

HIMAL

SOUTH ASIA

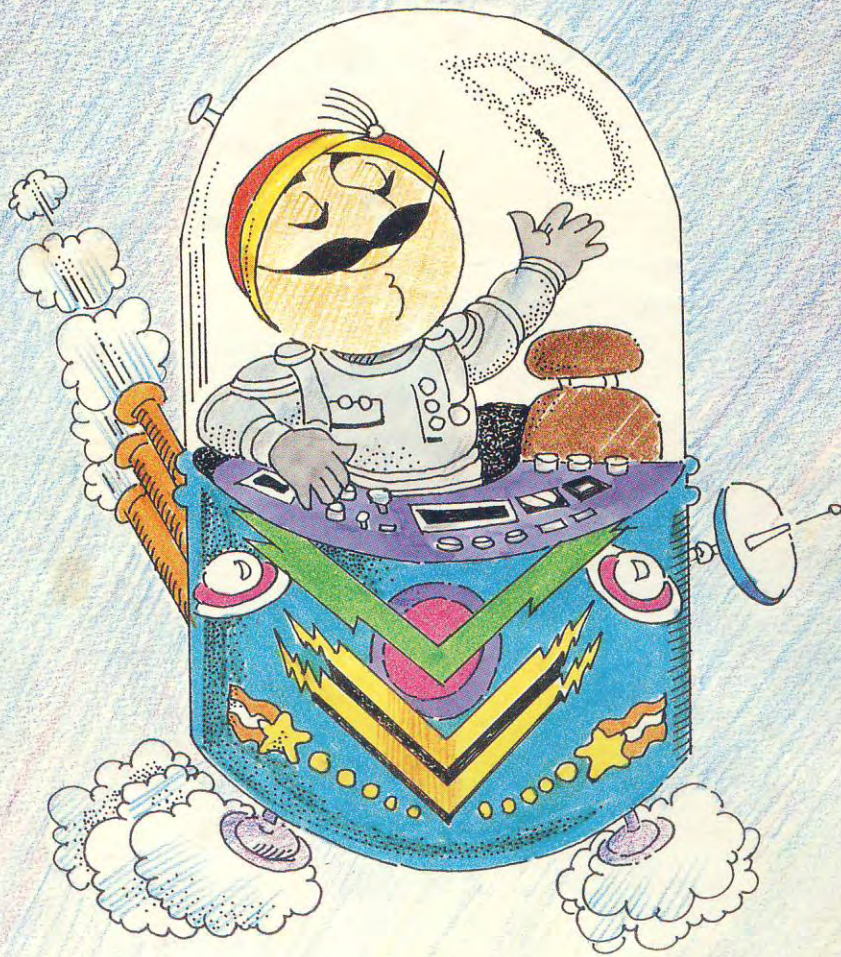


Open Skies, Closed Minds

Chakma Diaspora • Misusing Gandhi

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HIMAL

SOUTH ASIA

Vol 9 No 2

April 1996

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Information for New Readers

Himal magazine was started in 1987 as a journal for the Himalayan region. With the March 1996 issue, the magazine transformed into the first and only South Asian magazine. Every month, Himal South Asia provides readers in the Subcontinent and overseas with reportage and commentary on issues and trends that affect the region's 1.3 billion people.

We are now on the Web

Himal's latest table of contents, selected articles, subscription information plus other items of interest are now accessible on Internet.
<http://www.south-asia.com/himal.html>

For subscription details, see page 49.

COVER

- 16 **Open Skies, Closed Minds**
 by Hemant Arjyal



Cover picture by Ujjwal Raj Joshi shows Singapore Airlines A310 taking off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport. SIA is the airline which the South Asian flag-carriers would most like to emulate. It is also the non-regional airline with the maximum connections in South Asia.

