is that someone or some institution will throw up such leadership in time to come. My fear is that if this doesn't happen soon enough, it may be too late later.

The Other

I would now like to turn briefly to one factor that impinges greatly on Pakistan's past, present and future, one which should concern all of you who are assembled here today. That is Pakistan's relationship with India. In one crucial sense, India remains a determining factor vis-a-vis Pakistan. The Pakistani state has come to be fashioned largely in response to perceived and propagated, real and imagined threats to its national security from India. The mentality and outlook of the Pakistani state is therefore that of a historically besieged state. That is why conceptions of national security, defined in conventional military terms, dominate the Pakistani state's thinking on many issues. Indeed, that is why state outlook dominates government policies. That is why Pakistan's foreign policy runs its domestic policy rather than the other way round. That is why Pakistan's economy is hostage to Pakistan's cold war conceptions of "national security" rather than being an integral part of it. That is why Pakistan is more a state-nation rather than a nation-state.

This has had far-reaching implications for the lack of development of a sustainable and stable democratic political culture in Pakistan. Indeed, and more critically, it has directly spawned extra-state institutions espousing Islamic

fundamentalism and jihad. And it is these forces which are undermining the compact between the state and people of Pakistan, thereby adversely impacting on political discourse in the country.

Pakistan's obsession with India hurts Pakistan deeply. But the roots of this obsession cannot be shrugged away by India. Indeed, India may be said to be the root cause of Pakistan's insecurity. Apart from pre-Partition history, there is the fact of a great injustice done to Pakistan by India over Kashmir and the dismemberment of Pakistan in which India played a critical and leading role. For precisely this reason, one of the fallouts of this obsession is the decade-long low-intensity-conflict in Kashmir. Another is the tit-for-tat nuclear and missile tests by Pakistan and its refusal to sign a no-first-strike agreement with India which in turn means that Pakistan cannot get a no-war pact from India.

In this way, if Pakistan's past is umbilically linked to that of India, its future cannot but be shaped by India's future, as well as have an impact on it. If the rise of fundamentalist Islam threatens Pakistan's body-politic, India cannot expect to escape its negative fallout. If a nuclear arsenal is assembled in Pakistan, India's security cannot be vouchsafed by all the nuclear weapons at its disposal. If Pakistan fails as a nation-state and becomes a rogue regime marked by social anarchy and upheaval, India's army will not be able to contain its disruptive and destabilising impact. If Pakistan is drawn into an arms race with India, the logic of the situation will fuel the sources of conflict between the two countries rather than provide security to either country.

Of course, this does not mean that India should constantly look over its shoulder while seeking to determine its own national security policies. But it does mean that India cannot ever be a great power or great nation if its own backyard is seething with resentment and turmoil.

"Contemptible treachery"

The report sent in by the Pakistani high commissioner in New Delhi, Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, was the reason ostensibly behind Najam Sethi's arrest. The following is an excerpt of the report as quoted by a Pakistani government spokesman in Islamabad while commenting on Sethi's arrest. Reported in Dawn.



TRIBHUVAN THAKUR/OUTLOOK

MY OWN view is that Najam Sethi's attempt to pose as a heroic liberal fighting against corruption and tyranny by portraying his country as an irrational, contradictory, corrupt, unstable and dangerous entity — and that too in India of all places! — is an act of contempt against Pakistan amounting to the most contemptible treachery.

Mr Sethi claimed Pakistan did not know what it stood for. Was it Jinnah's Pakistan or Iqbal's Pakistan? It did not know whether it was an Islamic fundamentalist or modern state. It did not know what was its relationship to the Subcontinent, and whether it was Arab or Persian or Central Asian or Afghan, etc. It was, in short, a confused state!

Mr Sethi claimed that law and order was non-existent, there was mafia rule and violence including 'terrorism' and the political system was completely corrupt and dysfunctional.

Mr Sethi proclaimed the economy bankrupt and that, but for emergency international assistance, the country would have gone into default.

Mr Sethi alleged Pakistan was totally isolated and its foreign policy did not represent state interests. He pronounced Pakistan as insecure and 'obsessed with India' and merely complained that India had done 'an injustice to Pakistan' by denying it 'an honourable settlement' on Kashmir.

Domestically, Mr Sethi said civic society had totally collapsed and various extremist and fundamentalist groups including 'terrorist groups' had completely

taken over from the State. Corruption, hypocrisy, violence and indifference ruled the day.

In submission, Sethi announced that Pakistan instead of being a 'national-state' [sic] had become a 'state-nation' suggesting its artificiality, i.e. something that no longer represented the interests of its people. He then proceeded to suggest a series of solutions to Pakistan's crises in the most sketchy, rhetorical and meaningless terms, and finally concluded that there was no hope of finding anyone who could implement any of his solutions to save Pakistan from itself. In other words, this 'eminent liberal scholar' from Pakistan [told] an elite Indian audience that Pakistan was all but a lost cause.

In this vein, Sethi also alleged that Pakistan had become an 'unstable nuclear state' and that unless there was a Kashmir settlement, Pakistan was capable of doing anything. He used this condemnation of his country as an argument for India to consider 'an honourable solution' to the problem...

Sethi's pathetic and treacherous condemnation of his own country was music to his audience's ears. Sethi was not just criticising the government (which would have been his democratic right but utterly inappropriate in India anyway). Sethi was actually presenting an analysis of Pakistan that, without explicitly saying so effectively, suggested to his enraptured Indian audience that they were right to hold the belief that Pakistan should never have been created in the first place.

Indeed, as long as India's quest for great powerdom is based on its strategy of military outreach, it is bound to be thwarted in its ambitions by tit-for-tat Pakistan. Therefore India will be recognised as a great power in the new millennium not on the basis of its numerical military superiority in the region but by the extent to which the countries of South Asia, including Pakistan, are economically interdependent on each other and take their lead independent of the super powers. A pre-requisite for this is that India should make enduring peace with Pakistan on

principled and honourable terms and resolve the Kashmir dispute, thereby helping the forces of civil society in Pakistan to fashion a new state which is subservient to the Pakistani nation instead of the other way round.

By way of concluding, I should just like to remind everyone of one lesson of modern history: vibrant and stable democracies are less likely to go to war than authoritarian states which live and survive on the basis or threat of war.

Thank you very much for your patience. I would be happy to take your questions now.

Excerpts:

If Pakistan is in such a crisis, why should the Kashmiris want to join it?

That is a question which you Indians should ask the Kashmiris. But you know what they will say, that is why you don't ask this question of them. At any rate, if 100 million people in Pakistan are in a bad way, over 400 million people in India are worse off. So let us not try to score points over each other. Let us try and address the real issues.

Will Pakistan accept the LoC as an international border?

No, never. It is only in India's

interest to legitimise the status quo. We want to change it because it is illegitimate.

Nawaz Sharif could have gone so far, so quickly, reaching out to India. Will India reciprocate?

India agree to a no-war pact with Pakistan if its intentions are honourable?

Was the Lahore Summit a historic event?

The Lahore Summit will only go down in history if it is an anti-history event, if it succeeds in burying the history of the last 50 years. But that is the great challenge. ...the ball is in India's court yet again. Unless India makes an enduring and honourable settlement with Pakistan over Kashmir, there will be no peace in the Subcontinent. If this dialogue doesn't take off, a great opportunity will be lost. No PM other than

Why doesn't Pakistan accept a no-first-strike agreement with India?

Pakistan's conventional defense capabilities have been greatly reduced since the Americans cut off all assistance to Pakistan in 1990. Its reliance on the nuclear deterrent is therefore all the greater. That is why India should be cautioned about considering "hot-pursuit" into Pakistani territory. Our retaliation would be swift and massive. My question to all of you is: why doesn't

Is Nawaz Sharif trying to Islamise Pakistan via the Shariah Bill?

No. The 15th amendment is a horrendous piece of pending legislation. It has nothing to do with Islam. Its sole purpose is to make Nawaz Sharif an absolute dictator. If that amendment is passed, it will lead to bitter strife and instability which will worsen the crises I have been talking about. ▲

"Sethi was not revealing a state secret"

- I.K. Gujral

LISTENING TO Najam Sethi's Kewal Singh Memorial Lecture, my mind went back over several eras of Pakistani history. In the course of half a century of sovereignty, many dictators and autocrats had tried to suppress Pakistan's inherent spirit of liberty and outspokenness, until a democratic polity finally dawned. Now though they occasionally experience difficulties, elected governments, a free press and courageous NGOs are still centrestage. The task of social transformation in traditional societies is onerous, particularly in the initial stages when the mask of cultural hypocrisy is laid bare. But Parliament can perform its role effectively only with the assistance of the media.

Najam Sethi was not saying anything that we in India had not heard before. Nor are our own shortfalls hidden from the gaze of neighbouring countries. Satellite television and the Internet have lit up previously dark corners, broadcasting to all and sundry the existence of wide chasms between the pretensions and practices of the ruling elite, who believe they can suppress independent views with the help of police and hoodlums, that government-sponsored propaganda can black out reality. But why talk of Pakistan? Here in our own country, we have witnessed our worthy minister of information expressing similar beliefs while eroding the autonomy of Prasar Bharati. In the era of social transformation, autocratic regimes and minds want to edit both history and news. Bold practitioners of the media whose only tool is their credibility are bound to resist.

Najam Sethi was only re-stating what he had already written in his newspaper. But a false sense of national pride overcame Pakistani diplomats: the spirit was "why say it here in India", still "enemy country" despite all the bus journeys and the lauded Lahore

Declaration. The Pakistani high commissioner in Delhi who filed the FIR against Sethi perhaps felt the need to protect himself lest he be accused of dereliction of duty. But this action and the leaking of his secret report by an Islamabad official only caused him immense embarrassment here. He will obviously be the main prosecution witness if and when Sethi is brought before a court.

Sethi was not revealing a state secret when he said the US sanctions were imposing a heavy burden on Pakistan's economy. Nor did he tell us for the first time the agonising details of terrorist activities in Karachi and elsewhere. The gun is loud enough to be heard on its own. The cult of violence is causing anxiety to us as well; we recently saw the scion of a political family kill a girl who refused to serve him a drink. If this story were to be carried in Pakistani periodicals, would we brand it an "anti-Indian move"?