- 23 **The Non-Flag Carriers**
 by Suman Shakya

- 25 **Clash of the Titans**
 by Hemant Arjyal

Features

- 34 **Temples of the Salt Range**
 photo essay by Salman Rashid

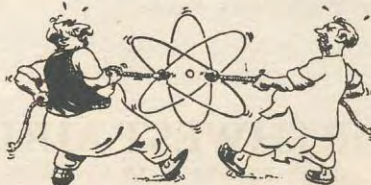
- 38 **Mongolia's Mahayana Mania**
 by Prabhu Ghate

- 43 **Refugees Within,
 Refugees Without**
 by Sanjoy Hazarika

Departments

- 5 **Mail**
 More Bangladesh, Please
 Himal for Post-Colonials
 More Than, Good Intentions
 Royal Tiger
 Closer to the Abyss
 Human Cost of Trekking
 No Crees in Bihar
 Arms Aggrandisement
 Subscribing No More
 The Height of Nonsense
 ON THE WAY UP

- 8 **Follow-Up**
 10 **Commentary**
 Let's Keep It That Way
 Do You Belong Here, Abimael?
 Time to Woo the Minorities
 Play up! Play up!



- 27 **Profile**
 His Holiness the Ambassador
 by Martijn van Beek

Arts & Society

- 51 **Would Billo
 or
 Chief Saab
 Approve?**
 by Arif Shamim



- 52 **Time Now for Counselling**
 53 **Reviews**
Jungle Girl
*Post Cold War Developments in
 South Asia*
 54 **Departure**
 Razia Bhatti, Rita Sebastian

- 28 **Briefs**
 Cleaner Air in Kathmandu
 Tigers in Central Asia
 Out of Siberia
 Dead Eyes See Again
 The Peerless Peerzada Brothers of Lahore
 Royal Reading
 Rickshaw in the Time of Hartal
 Colombo's Instant Condoms
 Who Are Nepal's Maoists?
- 46 **Analysis**
 Using and Abusing Gandhi
 by Ramchandra Guha
- 56 **Opinion**
 Mubashir Hasan on nationalism
 Neelan Tiruchelvam on devolution
- 61 **Mediafile**
 62 **Saarconomy**
 Believing Manmohan Singh
 by Mukul
 Liberalisation Only in Name
 by Brij Khindaria
- 66 **Young SouthAsian**
 68 **Abominably Yours**



MA
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More Bangladesh, Please

It was good to come across an exceptional magazine in a bookstore in Kathmandu. A delightful innovation, *Himal South Asia*! Having read the March issue, I hope for the magazine's longevity. We South Asians want more details about culture, education, politics, economy, tourism, and more on all the countries of South Asia. Lastly, as a Bangladeshi, I must complain that there were not enough reports on my country in your inaugural issue.

Hossain Md. Zakir
Camp: Tripureswar
Kathmandu

Himal for Post-Colonials

I am writing in response to the mail you have received regarding *Himal*'s decision to go 'South Asian'. Along with other readers, I too shall miss some aspects of the old *Himal*. But I feel it is too early to write an obituary to the kind of coverage you provided for the last eight years. In particular, I would like to draw the attention of your readers to two aspects related to transformations within *Himal*.

Firstly, there is no reason why the kind of analysis on various Himalayan issues that *Himal* provided should necessarily disappear from the pages of *Himal South Asia*. As you have written, the Himalayan region makes up a substantial portion of the South Asian region. Hence, I will look forward to the same kind of substantive articles on the Himalaya as you have provided in the past.

As historian Chetan Singh argued in your July/August 1993 issue, the Himalaya are intrinsically a part of the Subcontinent and analyses that do not lose sight of this fact will only augment what you were providing your readers earlier. From the point of view of a researcher on Nepal, I can only hope that your new agenda will force members of academia who work on Nepal to place their work in the context of the entire region and beyond.

Secondly, I would like to remind those despairing among *Himal*'s readers that for five years you have also covered the Himalayan region in the Nepali-language *Himal*. Its form, too, has

changed from an annual volume consisting mostly of translations from the English *Himal*, to a quarterly that has also started carrying original articles in Nepali. The recent announcement that as of Baisakh 2053 (Vikram Sambat) the Nepali *Himal* will become a bimonthly consisting mostly of original articles covering the Himalayan region should come as welcome news to those who might be nostalgic of the coverage you provided in the old English *Himal*.

This will, of course, mean having to read about the Himalaya in Nepali, but I am sure that experts and scholars of the region, including Westerners always in search of genuinely 'native' voices, will not think that learning Nepali is such a chore. Post-colonial theorists amongst the readers of the erstwhile Himalayan *Himal*, I am confident, will be delighted to know that intellectual exchange in the so-called vernacular language exists in the region, Himalaya as well as South Asia.

Pratyoush Onta
Kathmandu

More than Good Intentions

It is difficult to judge a large commitment from a single effort. "Helping South Asians talk to each other" is a giant-sized ambition. It will take a lot more than good intentions.

Monthly publications always have a problem about staying topical. Daily and weekly journalism have the advantage of frequency and pretty well exhaust matters of current interest in the 30 days between one issue of a monthly and the next. It is good that *Himal South Asia* will aim for in-depth reportage and analysis. There will have to be much

better illustration of this than, say, the article "Guns and Rotis" in the March issue, which leaves the reader with the thought that rotis rather than guns might be the stuff of dreams.

The magazine will need to develop a research and writing team of its own rather than obtain unplanned articles

from a variety of sources with an eye on superficial 'balance'. A chosen theme of the month should be examined in genuine depth and from all possible regional angles. This is one way that the magazine can make an impact and advance its objective.

Aziz Siddiqui
Temple Road, Lahore

Royal Tiger

Congratulations on your March issue. It looks great and reads the same as the old Himalayan *Himal*. Speaking of which, as I read it from cover to cover, I could not help but note the following passage in the interesting briefs item on tourism in the Sunderban of Bangladesh:

"An added attraction is the Royal Bengal Tiger, often visible while gliding along the placid canals on motor launches."



Now I know why they call that tiger "royal"—sort of Cleopatra on her Nile barge. Could not help wondering, though, who was steering the motor launch. If not the tiger, then it must have been a very unappetizing Bangladeshi boatman. Whatever, I loved the image the sentence conjured up.

All the best for a bright future for *Himal South Asia*.

Quentin A. David
New Delhi

Closer to the Abyss

With reference to the continuing political impasse in Bangladesh (Commentary, March 1996), living has become nothing but ritualistic drudgery for the people of Bangladesh. This poor country is being traumatised by gun battles, bomb explosions and continued hartals, all in the name of politics. There have been 24-



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hour, 48-hour and 72-hour hartals called by the opposition during which time the wheels of economy grind to a halt.

While the super-rich go to neighbouring countries to wait out the instability, the poor and middle class are badly affected. The worst hit are the daily wage-earners, as they have to work on a daily basis if the family is to eat. A cycle-van driver in Dhaka earns about a hundred taka a day, and a menial labourer earns no more than sixty taka. While the driver can survive for a couple of days or more on his daily earnings, the labourer does not have such luxury.

The extended political impasse is having the effect of expanding the gap between the rich and the poor, exacerbating a situation that was already being promoted by a mixed economic policy in which one class is beginning to appear alien to another.

The frustrations thus quickly turn to fury. Children who stay out of schools become easy victims of political activists who hire them for ten or twenty taka to throw bombs and stones at the opposing side on the streets. The poor people of the slums are also being used by political workers and criminals to hide illegal arms and to transfer them from one place to another. Hunger reigns supreme in the slums, and the politicians cynically exploit this vulnerability of the slum dwellers.