Sethi may have chosen sharp rhetoric. He used the word "crises" to describe a variety of challenges confronting Pakistan. Since I am temperamentally a moderate, I had counselled Sethi that the word "difficulties" may be more appropriate. Journalists tend to describe a spade as a sword; persons of my temperament call it a twig. All the same, overreacting to well-meaning utterances or writing does not serve the cause of democratic life, it is dissent and debate that generate progress. Otherwise, we would still believe that the sun revolves around a flat earth.

-Excerpted from "Why Najam Is Necessary" in Outlook.



Massaging the official message

Mushahid Hussain is just doing his job. He stands out because he is a former journalist defending a government that is hounding the press.

by **Khaled Ahmed**

Pakistan's Information Minister Mushahid Hussain Syed has two personas: one journalistic which cultivates easy camaraderie with the press in Pakistan, the other political which bows to the culture of defending the government, right or wrong. If a journalist is wronged by his government, he will let him know privately the wrong happened because his advice was rejected, then issue a strong official statement justifying the action.

This split personality has hurt Mushahid both ways. It has caused disenchantment among the journalist community, and it has undermined his status within the party in power. In April when the Jang Group of newspapers were under attack from Nawaz Sharif government (see *Himal March 1999*), he sent out secret messages saying he had advised against the action. Later it was revealed that he was very much part of the crackdown.

In the aftermath of the 'arrest' of Najam Sethi, chief editor of *The Friday Times* weekly, he has repeated the routine. In Hong Kong, he privately let on to his critics that he was not involved, but officially defended the arrest and secret confinement of Sethi on charges of "collaborating with India". That's the expertise Mushahid has developed in a government where he has had to fight the other Sharif loyalists to get to the top and remain there.

High-water mark

Mushahid Hussain Syed was a journalist once, and a very well regarded one. Unlike Hussain Haqqani, another journalist recently harassed by the government, who gained fame as a correspondent of *The Far*

Eastern Economic Review and was an ill-concealed proxy of General Zia's, Mushahid was not politically aligned. His high-water mark as a journalist came in 1983, as editor of Islamabad's *The Muslim*, when his was the best reporting on General Zia's military assault on the province of Sindh. He was not the arm-chair editor writing editorials.



Mushahid Hussain

He travelled and reported on the spot.

It was while editing *The Muslim* that he was ousted from his job in 1988 for "collaborating with India" in helping well-known Indian journalist Kuldip Nayar interview Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb. After the interview appeared in British papers, then prime minister Mohammed Khan Junejo pressured the management at *The Muslim* to fire Mushahid.

He then worked as a freelancer until 1993 when he joined the media cell of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML). This was after President

Ghulam Ishaq Khan dismissed the government of Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party returned to power in the subsequent elections. In 1996, President Farooq Leghari dismissed the Bhutto government and Nawaz Sharif swept to power with an overwhelming majority in the Lower House of the Parliament in 1997.

Mushahid Hussain was made senator and subsequently information minister.

Mushahid comes from a respected Shia family of Lahore. A graduate of international relations from Boston University, he taught international affairs in the mid-1970s at Lahore's Punjab University. Considered a leftist and a known critic of the US, he challenged Washington's global policy as neo-imperialism. He was also an opponent of India's "hegemonic designs" in South Asia, supported Pakistan's nuclear ambitions and advocated the testing of a nuclear device in response to India's 1974 Pokhran test.

As a journalist, Mushahid did adhere to an ideology — the ideology of anti-Americanism. He was inclined to support anyone who challenged America's hegemony. When Pakistan's then chief of army staff General Mirza Aslam Beg, announced his theory of "strategic defiance" (of the US) on the eve of the Gulf war in 1990, he supported it. And after General Beg set up his FRIENDS organisation upon retirement, Mushahid joined it, taking out processions in favour of testing Pakistan's nuclear device.

His left-wing orientation however dissipated with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Following the

revolution in Iran, a Shia-majority country, Mushahid became a great admirer of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Iranian revolution inspired all Muslims but it affected the anti-American and Shia Mushahid deeply. He became an Islamist. But being an Islamist in Pakistan is a rather complicated affair. And being in the Muslim League, which has a support base consisting largely of orthodox Sunni left-overs from the Zia era, complicates it further.

During the 1990-93 government of Nawaz Sharif, Mushahid was an important means of communication between Islamabad and Teheran. But Pakistan's relations with Iran began to sour in 1994 with the two countries supporting opposing forces in Afghanistan. The rise of the Taliban and their support from Islamabad, along with the ongoing Shia-Sunni mayhem in Punjab, brought the two on to a collision course. The Muslim League veered further right, and Mushahid came under pressure. His Iran connection soon became suspect, forcing him to keep a low profile. That remained the case until he became minister in 1997.

Among the faithful

During his second tenure, Sharif has gradually tamed all the institutions that could challenge him. He ousted President Farooq Leghari, who had dismissed the PPP government and time-barrred the accountability law to bring him to power. He amended the 8th Amendment in the constitution to become the appointer of chief of the army staff, then proceeded to get rid of the army chief Jehangir Karamat. And when it was felt that the chief justice would hear cases against the prime minister, a rebellion was engineered within the judiciary and the chief justice removed. Before this, the Supreme Court was assaulted by the Muslim Leaguers to prevent the bench from hearing cases against Sharif.

The BBC news footage of the incident at the Supreme Court showed Mushahid among the faithfuls bargaining into the Supreme Court to put

his loyalty to the prime minister on record. Others were far more aggressive and were indicted for insulting the court. For his part, Mushahid, as information minister, defended each step of the government as fulfillment of the democratic ideal.

Meanwhile, as Nawaz Sharif moved close to Washington, Mushahid's pre-1993 rhetoric was trimmed accordingly to defend the relationship. His anti-India stance was likewise modified when Nawaz Sharif moved to normalise relations with India. Nawaz Sharif's ambivalence provided space for Mushahid to function easily. His line now was "Pakistani decisions are made in Pakistan", implying that in the past this was not the case. When in May 1998 Pakistan exploded its nuclear device, Mushahid Hussain's old dream was realised.

There is nothing unusual in the behaviour of Mushahid Hussain. That's the way information ministers are supposed to behave in this part of the world. They 'create' the image of the government, and control the damage to this image when the government goes wayward.

The press in Pakistan is right-wing and dotes on Nawaz Sharif — the Urdu section more than the English one — and as such, Mushahid's job is not a particularly tough one. His only problem is that the government, ill-advised by the prime minister's inner coterie, keeps on whipping a willing horse and gives itself a bad

name at home and abroad.

Thus you have the ridiculous phenomenon of column-writers singing panegyrics on Sharif on the editorial pages, complete with mug-shots to register with a non-reading prime minister, while the news pages carry stories about journalists being roughed up by the regime's secret agencies.

Why should Mushahid be picked on? After all, he is only a party man, contesting turf with many other Muslim Leaguers close to the prime minister. He is not even in the inner sanctum and there are many who would like to see him trip up in his work. He is doing his job much the same way as BJP information minister did when Hindu fanatics were killing Christians in India.

Perhaps he stands out a bit more in the double-speak jungle of Pakistan because he is articulate and himself comes from the community of journalists that is being hounded by the government he speaks for. ▲



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Eqbal Ahmad

(1934?-1999)

An intellectual unintimidated by power or authority

Eqbal Ahmad, perhaps the shrewdest and most original anti-imperialist analyst of Asia and Africa, has died, aged 66, in Islamabad following an operation for colon cancer. A man of enormous charisma and incorruptible ideals, he was a prodigious talker and lecturer.

He had an almost instinctive attraction to movements of the oppressed and the persecuted, whether in Europe, America, Bosnia, Chechnya, South Lebanon, Vietnam, Iraq or the Indian Subcontinent. He had a formidable knowledge of history, always measuring the promise of religion and nationalism against their depredations and abuse as their proponents descended into fundamentalism, chauvinism and provincialism. Ahmad was a fierce, often angry, combatant against what he perceived as human cruelty and perversity...

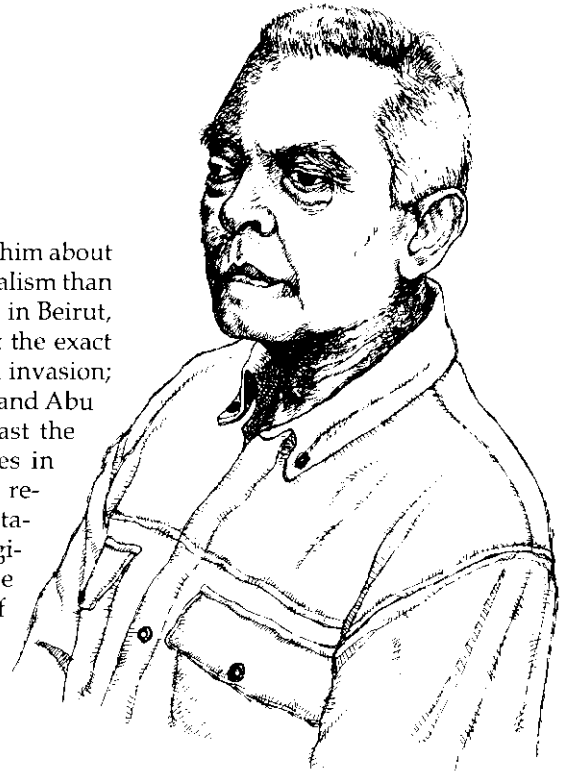
Ahmad was an early and prominent opponent of the Vietnam war, and in 1970 was tried with the Berrigan brothers on a trumped-up charge of conspiracy to kidnap Henry Kissinger — on which he and his alleged co-conspirators were acquitted. In addition to his outspoken support of unpopular causes (especially Palestinian rights), Ahmad's uncompromising politics kept him an untenured professor at various universities until 1982, when Hampshire College, Massachusetts, made him a professor. He taught there until he became emeritus professor in 1998, dividing his time between New England and Pakistan.

During these years he travelled all over the world. Arabs, for ex-

ample, learned more from him about the failures of Arab nationalism than from anyone else. In 1980, in Beirut, he was the first to predict the exact outlines of the 1982 Israeli invasion; in a memo to Yasir Arafat and Abu Jihad he also sadly forecast the quick defeat of PLO forces in South Lebanon. He was a relentless opponent of militarism, bureaucracy, ideological rigidity and what he called "the pathology of power". He was consulted by journalists and international civil servants about abstruse currents in contemporary Afghanistan, Algeria, Iran, India, Pakistan, Angola, Cuba, Sri Lanka, and he had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the US.