Besides the poor, the educated middle class too has suffered. This is a proud class that gives society its much needed doctors, engineers, economists, sociologists, physicists, chemists, writers, poets and artists. This is the class that, as the conscience of the country, worked for the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Today, this middle class suffers in silence while arrogant politicians work to ruin the country. These politicians indulge themselves and Bangladesh slips closer to the abyss. If nothing is done soon enough, the nation will witness real tragedy, before which all this will pale.

*Shahnoor Wahid
Dhaka*

Human Cost of Trekking

Reading about the snow storm that lashed the Nepal Himalaya (Himal Nov/Dec 1995) on 10 November was numbing. How can anybody leave another human being to die? But, this is what happens every trekking season. Reports of shameful behaviour displayed by trekking groups and individuals filter into

Kathmandu all the time. Porters are found left behind on the Thorung La pass suffering from altitude sickness, hypothermia and frostbite; four Sherpas are found in the Imja Khola Valley in Khumbu, exhausted and without tents, sleeping bags or food; six snow-blind porters are abandoned; a young boy freezes to death. The list goes on and on.

Obviously, not all trekking companies behave in this way. The more caring and conscientious among them provide warm and protective clothing for porters and trekking crew. Shelter, food and insurance are also part of the deal and dangerous terrain is not tackled. But such companies are in a minority. For the most part, Nepali agents cut corners, and porters are taken to 17,000 feet and higher with wholly inadequate gear.

In an ever-competitive atmosphere, companies are striving to offer "the wildest and most adventurous" treks. Their glossy brochures offering a selection of treks with high, glaciated and difficult pass crossings. Many of these high passes are challenging to a well-equipped western trekker. What would it be like for a Nepali porter weighted down by a heavy bamboo basket and wearing plimsolls and cotton trousers?

This kind of inhumane behaviour would never be allowed anywhere in the Western world; why should it be different in Nepal? It is time that everyone involved in the trekking industry—directors, trek leaders, local agents and the trekkers themselves—stopped trying to "do Nepal on the cheap," and shoulder the responsibility and costs of taking a Nepali trekking crew into the highest mountains on earth.

*Ann Brooks
Derbyshire, UK*

No Crees in Bihar

While I appreciated the sentiments and argumentation behind Dipak Gyawali's "Neo-Gandhian Maoists vs. Nehruvian

Stalinists" (Analysis, March 1996), reading his piece also added to my conviction that activists, economists and environmentalists have a dam-fixation. High dams, barrages, reservoirs, penstock pipes and water gushing out of tailrace tunnels are the stuff that makes men either applaud the technological prowess of the human race or decry misplaced development.

Why is it that only high dams are able to wake us to the evils of mega-projects? There are hundreds of other mega-projects being built under our very noses, but no one utters a word. If the now-dead Arun Three project in East Nepal was going to cost nearly a billion dollars, there are irrigation and embankment projects that cost as much or more being built all over South Asia. On the Indus in Pakistan, the Gandak and the Kosi in India, and on the numerous distributaries of the Ganga and the Brahmaputra in Bangladesh, through foreign or governmental grants or loans, billions are being spent without review or criticism.

Compared to the economic, social and environmental costs of these projects, I am sure those projected for the Arun Three would pale to insignificance. Take the massive problem of resettlement, the social costs of spread of diseases like kalazar, and the impact on the economies when you try to harness the fury of nature rather than try to adjust to it.

I find that social scientists tend to ignore these problems, which are common to all countries of the Subcontinent, and are happy focusing instead on dams, which are so much easier to target, and to galvanise international activists against. I have heard that some Washington DC activists even brought some Cree Indians who had fought the James Bay project in northern Canada to the hills of East Nepal to help in the fight against Arun Three. I would only ask why these very Cree Indians were not taken downstream to the

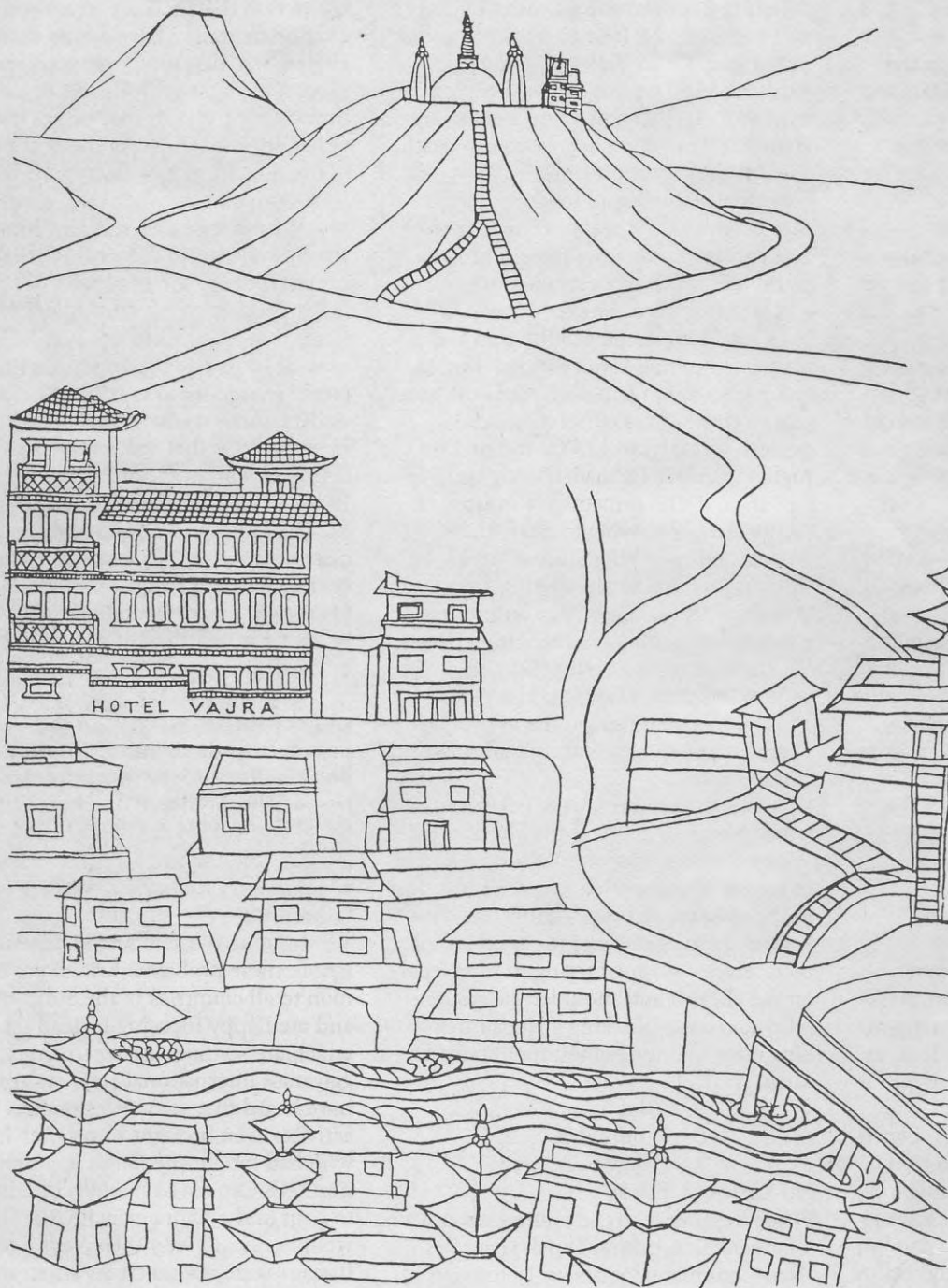
Kosi in Bihar, where eight lakh of the state's poor have lived within embankments, to be flooded every monsoon.

At the very least, Mr Gyawali and other social scientists have the responsibility to explain the fallout of these dreary plains-based projects, using lessons learnt from the study of opposition to high dams.