No one who saw him sitting bare-foot and cross-legged on a living-room floor, conversing genially until the early hours, with a glass in his hand, will ever forget the sight or the sound of his voice as he announced 'four major points' — but never got past two or three. He loved literature, especially poetry, and the sensitive and precise use of language, whether it was Urdu, English, French, Arabic or Farsi. Ahmad was that rare thing, an intellectual unintimidated by power or authority, a companion in arms to such diverse figures as Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Tariq Ali, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Richard Falk, Fred Jameson, Alexander Cockburn and Daniel Berrigan.

Immaculate in dress and expression, faultlessly kind, an unpretentious connoisseur of food and wine, he saw himself as a man of the 18th century, modern because of enlightenment and breadth of outlook, not because of technological or quasi-scientific 'progress'. Somehow



he managed to preserve his native Muslim tradition without succumbing either to the frozen exclusivism or to the jealousy that has often gone with it. Humanity and secularism had no finer champion. ▲

—Edward Said in *The Guardian*

The cosmopolitan leftist

Eqbal Ahmad had a wonderfully analytical mind. He could conceptualise events and policies with great ease when most of us looked in vain for theoretical frameworks. As events took place and policies were applied or misapplied, journalism had to wait for the final word from Eqbal Ahmad to understand what was happening in the world and inside Pakistan.

His left-wing past was cosmopolitan. He had seen the cold war world getting divided in a cruel confrontational politics that destroyed many men of integrity. While teaching in the United States, he challenged the US establishment suc-

cessfully. Some of his best writings came out of that period. When he took on the US, it was on the basis of facts that no one could challenge.

Tragically, his efforts to set up a centre of learning in Pakistan came to grief. Khalidunia, the name he gave to his university, promised an independence of inquiry that Islamabad was not willing to tolerate. The threat was not so much the proposed university's left-wing anti-imperialist orientation, but its potential to challenge the state in Pakistan and its coercive religious ideology.

In 1991, while editing *The Frontier Post*, I happened to pick a bone with him through an editorial. My contention was that his blanket anti-Americanism was playing into the hands of the fundamentalists. He was so offended that to placate him I had to send him a written apology, an undertaking which I have never regretted. There were so many issues on which I found support in his columns that I sincerely realised the mistake I had made.

Later, as he became disenchanted with the Iranian revolution and the tightening of the ideological noose in Pakistan, he perhaps realised the risk of appearing to court popularity in the wrong quarters. His view of the Indo-Pakistan rivalry and the Kashmir dispute was so balanced that publications in South Asia and

the West frequently sought him out for comment. The establishments in Islamabad and New Delhi couldn't have liked him for what he said in his inimitable and persuasive style. His speeches in New Delhi stand as masterpieces of criticism that India was not used to hearing from Pakistanis.

The circle of friends who had lionised him during his early anti-American period gradually distanced themselves as his tough secular mind refused to bend to their programmes. He stayed away from such 'national' causes as the bomb and anti-liberalism as a device to save national sovereignty. As the Pakistani mind moved towards isolationism, he criticised policies that embodied defiance of the world opinion in the name of nationalism. His columns in *Dawn* can be cited as the best opinion-writing done in Pakistan in recent years. Clarity and conceptual strength were the hallmark of his journalism.

He was partisan to no one's politics, he was partisan only to his view of life and politics. He had no self-doubt over the views he embraced. Normally lack of self-doubt characterises the mind of the hawk, but his adherence to secularism had deep intellectual and civilisational roots. The old hawkish argument that being a 'dove' sent the wrong message to the 'enemy' never

washed with him. Towards the end, he stood away from both the intellectually frozen Left and the new aggressive nationalism of the hawks. ▲

—Khaled Ahmed

The itinerant intellectual

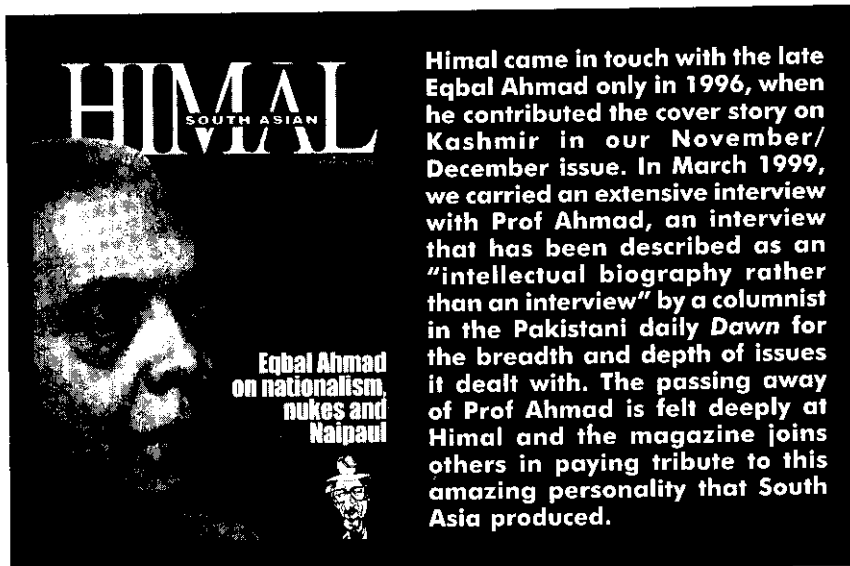
In the death of Eqbal Ahmad — the brilliant Pakistani political scientist, journalist, activist and thinker — India has lost one of her most illustrious sons.

In that paradoxical tribute lies an important clue to the life and work of Ahmad, which spanned highly dispersed causes and events, geographically and politically. From the Algerian revolution and the anti-Vietnam protest in North America to anti-nuclearism and planning for a new Khalidunia University at Islamabad that, he had hoped, would break out of the shackles of conventionality and the intellectual stupor that afflict the South Asian university system.

Despite knowing him for some thirty years, I came close to Ahmad only during the last decade or so. Strangely because it gradually became obvious to us that, while we shared almost nothing of each other's larger vision, we agreed on virtually everything that was of immediate political and intellectual concern to us.

Eqbal was a Bihari. Like most Westernised upper-class Biharis these days, Eqbal had a touch of the wandering, itinerant intellectual about him. Only he began his journey early, in the wake of the massive bloodshed and the uprooting that accompanied the division of British India 50 years ago. The tiredness of those 50 years had begun to show in recent years. Those like me, who feel maimed by his sudden death this week, may like to console themselves with the thought that Eqbal Ahmad deserves his rest. ▲

—Ashis Nandy



A bomb, a nation, a leader

Getting festive about nukes is one way of getting nationalism going.

by Zia Mian



On 28 May 1998, the government of Pakistan followed that of India's and tested nuclear devices. While everyone else worried about the prospect of nuclear war in South Asia, Eqbal Ahmad predicted that Pakistan's nuclear tests would have an even more profound impact on its domestic politics than on its defence or foreign policies. As on so many other occasions, the late thinker was proved right.

In early May, the government ordered 10 days of national celebrations to mark the first anniversary of Pakistan's newfound "self-reliance" and "impregnable defence". The festivities offer a window into the minds of those heading the world's newest nuclear weapon state and warn of a dangerous future for the country.

The numerous events organised and sponsored by the state made it clear that at one level the celebrations were designed to deepen and broaden support across the country for the government and for nuclear weapons. The events announced were to include "a competition of ten best *milli* (nationalistic) songs, seminars, fairs, festive public gatherings, candle processions, sports competi-

tions, bicycle races, flag hoisting ceremonies, etc." Thanksgiving prayers and special programmes for children and debates among school children were also arranged. Appropriate programmes were aired on national television and radio networks as well as local radio in the regional languages.

To make sure that no one missed out on what was being celebrated, cities and towns were decorated with banners and giant posters carrying pictures of Pakistan's nuclear weapons scientists and that of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif against a backdrop of mushroom clouds. The weapons themselves were not absent. Replicas of Pakistan's recently-tested nuclear missiles and a giant-scale model of the nuclear test site at Chaghai in Balochistan were put up. Even markets and crossroads were named after nuclear weapons scientists.

There has probably never been an occasion like this before. It is nothing less than glorying the capacity to commit mass murder and, as such, is fundamentally immoral. Weapons are tools of violence and fear; and nuclear weapons the ultimate in such tools. All decent

people detest them. No one should glory in their existence, let alone their possession.

Thrice-born Pakistan

But there is more here than glory. A state is using all its authority and institutional resources to build pride in having nuclear weapons into the very national identity of a people. Pakistanis are meant to rejoice and delight and think of themselves as citizens of "Nuclear-Pakistan"—a term used by the state media. To the extent the state succeeds at its efforts in creating a nuclearised nationalism, Pakistan, henceforth, shall be a country whose identity is based not just like others on a sense of a shared place, or history, language, culture, or even religion. Its identity shall be inextricably linked to a technology of mass destruction. For some, this has already happened, as Information Minister Mushahid Hussain proudly puts it: "Chaghai has become a symbol of Pakistan's identity all over the world."

It is worth considering how having imagined itself to be a nuclear nation, Pakistan will ever deal with nuclear disarmament. For nuclear hawks such as Mushahid Hussain,

who have orchestrated the celebrations, that day is never to be allowed to dawn. Whenever the question of disarmament is raised, they will point to the public support for the nuclear weapons they have worked so hard to manufacture and say: "How can we? Our people will not permit it. They want nuclear weapons." With this they are trying to close permanently the door to real peace. Far better in their view, an endless nuclear-armed confrontation with India, that in turn gives cause for demands for high military spending and excuses state failure and government excesses in other areas.

Reveling in the success of last year's nuclear tests was also meant to overcome the growing sense of fundamental political and social crisis gripping the country. The whole affair certainly had the feel of a circus, albeit a nuclear circus. It offered a national distraction, a brief respite from the grinding daily experience of failure that consumes the time, energy and resources of the people of the country. There is hardly any point in recounting either the specific failures or the crises that have created them. They are all so well-known.

The sense that in the glitter and the noise people were meant to forget that there have been 50 years of abject failure when it comes to the state providing them with social justice or basic needs is sharpened by the declaration that 28 May is the most important date since Independence. It suggests a search for a new beginning; the rebirth of a nation.