*Nandan Mishra
Calcutta*

Readers are invited to comment, criticise or add to information and opinions appearing in HSA. Letters should be brief, to the point, and may be edited. Letters that are unsigned and/or without addresses will not be entertained. Include daytime telephone number, if possible.

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

Ketaki Sheth
Inside Outside

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

John Collee
The London Observer



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Arms Aggrandisement

The one and only South Asian magazine's inaugural issue coverage of the "arms race" in South Asia (March 1996) was perceptive and informative. It is appalling that, on the verge of the 21st century, we South Asians are still obsessed with arms aggrandisement. India and Pakistan find reason enough to invest in their national armouries because of the animosity existing since their partitioning. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have their internal "compulsions" to retain and invigorate the armed forces, and Nepal, relatively more peaceful than its neighbours, nevertheless seems to have the same urge to expand on and expand its army. As the plan goes, Nepali army men are to be merchandised as mercenaries in so-called peace-keeping missions far and wide.

People like Mahbub ul Haq may be dreamers, as former Indian Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit implies, but at this juncture the South Asian region needs visionaries like Mr Haq, as well as arbitrators who will transform vision into reality. In a manner of speaking, the real threat to South Asia is not the arsenals that the Indian, Pakistani and other armed forces possess, but the persisting and rampant poverty.

Hopefully, Himal South Asia, by putting the spotlight on burning regional issues, will spur debate among the South Asian countries and make those in charge of national policies think twice before they invest another paisa in the "arms" race.

Incidentally, why did you not cover the armed forces of Bhutan and Maldives?

Kishor Pradhan
Lalitpur, Nepal

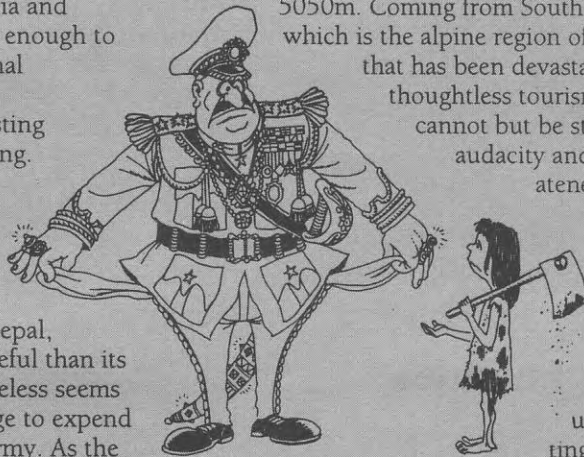
Subscribing No More

When I got the first edition of the changed Himal, I was truly disappointed. It has become a pure SAARC paper. The old Himal, with its many excellent articles on Nepal, its life, culture and politics, has disappeared. I will not be renewing my subscription for I feel that there are enough political magazines for this region, such as the *Far Eastern Economic Review* and *Asiaweek*.

Annemarie H. Spahr
Turenthal, Switzerland

The Height of Nonsense

I am turning to your magazine with the story of a horror that is being committed up in the Khumbu region of Nepal. It is the plan to establish "the world's highest hotel" alongside the trail to the Mount Everest Base Camp, at an elevation of 5050m. Coming from Southern Bavaria, which is the alpine region of Germany that has been devastated by thoughtless tourism projects, I cannot but be stunned by the audacity and inappropriateness of the idea.



By allowing the plan to proceed, Nepal's Ministry of Tourism is up to committing the same

fatal errors that the Bavarian authorities did some 40 years ago in their effort to promote tourism in the mountain region. Today, one can hardly find a mountain in the Bavarian alps that does not feature either a restaurant or a hotel on the summit. The result of these manmade incursions into the ecologically fragile high altitude environments are disastrous—wildlife vanishes, soil erodes, and forests are lost.

The regular tourist does not care. He takes advantage of the "nice facilities" as long as their effects on the environment are not visible. Once the damage to the landscape becomes obvious, he turns away and looks for other "unspoiled" places. Meanwhile, instead of giving nature time to recover, tourism operators try to hold on to their customers by setting up even more elaborate facilities and "fun attractions".