This third birth of Pakistan, after 1947 and 1971, is no more auspicious than the first two. Each birth has been violent and produced violence. The first, out of the horrors of Partition, failed to produce a viable constitution and led to military dictatorship and twice to war. The second birth, out of the slaughter in Bangladesh, failed to produce democracy and led to more dictatorship, and the sectarian demons who now haunt the land. The third life, a Pakistan born

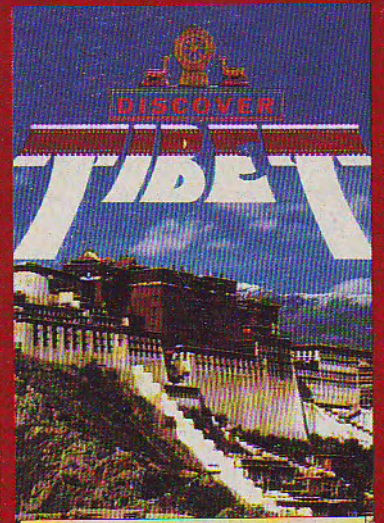
out of nuclear explosions, carries the threat of terminal violence.

Nuclearly virile

It is worth delving a little deeper into what the nuclear circus was meant to conceal. It was meant to be an affirmation of strength, pride and "virility" — at least that is what Pakistani President Rafiq Tarar called it. What this tries to conceal, if not erase altogether, is that events after last year's nuclear tests provided clear evidence of the weakness of this country.

The sanctions that were imposed by the international community after the tests were lifted not because the world was awed by Pakistan's new nuclear might, but because they took a really good look at it and were horrified by its obvious fragility. Sanctions were lifted because otherwise the country would have fallen apart and nobody wanted to see that happen, particularly now that nuclear weapons were involved. It was an act aimed to protect Pakistan from itself — or more accurately, to try to protect its people from the criminal stupidity and recklessness of its leaders.

It is easy to see how having to accept this realisation of weakness would have created a crisis among those who were responsible for taking the decision to test. On the one hand, they tested nuclear weapons and thought of themselves as being strong and having broken the "begging bowl". On the other, the world offered them pity and charity, because otherwise the country would collapse. And thus the nuclear circus as a way of ridding their minds of these fears and memories. The louder and brighter the circus, the deeper the anxiety about being weak could be pushed. No wonder then that government press releases insisted the nation was united "to pay tribute to the courage, statesmanship and maturity of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif". A bomb, a nation, a leader. ▲



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Designer condoms

A CONDOM CONFRONTATION is taking place in a federal courtroom in Newark in an emotionally charged dispute over the exquisite architecture of the prophylactic.

At the heart of the imbroglio is Dr Alla Venkata Krishna Reddy, 59, a surgeon turned businessman and inventor, who for the last decade has been a quixotic and controversial figure in the prophylactic world. Reddy's designs for condoms with built-in bulges are an attempt to rethink the way condoms work, prompting Adam Glickman, the founder of Condomania, a specialty retailer and Internet-based mail-order company, to call the taciturn Indian designer "the Leonardo da Vinci of the condom".

The court case, which involves a patent dispute over two Reddy designs, has unwittingly opened a window on the high art of condom design, as conservatively dressed lawyers, clutching male mannequins reduced to their most essential parts, argue the fine points of pouches and bulges and what constitutes design innovation in a condom...

Reddy, who is not affiliated with a big company, has been part of a new school of thought that seeks to revamp the contemporary image of condoms from necessary evil to alluring sex enhancer. He began designing barrier contraceptives, some of them downright bizarre, in 1986 while researching the AIDS virus, convinced that condoms were the only hope. "My gut feeling was there was not going to be a cure or a vaccine," Reddy recalled. His Pleasure Plus condom, which when inflated resembles an upside-down Boeing 747, was considered by some to be a radical departure when it was introduced in the early 1990s. It embodied Reddy's belief that "if you developed a condom with more pleasure, people would use it regularly."

Although condoms with mildly flared tops had been introduced before, Pleasure Plus was notable for its asymmetry and for exploiting the friction inherent in moving latex. It had a baggy tubular pouch that sidled

up against the underside of the glans penis. "He understood nerve endings and anatomy," Glickman of Condomania said, adding that the Pleasure Plus developed a "cult-like following" and outsold all other condoms in Condomania's retail stores in New York and Los Angeles by 10 to 1. "Compared to what was out there, it was the difference between the San Fernando Valley and the Grand Canyon," he said.

But less than a year after it was introduced, the Pleasure Plus disappeared from shelves because of manufacturing problems. Reddy's company went bankrupt.

"It was a tragedy — consumers were desperately trying to find this condom that had changed their sex lives," said Davin Wedel, the founder of the Global Protection Corp, a Boston-based company trying to bring back the Pleasure Plus. The company is working with Portfolio Technologies, a group of investors based in Kenilworth, Illinois, who bought the rights to the condom.

In the meantime, Reddy, who divides his time among Chennai [Madras], India, and Plainsboro, New Jersey, has dreamed up a new design, the Inspiral, which he calls "the best I've created". It is indeed a visually stunning work that, when active, has a spiral shape evocative of a whipped-cream dollop or a Nautilus shell. More important is its spring action, a motion Reddy's patent lawyer, John C. Evans, likens to a pogo stick and the doctor himself compares to "the shock absorber of a car".

Reddy has invested USD 7 million, including a USD 4 million loan from the Indian government, to build a factory in India, with 60 to 100 employees, to make the Inspiral. About 590,000 of the condoms were on the verge of being distributed to the Eckerd and Genovese drug store chains, to Planned Parenthood and to other customers when the current legal squabble began. In the case, Portfolio Technologies — the owner of the rights to the Pleasure Plus — is seeking a temporary injunction in the US district court in Newark to block the Inspiral, which the plaintiffs say is basically the same condom as the Pleasure Plus.

The crux of the debate centres on whether there is a difference between Pleasure Plus' pouch and Inspiral's grand, helix-shaped bulge. "If there's a bulge that creates a looseness in an area that contacts the user, and moves back and forth to create enhanced sensation, then it's covered by the patents," said Robert W. Smith, a lawyer specialising in patent infringements who is representing the plaintiffs.

Reddy, who has been a far better designer than businessman — he left a string of creditors in the wake of his Pleasure Plus collapse — is arguing that the spring action of the Inspiral and the resulting movement make it novel.

Reddy said he "never touched a condom" until his AIDS research. He is married with three sons — "three sons and a tubal ligation, that's it!" he muttered. His wife, Sarojini, does not approve of the turn his career has taken. "She thinks I'm crazy," he said. "She says one man cannot save the world."

PATRICIA LEIGH BROWN IN "THE 'LEONARDO' OF CONDOMS" FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES.

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Reverse racism

AUSTRALIAN-BASED Tamils today accused Sri Lankan cricket captain Arjuna Ranatunga of racism after his angry reaction to criticism from Aussie star Shane Warne.

The Australian leg spinner received a suspended two-match ban and was fined half his match payment after writing an English newspaper column suggesting cricket would be better off without Ranatunga.

Ranatunga hit back, saying the criticism "shows more about Shane Warne and the Australian culture". "We come from 2500 years of culture and we all know where they come from," he told reporters.

The Australasian Federation of Tamil Associations said the Ranatunga statement was "racist and unworthy of someone who represents a country at cricket". "We also feel the statement is insulting to all Australians," said the federation's secretary Ana Pararajasingham.

Pararajasingham said Ranatunga had close links to Sri Lanka's ruling elite whose policies had turned the island nation into one of Asia's largest killing fields. "It is ironical that Ranatunga, who lays claim to 2500 years of culture, comes from a country which has killed over 60,000 Tamils and driven another 500,000 Tamils out of the island," he said.

"It is Australia and its multi-cultural society which Ranatunga has sought to denigrate that has offered a safe sanctuary to tens of thousands of Tamils driven out of Sri Lanka by the fanaticism and the chauvinism of Ranatunga and his ilk."

STEVE CONNOLY IN "TAMILS DEFEND AND THANK AUSTRALIA" FROM *CANBERRA TIMES*.

Support for cricket

IF BACKSIDES on seats are any indicator of support, it is not England, but India, who are on course to enjoy the strongest advantage in the World Cup...

Most of the tickets for India's games were gone by March, and it is probably no coincidence that the Indian population in the UK - 900,000, as defined by ethnic origin for census purposes - is higher than any other competing nation bar England and Scotland.

The Pakistani population, at 600,000, is the next highest, followed by the West Indian population (500,000). Strong ticket sales for these nations' games, and for the games involving South Africa, Australia and New Zealand (all of whom have substantial UK-based support) indicate that the tournament's "Carnival of cricket" slogan may yet be borne out. The only country which has yet to sell out any of its group matches is Bangladesh, despite a potential UK-based support of 200,000. Local observers think it is only a matter of time before interest intensifies. "There's a lot of World Cup interest among the Bengali community, especially with this being the first appearance for Bangladesh," Suzad Mansur, an editor with *Janomot*, the longest-established Bengali newspaper in Britain, said. "We've been covering the run-up for a couple of weeks and there'll be a special cup supple-

ment this week. Bengali people are very excited." Mansur added that around 2000 Bengalis in total had attended their side's warm-up matches, and said that more are likely to go to matches once the tournament is underway.

Support among British Pakistanis for Pakistan is likely to be fervent, according to Shahed Sadullah of the *Daily Jang*, a London-based bilingual Pakistani newspaper. "Most, if not all, of the Pakistani population here would fail the Tebbit test," Shahed said, in reference to former Conservative cabinet minister Norman Tebbit's statement that English-born members of minority communities tend not to support England. "Cricket is one area where the countries from the Subcontinent have made progress and can stand amongst the best," he added, and said there were several reasons why South Asians have a particularly strong affinity for the game.

Aside from that fact that cricket is the major sport on the Subcontinent and that three of last four World Cup winners have come from there, Shahed said that minority communities in the UK look to their countries' cricket sides to show they can excel on the world stage.

NICK HARRIS IN "SPECTATORS HAPPILY FAIL TEBBIT TEST" FROM *THE INDEPENDENT*.

Trade secrets

POLITICOS UTTER a lot of nonsense about the privilege of serving their constituents much as rip-off doctors talk of serving humanity or cut-throat lawyers say that theirs is a noble profession dedicated to upholding the rule of law. This is trade talk and should not be taken too seriously. The politician, like any other professional, is first out for himself and then for anyone else. This is not to say that a spirit of public service is a myth. It is not, but in the Pakistan of today it does not exist, at least not in the political class.

Forget for a moment lowly parliamentarians and consider the case of the two leading lights of this class: Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, both resounding metaphors for a peculiarly Pakistani form of moral and intellectual bankruptcy. The tales of the first are now certi-

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fied history. The second is a successful politician, in a narrow compass perhaps the most successful in Pakistan's history, whose entrepreneurial family has turned the taking of bank loans and then not paying them into an art form. In the politics defined and shaped by these two gifts to the nation public service becomes a notional if not a laughable concept. And to think that for the past 14 years, an eternity in politics, the people of this land have been in thrall to these two wonders.

AYAZ AMIR IN "GETTING OUT OF A TIGHT FIT OF CLOTHES"
FROM DAWN.

Sign it

ACCORDING TO Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh, India cannot sign the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) as previously scheduled. Singh claims the decision to agree to the international treaty is a policy matter. Since the government is only a caretaker cabinet awaiting the September elections, it cannot decide such important matters. Singh is mistaken, both legally and logically.

The government should proceed to sign the test-ban treaty on schedule. Otherwise, it risks great criticism and loss of prestige.

Singh is correct about one thing. India's nuclear policy is extremely important, both to Indians and the rest of the world. But he is incorrect about the meaning of this truth. The worst thing that India can do about its nuclear policy is to follow Singh's recommendation and allow it to stagnate.

The Indian elections are scheduled for September and early October. Lack of action on India's part until after the vote is in no one's interest. The country has already pledged itself to a September deadline for agreeing to the worldwide test ban. There are final details to be worked out—not least, the parallel decision to agree to the CTBT by Pakistan.

Singh's questionable claim is that while the country is in an election campaign, the government cannot take policy decisions on nuclear weapons. In addition to renegeing on signing the test ban treaty, Singh wants

to freeze nuclear talks with America. Washington has been helping India and Pakistan set the stage for simultaneous actions to halt their nuclear arms race.

The claim of the foreign minister is clearly illogical and legally indefensible. The government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was defeated in Parliament, which is why elections are being held. But the cabinet is India's legal caretaker. It is fully empowered to take all decisions—policy, strategy and tactics.

Singh completely misrepresents the sequence of events. India has already committed to sign the CTBT. Even if his logic were acceptable, the test-ban treaty would have to be signed in September, as already decided and committed before the parliamentary defeat.

Since India lamentably pushed its way into the international nuclear club a year ago, Vajpayee's various governments have exploited the country's weapons races, including nuclear weapons and missiles. To be fair, the Indian and Pakistani prime ministers also have established a personal relationship. This has kept tension and danger at a tolerable level. But India's neighbours will only tolerate escalating nuclear arms race in the Subcontinent if the countries involved work towards a rational policy of safety.

Despite the mistaken posturing of Hindu nationalists, India is not either a great or respected country through military power, threats or conquest. India is respected for its cultural traditions. Its artistic and language heritage is visible daily far from Indian shores, not least in Thailand. It is the cradle of the two great Eastern religions. It is respected throughout the world for its toleration of others. The attempts of successive Vajpayee governments to tally respect with its nuclear weapons acquisitions have had the opposite effect.

EDITORIAL IN THE BANGKOK POST.

Radio days

...IN THE EARLY 50s, a cranky minister for information and broadcasting, B.V. Keskar, banned film music being played on AIR, a move which drove millions of film music fans into the arms of the commercial service division of Radio Ceylon. I was then growing up and thought the world of Hindi music. Though the radio set at home was always near grandfather, I sneaked in to tune in to Radio Ceylon regularly for the early morning "Old Film Songs", "Listener's Choice" and the Wednesday night "Binaca Gectmala", which had become a legend.

Radio Ceylon also broadcast English and Tamil programmes. The quiz shows conducted by Hamid Sayani and then his younger brother, were both educative and informative and I seldom missed these. The advertisement jingles on Tamil programmes were hilarious. I still remember one on Philip's Milk of Magnesia—"Vaithuvali vandihiruche akka, Priya akka...Philip's Milk of Magnesia kudichuko, thangachi kudichuko..."

Television was still a dream, but radio was a boon for sports fans. For a cricket buff like me, the ball to ball commentary on AIR was a miracle. I heard with plea-

Garbage: Uphill task

Kathmandu, Reuters

Spanish climbers who removed 1,000-kg of garbage from the world's 10th highest peak, Mount Annapurna, are fighting an uphill battle to take the trash out of Nepal. "There are no rules for the export of garbage. This is creating confusion with customs," said Shailendra Raj Sharma, a spokesman for the Tourism Ministry. Mr Sharma said Nepali customs have no idea how to clear the garbage at Kathmandu airport for export.

sure the commentaries of the famous "Vizzy, Berry and Puri" trio (Maharajkumar of Vizinagaram, Berry Sarbadikary and Devraj Puri), who were occasionally joined by Ananda Rao. The latter often revealed his links with a hotel chain by repeating every five minutes, how much time was left for "tiffin time". My obsession with sports continued, thanks to radio. I listened to England's famous "Ashes" victory in 1953 and the unforgettable last minutes of the immortal tied test at Brisbane in 1961, between Australia and the West Indies.

Now a man with family responsibilities, I have very little time for the radio. Yet, I have spent my hard-earned money to buy an expensive four-band radio so that I can listen to the fascinating Test Match Special on the BBC and commentary on Radio Australia. Sometimes, the reception is so poor that I have to sit close to the set, my ear almost touching it. Today, satellite television has brought into our drawing rooms, live telecasts of matches played thousands of kilometres away.

A radio commentary is a lost art. Yet, I do need the radio...for my daily quota of old Hindi film songs.

V. GANGADHAR IN "SLICE OF LIFE" FROM *THE HINDU*.

Malarial dilemmas

MALARIA AND the mosquito have had a role in the history and politics of sub-tropical nations such as Nepal, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Myanmar. It was the scourge of the mosquito in the swamps which halted and shut out the imperial European invaders in their marauding advance, until suitable drugs were found against the malarial parasite Plasmodium... Visitors to Nepal are told how the malaria-infested swamps and forests in the Tarai region, bordering India, kept the British army out of the Himalayan kingdom. During the century of Rana rule, a life sentence for various offences meant banishment to the mosquito-riddled Tarai where prisoners took five units of rice—four for the terminal, four-week bout with malaria, and the fifth, to keep the gods happy on the heavenward journey, unwept, unhonoured but unstung. In the recent civic elections in Bangladesh and in our [India's] North-East, the mosquito figured as an unlikely King Charles' head again and again in poll speeches and promises as rival candidates assured harassed citizens "freedom from the mosquito"—almost on par with the other Four Freedoms. Our malarial dilemmas and fevered politics share some vital characteristics. No wonder, some years ago, the AIADMK supremo, Ms Jayalalitha called her present ally (but then a staunch opponent) Dr Subramanian Swamy a "mere mosquito which could be swatted at will". Curiously, both the politician and the mosquito have their life-cycle dependent on unsuspecting victims and draw sustenance from accommodation which people unwittingly provide.

Worse, when we realise they are a menace and try to rein them in with newer formulations, they claim immunity from routine laws and the course of justice to continue their parasitical existence.

EDITORIAL IN *THE TIMES OF INDIA*.

Three Indias

FOREIGN JOURNALISTS (and photographers) covering India are generally interested in three kinds of India:

(a) The macabre and the negative: the widows of Benares, the caste system as practised in Bihar, Mother Teresa's place for the dying, kidneys traffic in Tamil Nadu, the slums of Calcutta, bride burning, etc. These subjects have their own truth and there does exist in India terrible slums, unacceptable exploitation of caste, dying people left unattended, or bride burning. But by harping only on these topics, the foreign press always presents a very negative image of India. Foreign writers have also tended to exploit that vein: Dominique Lapierre in his "City of Joy", which still is a world-wide best-seller and has been made into a film, has done incalculable damage to India, as it takes a little part of India—the Calcutta slums—and gives the impression to the Western reader, who generally is totally ignorant of the realities of India, that it constitutes the whole.

(b) The folklore and the superfluous: Maharajas, of whom Westerners are avid, although they are totally irrelevant to modern India, the palaces of Rajasthan, cherished by such magazines as *Vogue* which regularly sends their photographers and lanky models, who have no idea of Indian festivals: Pushkar, the camel fair, kumbh-melas, dance performances in Khajuraho...all these have their own beauties, but they represent only a small part of this great and vast country.

(c) The politically correct: There must be at least three hundred foreign correspondents posted in Delhi, which should vouch for a variety of opinion. But if you give them a subject to write about—any subject—say Ayodhya, the RSS, fanatic Hindus, secularism, or Sonia Gandhi, you will get 298 articles which will say more or less the same thing, even if it is with different styles, different illustrations and various degrees of professionalism. This is not to say that there are no sincere Western journalists who write serious stories which do homage to India's greatness and immense culture, but they are usually the exception. And at the end, the result is more or less the same: a downgrading of India, a constant harping on "Hindu fundamentalism", or the "fanatical khaki-clad RSS members of the burning of Christians in India", conveniently forgetting to mention that Christians have found refuge in this country for 2000 years and have often taken advantage of this great Hindu tolerance.

FRANCOIS GAUTIER IN "A STEREOTYPED VIEW" FROM *THE HINDUSTAN TIMES*.

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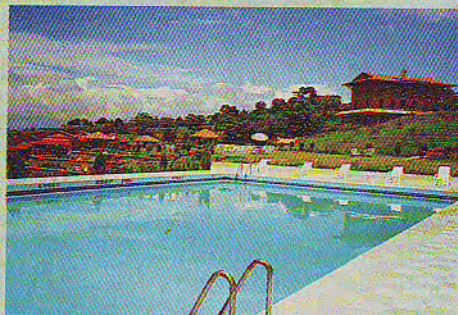


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Technicolour Partition

An eminently watchable movie based on a mediocre novel.

reviewed by **Paramjit Rai**

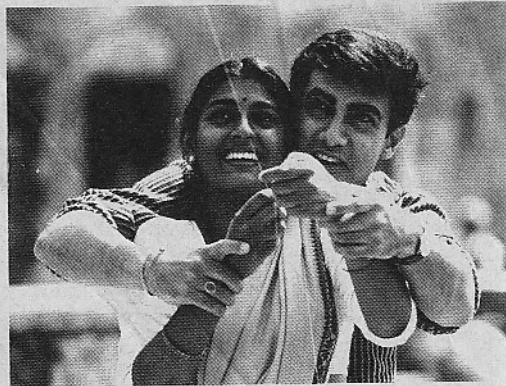
Talking to Rehan Ansari in these pages some months back, filmmaker Deepa Mehta noted that making films has become a "hybrid" process, and her latest offering, *Earth*, clearly is one. Based on a book by a Pakistani author, with Indian actors, filmed in Delhi, and funded by a Canadian film company, the film is patently international. And given that the making of the film was such, the audience targeted also seems to be equally hybrid—those wanting a serious film, yet familiar with Bollywood's musical bonanzas.

Earth is an adaptation of Bapsi Sidhwa's novel *Cracking India*. Mehta re-wrote the dialogue and adapted from the original English into Punjabi, Urdu, and Gujarati. And it is to her credit that she has rendered an eminently watchable film from a passably written book.

Earth tells the story of the scorching summer of 1947 in Lahore (just before Radcliffe's partition plan was announced) as seen through the eyes of Lenny-Baby, a polio afflicted little Parsi girl, and her Hindu ayah,

Shanta. At the time of Partition, Lahore was home to a tiny, but financially strong, Parsi community, along with the numerically stronger and more politically active Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus. Where the film succeeds most, is in this depiction of the dilemma of being a Parsi (as writer Sidhwa herself is) in a conflict defined by religions, but one that ignored the Parsi community. While the other communities were caught in the cult of violence, potential targets like the Parsis were not touched.

This is echoed in the portrayal of Lenny-Baby's father as the gruff, English-loving Parsi who finds solace in the commotion ringing outside his home by telling himself, mantra like, that the "Parsees are the Swiss of India"—non-interfering and non-controversial. So it is particularly striking when Lenny-Baby asks her mother if Parsis are the bum-lickers of the British. Her mother reassures her that they are not, instead they are the sugar in the milk, in India they are invisible, but sweet.



Bunty Sethna (Kitu Gidwani) carrying Lenny (Maaia Sethna), left, and Ayah (Nandita Das) and "Icecandywallah" (Aamir Khan).

Earth revolves around the love of two Muslim youths—"Icecandywallah" and Hussain "Malishwallah"—for Shanta, a Hindu. The strains in the love affair mirror the tensions in Lahore city as Partition violence slowly builds to a crescendo, ultimately engulfing our lovers. Here the director has skillfully portrayed the way some individuals manipulated the 'madness' of Partition for their own gains.

Mehta has given us the Partition in technicolour. We see ghostly trains ferrying mutilated and bleeding bodies, rioting on the streets, and expectedly, the law enforcers aiding the bigoted rioters in the destruction of buildings; and unending processions of sweaty and frightened refugees descending on Lahore in *kafilas* (lines of refugees walking mainly on foot from east to west and vice versa) from East Punjab. But these are the well-known generalities of Partition captured well both in the book and the film. The real complaint against Mehta's *Earth* is that there is no soul to the drama. She has fallen into the trap of using broad strokes to delineate the chaos. Rather than delicately etch the story, this is a film that is too aware of its importance. It is a shame that Mehta didn't go beyond showing clichés, such as the Muslim support for Jinnah and the Muslim League, and the Hindu-Sikh support for the Congress.

One is reminded of another Par-

tition film, *Garam Hawa* (1973) directed by M.S. Sathya), in which, like the Parsis in Lahore, Balraj Sahni, in the role of the Muslim patriarch and owner of a small shoe-making outlet in Agra, fights for the right to remain in his home. The film is set in the heady days just after Independence and the old Muslim's commitment to his home, livelihood, and the right to remain in Agra with dignity and integrity, is wonderfully and delicately portrayed by the talented Sahni. One can sense the bewilderment of his character in the attempt of those who encourage him to move to the strange land of Pakistan. One wishes Mehta had displayed some of the emotional commitment that clearly must have gone into the making of *Garam Hawa*. All the more so, following her statement that she chose Partition as the theme because her father's family came from Lahore, and she "grew up with the disillusionment of Partition".

In quick succession, after *Earth*, I watched two films based on traumatic historical events: *Beloved*, based on Toni Morrison's book about a freed black slave woman, and *Life is Beautiful*, a film that looks in ironic humour at the life in a Nazi concentration camp. The filmmakers have taken on the enormous task of rendering the 'unsayable' in images. The emphasis is on how troubled times force people to respond in ways that they would otherwise have never imagined, as they grapple with the consequences of political events to keep their dignity and families intact. In the end, *Earth*, *Life is Beautiful* and *Beloved*, along with *Garam Hawa*, are appreciated for their heroic attempts at trying to capture the essence of what in the end is mystifying and soul-destroying experiences.

Earth concludes with the sounds of a Sikh hymn, perhaps underscoring the notion of one creator with multiple names (Rahim, Ram and Waheguru). It leaves one with an exasperating question: considering the bigotry that still exists in both the countries wrenched out of Partition, was it really worth it? ▲



COURTESY: TM PRADHAN

Bollywood, Bollywood

Juhi sulks. Jackson loves Mahatma Gandhi. Jaffrey shoots his mouth. The Bollywood virus hits Gotham.

It was a near-sell-out-delirious crowd that bellowed and jumped on seats at the Bollywood Awards ceremony on 1 May at the Nassau Coliseum in Long Island's Hempstead. Some of Bombay film industry's pin-up faces were there, including heartbreakers Shah Rukh Khan and Juhi Chawla.

Beating them all, at the stroke of the midnight hour, came the "Thriller" himself, Michael Jackson, in his South Asian avatar, clad in a Pathani suit, waving and blowing kisses with the hand that knows so well both the mike and the crotch. "Thank you, I love you all," he told the standing ovation. "I admire Mahatma Gandhi for his philosophy of non-violence and I am deeply touched by it," he added, while receiving the "Humanitarian Award" (pictured above) from S.P. Hinduja, a recent British citizen and chairman of the London-based Hinduja Group of Industries. The award was purportedly for Jackson's role in "promoting the cause of peace and understanding around the world" through his Heal The World Foundation.

The four-hour show was mostly

filled with Bollywood antics. Changing costumes furiously in chameleon Bollywood fashion, Shah Rukh Khan, Juhi Chawla and Shilpa Shetty pranced around to some hit Hindi numbers (*Koi Mil Gaya*, *Mere Mehboob*, *Mere Sanam*, *Chhaiya Chhaiya*). If that drove the about 17,000-crowd wild, playback singer Udit Narayan (who later was given the award for "Best Singer-Male") and his son Aditya Narayan charmed the assorted audience which included Americans, Indians, Nepalis, Sri Lankans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis living in New York and New Jersey. (The tickets were priced at USD 25, 35, 50 and 100.) Towards the end, old-time Bangla crooner Runa Laila activated many a nostalgic nerve, while the stage was lit up by laser displays and fireworks. Earlier, the popular Pakistani band, Junoon, whipped up frenzy among the younger members of the crowd, who also lapped up British reggae star Apache Indian's chart busters.

For all the razzmatazz, true to Bollywood blood, there was bad blood. Not least from compere Javed Jaffrey's failed attempts at being funny. At one point, while rubbish-

ing lyricists, he said that even the Gurkha guard at his home can aspire to be a song writer. It was a sucking moment for the sizeable number of Nepalis present in the audience, not to speak of the Nepali father-son singer duo of Udit and Aditya.

And if it's Bombay stars, someone has got to sulk. Juhi Chawla stuck to the script by not coming onstage to receive the "Most Sensational Performance-Female" award — something for which she was never nominated in the first place. Instead, the lady wept buckets in the confines of what was indicated to us was the Green Room. Sources said she was crestfallen for not being chosen the best actress as promised and being passed off as merely sensational.

Technical glitches also had a good day, the most embarrassing one occurring while Runa was performing. Having decided to lip-synch instead of singing live, she was caught



Shah Rukh Khan and Shilpa Shetty take the stage.

behind when her song came on even as she was announcing it. And while young Aditya was casting his spell live, the background score just refused to play along.

As for the awards themselves — 23 categories of them — nominees and winners were arrived at by means of votes polled by fans across North America, through the Internet, phone calls, mail-in flyers and ticketing outlets. But, going by Juhi Chawla's sulk, the final winners may

not have been chosen strictly on the strength of vote.

Mercifully, the show organisers — 'promotion' by New York-based Kamal Dandon and 'production' by actor Anupam Kher's Radical Entertainment Company — did not leave out those striking a trail aesthetically different from the regular potboilers. So there were the "Satyajit Ray Award" (without any affiliation to the late Ray's estate) given to veteran director Yash Chopra for "consistent excellence in Indian filmmaking", and the "Pride of India Award" given to celebrity director Shekhar Kapoor, whose *Elizabeth* bagged seven Oscar nominations and won one.

So having taken on the capital of the world (Long Island is as good as New York City), where next for Bollywood? Why not Hollywood?

— Reported by Tri Pradhan



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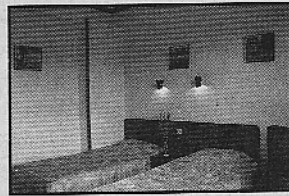


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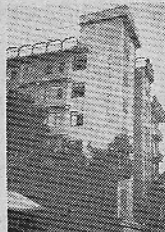
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Nepal's pioneer Jesuit

'Authorised' biography of Fr Moran of Kathmandu.

Ever since the founding of the Society of Jesus in 1534, the Jesuits have had a simple but formidable task. They had "to be ready to live in any part of the world where there was hope of God's greater glory and the good of souls". And when one examines their nearly 500-year-old history, it becomes obvious that the Society of Jesus has been a successful organisation, too successful, some would say.

One of the meanings of "Jesuit" found in the dictionary is "a dissembling person", and "Jesuitical" means "having the character once ascribed to the Jesuits; deceitful...practising equivocation... over-subtle". But then, Jesuits are renowned the world over as outstanding educators and scholars. *Moran of Kathmandu* tells the story of one such Jesuit, who lived in Kathmandu for over 40 years.

There must be very few Nepalis above the age of 30 and of a certain socio-economic background who do not know of Father Marshall Moran, who founded St Xavier's School in Kathmandu on 1 July 1951. "On that day," notes Moran's biographer Donald Messerschmidt, "primary education took a giant leap from the medieval to the modern." From this historic beginning until his death in 1992, Father Moran in Nepal remained the quintessential Jesuit: educator, diplomat, bon vivant, and, as suspected by some, also a spy.

As young boarders at St Xavier's in the mid-1960s, Father Moran already appeared as a living legend to us. We got glimpses of him as he strode along in his trade-mark black beret, or when he arrived or departed with his famous foreign guests (whom we entertained by singing songs and reciting poems). His presence was most palpable when he sat chatting in his cluttered room to people all over the world

on his crackling ham radio. In those ancient days before email and fax, it was this possession of the radio (and Father Moran's conspicuous presence among the foreign community) that led to whispered charges that he was also a CIA agent.

One of the most boring classes I have ever taken was by Father



**Moran of Kathmandu:
Pioneer Priest,
Educator, and Ham
Radio Voice of the
Himalayas**

by Donald A.
Messerschmidt
White Orchid Press,
Bangkok, 1997
314 pp, NPR 650

reviewed by **Rajendra S. Khadka**

Moran when he tried to teach us the Morse code when we were in the 5th standard. Every Saturday morning, for one hour, we had sit and decipher the dots and dashes of that infernal code (now thankfully laid to rest even by international shipping), while the rest of the school played outside. A couple of years later we began to get glimpses of Father Moran's fascinating past when he became our English teacher. He often digressed from the lesson at hand to reminisce about his family and boyhood in Chicago and his early years in India. He was especially fond of recalling his first meeting with Gandhi. Moran had been allotted five minutes, but instead spent one full hour with Gandhi. Indeed, if there was one person he spoke most often about, it was Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

Moran of Kathmandu is an 'authorised' biography which received full cooperation from the subject himself (before his death in 1992 at the age of 86) as well as his numerous famous and obscure friends, relatives,

students and fellow Jesuits. The author, a former Peace Corps volunteer who has continued to work occasionally in Nepal, has done an excellent job of adding flesh, bones and fat to a legendary figure.

The book has a straightforward, no-nonsense, chronological approach. Childhood and youth in America, 20 years as a young Jesuit in India, and the following Nepal years are faithfully detailed. Inserts are sprinkled throughout from Father Moran himself, and short but laudatory passages have been contributed by others. The portrait that emerges is one of a very intelligent and dedicated individual who had his share of human contradictions.

Even as he lived among some of the poorest of the poor, Father Moran retained his fondness for the high life and luxury. But while some may have seen Moran as something of a social gadfly in his later years in Kathmandu, Messerschmidt highlights the social and, given the times, even radical bent in Moran the educator. Despite opposition from orthodox quarters, he helped establish Patna Women's College in the early 1940s, the first degree college for women in North India, and was the major force behind the establishment of St Mary's School in Kathmandu in 1955.

When Tibetan refugees streamed into Kathmandu after the Chinese invaded Tibet, he immediately set up an informal committee to provide assistance to them. And when his efforts were hindered by the local bureaucracy, he went straight to the king—and naturally, the problems disappeared immediately.

His attitude towards conversion was iconoclastic. Messerschmidt notes that in 1986 Father Moran told the journal *The Catholic World*, "They've [Nepalis have] been without Christianity for 2000 years... I don't think there's any need to hurry. God will make things easier if he wants...if people want to look in, to come in, then we'll talk with them." These comments caused "a flurry of criticism", among the readers in the US.

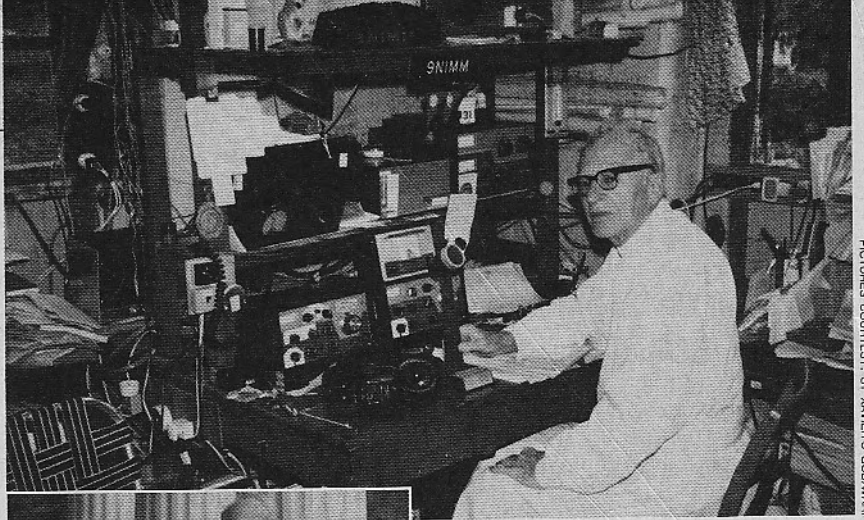
Moran of Kathmandu is indispensable reading to anyone who had any connection with Father Moran, certainly for the larger community of English-speaking St Xavier's graduates of Nepal and India. It will also be appreciated by those who are interested in the history of the Jesuits, early explorations and activities of some of the pioneer Western missionaries in the Himalaya. Readers unfamiliar with the history of Nepal will also get a glimpse into the first but ultimately failed democratic transition of the 1950s.

But because this is an 'authorized' biography, the omissions are glaring. Except for pointing out Moran's love for 'high society', the book is devoid of any serious critical analysis of Father Moran and the views he held. Father John Morrison who came with Father Moran to the Subcontinent, writes in his insert, "...one of the facts of his character was a sort of 'aloofness' towards so many of his fellow Jesuits. I do not want to denigrate in any way the outstanding work that Moran accomplished...but it is safe to say that I am not the only one who had some close association with him in the earlier times who saw a certain aloofness, maybe call it a superiority complex."

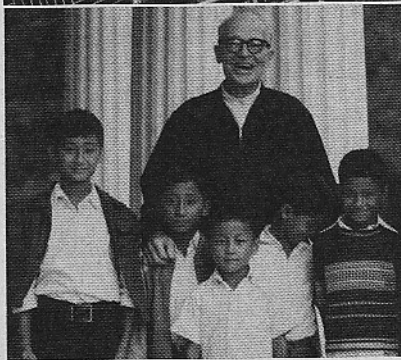
Such observations are rare indeed. Elsewhere, the author writes:

In the pedagogical philosophy of Jesuit schooling, attention to the students' own cultural heritage is an important responsibility. The students are Nepalese first and foremost, the future leaders of the country and the people, so their national and cultural identities must not be neglected. (emphasis added)

The philosophy was indeed lofty, but the reality in the experience of this reviewer was quite different. Anyone who was a boarder at Kathmandu's St Xavier's will recall the infamous Donkey Stick, a square stick about a foot long covered with white paper. If a boarder spoke even a word of Nepali, he himself was to write down his roll number on the



PICTURES COURTESY: ST XAVIER'S GOODAVARI



Donkey Stick, to be punished if his number appeared more than three or four times within a week. How is a young boy to appreciate his own cultural heritage if speaking his own language was equated to being a "donkey" and punished?

We wore trousers and shirts and ties. Our formal and informal education consisted almost entirely of English books and American movies and comics. In every grade, from I to X, one period, "Moral Science", was always devoted to the Catholic-Jesuit-American worldview, but almost nothing about being Hindu or Buddhist. Several times a day, we prayed in English to a crucifix nailed to a wall in the classroom or the dining hall.

Given this saturation of an alien culture, the author (an anthropologist and currently a "developmental worker" in Bhutan) does not question whether or not such an elitist schooling would produce young men who would become arrogant about themselves and their position in Nepali society. As a result, the fine education bestowed on Nepal's "best and brightest" was largely wasted in that very few graduates of St Xavier's Kathmandu deigned to get their hands "dirty" in politics,

bureaucracy, scholarship, development, or activism. The overwhelming areas of choice for the generation overseen by Father Moran were engineering, medicine and family business. Perhaps no one alerted the author to these contradictions between what the Jesuits planned by introducing "learning" to Nepal and the crop they produced.

The Jesuits were not entirely to blame either. After all, our parents too were (and continue to be) obsessed with English and Western mores and manners. And often it was our own parents who insisted that their sons speak nothing but English, and pushed the children into medicine and engineering, taking advantage of the Colombo Plan scholarships which were such easy pickings for St Xavier's graduates. Thus, one could make a 'Jesuitical' argument that the education given was the kind the parents demanded.

It is interesting that the author did not care to talk to anyone who graduated from Kathmandu's St Xavier's after 1962. Was this because the younger generation of students would be more critical of the man, if not his methods? Indeed, the author presents an archaic and idyllic view of the school Father Moran founded.

These critical flaws notwithstanding, Donald Messerschmidt has made an important contribution towards the history of modern education in Nepal. His book will be welcomed by all those who knew and loved Father Moran. But we will have to wait for another writer to provide us with the missing details in the life and works, the legacy, of Father Marshal Moran, SJ. ▲

Nothing to be Cross about

An intense account of how a Gurkha colonel made Nepal his home.

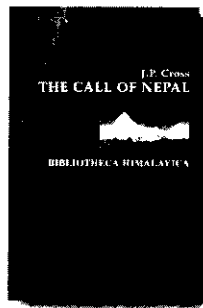
Since my first meeting with Lt Col J.P. Cross over five years ago at his modest house in the central Nepal town of Pokhara, I have been loath to use the word "unique". We were sitting together in his front study, in near darkness to ease his failing eyes, and discussing the involvement of Nepali citizens in the British Army. I had asked, somewhat naively, if the position of a particular ethnic group could be seen as "quite unique". Cross was silent for a while and folded his hands together under his chin, as if in silent and contemplative prayer. After a moment he sighed and then said, obviously quite distressed: "Well, I really can't possibly agree with you." I was concerned that I had said something culturally unforgivable, and braced myself for what he would say next. "I mean how on earth can you expect me to agree with such poor grammar: either something is unique or it isn't, it can't be quite unique."

It is thus with a sense of victory as well as with confidence in my choice of words that I describe Cross's astonishing autobiography as unique. *The Call of Nepal* is a slightly modified reprint by Bibliotheca Himalayica of what was first published in 1996 by New Millennium in London under the title *The Call of Nepal: (A Personal Nepalese Odyssey in a Different Dimension)*. The subtitle, unfortunately absent from this reprint, is carefully chosen and is an accurate summation of both the style and the content of the book.

Now nearing 75, Cross, a retired British Gurkha Colonel, left England for India in 1944 and was in the British Army until 1982. He first came to Nepal in 1947 and the last six years of his service were spent recruiting for the British Army's Gurkha Bri-

gade. Despite a life-long career in the military, Cross has a string of quirkily titled books to his name that deal with specific facets of soldiering and jungle warfare, the latter being a field in which he is an undisputed authority.

Compared to his earlier military and historical accounts *Face Like A*



The Call of Nepal
by J.P. Cross
Bibliotheca
Himalayica,
Kathmandu, 1998
241 pp, NPR —

reviewed by Mark Turin

Chicken's Backside; First In, Last Out and others, *The Call of Nepal* reads somewhat like a romantic confessional, although the precision inculcated in the military dies hard. Some readers, for example, may not warm to his unending attention to detail, be it his paternal grandfather's half-mile world record in 1880 (of 1 minute and 54.4 seconds), or his uncanny ability to remember 50-year-old conversations and dates with accuracy. Details aside, however, Cross has written a disarmingly honest account of his successes and failures, both as a soldier and as a man, and he reveals all aspects of his colourful life to his readers in a way that few people, let alone Gurkha colonels, can.

The account is essentially a eulogy to Nepal and her citizens, brought to life through Cross's descriptions of living with Gurkha sol-

diers. The common thread running through all the disparate and often seemingly unrelated stories is the soldier's feeling more and more out of touch with Western life each time he returned to Britain. Increasingly, Nepal became his home, and Nepali friends his family. Although his dissatisfaction with the commercial and soulless nature of Western society is now common fare in many personal accounts by those who travel to the Himalaya, to hear such sentiments from a seemingly old-fashioned Gurkha Colonel is surprising, not to say unique. Throughout his chronological account, it becomes clear that his story has been one of gradual yet steady improvement from his modest beginnings as an "embryo infantryman" to a retired soldier "superbly at ease", whose relationship with his adopted Nepali family "makes sense of this life".

Handle him with care

Cross's detractors will have a party with *The Call of Nepal*. Those schooled in modern social science will pounce on such comments as: "Burma had never been ours in the same way as India had been", and will de-contextualise statements such as "a Gurkha has a limited imagination" to render them offensive. What they will miss, however, is that in good reflexive tradition, Cross then turns these statements around and re-directs them towards his own society, his family and even himself. An "Anglo-Saxon" and a hill man from Nepal, he suggests, have "basic qualities [that] seem to be the same: both peoples are fierce, obstinate and untameable and both peoples need special handling to get the best out of them". A further excerpt may serve to prove the point: "I found that the eastern Gurkha is like a cat: friendship cannot be forced and the chemistry takes some time to work. The westerners are more like dogs: it was productive to make positive advances."

In short, his tendency to objectify, rarefy and categorise ethnic groups and individuals, is neither barbed nor colonial, it is simply the way that

he sees all those who are part of his world, and most of all himself. Understandably, Nepali readers may react against such comments since they smack of a time which is all too fresh in the collective memory when Nepal and her citizens were characterised in the English-speaking world according to their racial virtues. However, one hopes that Cross's critics will read him carefully and note that, although conservative in many ways and one among the ever-dwindling survivors of an era that has surely passed, Cross is a man whose experience of Nepal and fluency in spoken and written Nepali remain unrivalled by most other foreigners who have made this country their home.

The colonel's sheer love for the country shines through his sometimes verbose accounts and he reminds us time and time again that "to settle in [Nepal] became something that I wanted more than anything else in the world". This wish was granted by royal decree, and Cross became the first-ever foreign

citizen to be allowed to own land in Nepal. He writes that he has "never accepted a Nepali as less than an equal and never regarded myself as intrinsically in any way superior". Some readers may wonder if this can be true given the colonial flavour in his slightly archaic English, but Cross's deep friendships with Nepalis must bear testament to the truth of his claim.

Likewise, the author's handling of the subtleties of the relationship with his adopted and surrogate Nepali son, to whom he dedicates the book, is so gentle that his motives are beyond suspect. His love for Buddhism, and his belief that their relationship was predestined is deeply touching. This is how he places the relationship: "we [are] as one tree, I the roots and he, with his wife, the branches". It is a tribute to Cross that he handles this personal story in the candid and careful way that he does.

Cross's astonishing autobiography is as challenging to read as it is difficult to review. Reviewing the

book is tantamount to reviewing the man himself. He swings with great ease from racial stereotypes of Gurkhas to such fashionable concepts as "morphic resonance" and even telepathy, and genuinely seems to believe in both. It is this peculiar mixture of humility, self-effacement and honesty on the one hand, and contentedness and pride on the other, that makes the book such an extraordinary achievement.

But even as this reviewer urges everyone to read this remarkable book and form their own opinion, they must do so keeping in mind the sadly absent subtitle, "A Personal Nepalese Odyssey in a Different Dimension". Cross has written an intensely, at times even embarrassingly, personal account and it is firmly rooted in an altogether different dimension—historically, politically, culturally and linguistically. For Colonel Cross, despite the changing social and political climate, the "Call of Nepal is still as loud as it ever was when I first heard it so many years ago". ▲

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Just some of the guests Thomas Kilroy has cooked for.... HM Queen Elizabeth II.... Bill & Hillary Clinton... Princess Diana.... The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia... George & Barbara Bush.... Prince Charles... Richard Gere..... Cindy Crawford.... Ang Rita Sherpa (10 times Everest Summitter)... The Aga Khan.....Salman Rushdie....Jimmy & Roselyn Carter.... Lionel Richie... The Queen of Norway... John Major.... Diana Ross.... Duke & Duchess of York..... Margaret Thatcher.... Mick Jagger.... Naomi Campbell.... Dire Straits... The Duke Of Edinburgh.... Jerry Hall... Princess Margaret.... Prince Edward.... Robert DeNiro...Koo Stark... Princess Ann.... Sean Connery.....Janet Jackson.....Koo Stark....Anton Mosimann... Mark Knopfler..... Dire Straits.... Rod Stewart..... Tony Blair.....

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The Human Genome Diversity Project's world tour has finally reached China and is currently analysing blood samples of some of its one billion people. According to the *New Scientist*, experts have come to the inescapable conclusion that the Chinese are descended from Africans. This has sent shockwaves through Beijing. I understand from the grape wine that the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which would like to think that the Han evolved in the Yangtse Valley from a genetic offshoot of the Giant Panda, has rejected this finding outright. In fact, Li Jan, a senior Chinese scientist told the *Los Angeles Times*: "The genetics community in China is in favour of the idea of the independent origin of the people of China."

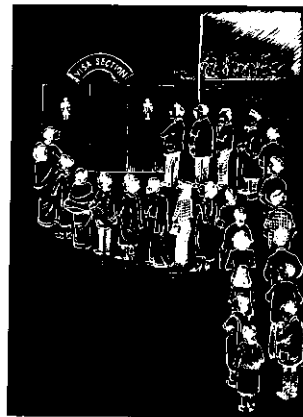
Living as I do on the ancient migratory route from Africa to Asia (my ancestors were early tool-using hominoids who got separated from the main trek during a blizzard), I have come to the conclusion that the theory of racial purity and creationist parthenogenesis are closely linked.

In any case, everything being equal, be that as it may and notwithstanding the results of the Genome Project's DNA scanning of every living Han on the planet, I must say that I am fascinated by the thought of Mao Zedong sharing 99 percent of the genetic code of a Rwandan mountain guerrilla. Confucius says: "My ancestor was your ancestor."

Ever since we early humans climbed down from the baobab and learned to walk on our own two feet, we have constantly been on the move. As a matter of true fact, it was when bipeds started riding mopeds that we really started zooming around. And we haven't stopped travelling, in fact at any given time on the surface of the planet just about everyone is going from some place to some other place. These are thoughts that passed my mind, as I chewed the cud with my significant other while waiting for a visa. What would have

happened to this Great Hominoid Migration Out of Africa if Chinese visa procedures were as strict then as they are today? Or, for instance, what would the demographics of England have been if the Normans had to queue up for non-tourist visas in 1066?

Perhaps like the Sri Lankan World Cup cricket fans, the Normans would have had to face a General Knowledge quiz from the visa officer at the British Counsellor Section in Dieppe about the country they were invading. Visa Officer: "Since you are desirous of taking over our country, we'd like to test your bona fide status to make sure that you do not intend to overstay in the UK by asking you a few



questions. First question: Which Scottish nationalist did Mel Gibson impersonate in the film *Braveheart*."

This tradition of treating every visa applicant as a potential alien invader is rooted deeply in the visa officer's psyche to this day. In fact, counsellors have to go through gruelling training and selection procedures to weed out wimps in their midst. And anyone who exceeds a certain minimum IQ threshold is immediately disqualified. This is especially important to ensure among national staffers manning the Gates.

Having had the opportunity to observe many visa offices at close quarters for extended periods, I can offer a few useful tips for countries that have to deal on a daily basis (except weekends and public holidays 8:30 am to 10:30 am) with the huddled and hungry masses yearning to be free:

a. There are important qualities to look for in a visa officer, the firstmost is that they have to have the person-

ality and physique of an American football quarterback

b. Only those who have never smiled, not even once in their lives, and are physically incapable of doing so can become visa officers

c. Preference should be given to candidates with no common sense and a post-graduate degree in Xenophobia

d. Remember, this is the first line of defence against invasion, so psy-war tactics should be followed:

the visa waiting area must have the ambience and the comfort level of a gas chamber. Minimum temperature 37 degrees Celsius and at least 40 people in an unventilated 4mx4mx2m room

e. The enemy's confidence level must be shattered even before they enter waiting area. This is done by employing mercenaries who can bark fiercely and carry metal detectors that look suspiciously like cattle prods

f. Reciprocity is the key in this low intensity war. Motto: Do on to another country what that country does on to you. So if one country enforces a cricket interview, our visa on arrival at Katunayake Airport must include a mandatory three-hour written exam about King Parakramabahu and the Early Kings of Polonnaruwa's Hydraulic Civilisation that will include a 20-point essay on the architectural splendours of Anuradhapura. Those who fail the test will be deported.

g. Your best psy-war weapon is to let visa applicants to spill out into the streets outside. This is like having a large billboard with flashing lights that says:

"This-Country-Is-Tough-To-Get-Into-Try-Another-One-Down-the-Road."

I hear through the grape juice that embassies in Delhi have a secret competition where those judged to have the most tortuously long visa lines are awarded a trophy every month. An unnamed OECD state has bagged the prize three times in a row.



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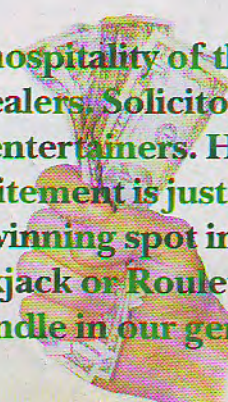
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