This is a vicious cycle that the Bavarians know only too well, and rather than be trapped themselves, Nepalis should learn from the mistakes of other mountain regions. A hotel on the high Base Camp trail is a firm step in the wrong direction, not to mention the fact that this "prestigious project" seems to have been approved without prior determination of its ecological impact. I wish the Nepali government officials would come to see the Bavarian mountains, which are now nothing more than lifeless tourist parks, before proceeding with the so-called "8000 Inn" on Everest.

Colin Goldner
Munich

On the Way Up



- Kanak Mani Dixit

As a small, new magazine, we were happy that our South Asian launch from New Delhi in March received wide coverage in newspapers and magazines. The write-ups generally welcomed Himal South Asia as an idea whose time indeed had arrived, and commended our editorial content. Many also understood that by producing a serious magazine for all South Asia, we were trying to buck the regional trend of bringing out quick-read glossies targetted at niche markets. These well-wishers were clearly worried that the market might not sustain *Himal South Asia*.

In his syndicated column "With Malice Towards One and All", Khushwant Singh reviewed *India Today Plus*, *Outlook* and a few other new journals, and expressed the opinion that "the most daring magazine venture of the last month is *Himal South Asia* from Kahtmandu." He wondered whether the magazine would receive enough advertisements to keep its head above water.

"A bold venture in the face of Himalayan obstacles," wrote BBC correspondent Andrew Whitehead in his fortnightly column in *Asian Age*. "Himal is embarking on a bold gamble. It needs, and deserves, more success than the other South Asian institution based in the Nepalese capital -- SAARC."

Sunday magazine, after alerting readers that the new journal's editor was not related to "either Madhuri or the former foreign secretary", went on to worry, "...whether advertisers will bite the bait is to be seen."

Here at Himal South Asia, with seven years' experience of publishing the earlier Himalayan Himal, we know that it is not enough to publish a good magazine. The trick is to survive in order to be able to improve and expand. This requires good marketing and sales, and most importantly, the ability to attract advertising. Because Himal South Asia's beat is the entire Subcontinent, we hope to explore -- and be the first to benefit from -- the regional advertising market.

Presently, the advertising budgets of trans-nationals are fragmented according to the political economies of South Asia, and national companies which do not have trans-border ambitions have no incentive to ride the pages of a regional magazine. It is only a matter of time, however, before: a) regional advertisers see the benefit of advertising for a select audience that is spread out all over South Asia, and, b) national advertisers begin to eye the regional market.

South Asia is one of the last regions worldwide where magazine publishing is yet to peak, and with the support of advertisers a serious magazine like Himal South Asia, too, will find sustenance. There is only one thing that we ask for: chief executives who read.

Alms Race

The Subcontinent of Sub Saharan Asia

March 1996

Tired of the Bickering. The Rand Corporation, the conservative US think tank, too, thinks that the India-Pakistan enmity is costly. Rand staffer George Tanham, in an article in *The International Herald Tribune*, writes that the tension and conflict between the two bring heavy costs, tangible and intangible, to both countries. India spends about 2.5 percent of its gross domestic product on defence, he writes, and Pakistan 7.5 percent. In 1994, Indian military spending was USD

7.3 billion, Pakistan's USD 3.4 billion. However, Pakistan's army and air force are about half the size of India's. The intangible costs of the conflict, writes Tanham, "may be even greater than the actual financial costs of military spending." He adds, "The bitter conflict between India and Pakistan hurts their standing in much of the rest of the world which is tired of the constant feuding and bickering."

How To Lose Friends and Win Enemies

March 1996

Building Up Imran. Advice given by columnist M.A. Said in the Islamabad *Nation* to former cricketer and Bhutto nemesis Imran Khan, now that he has declared his political ambitions. 1) His public statements should be the outcome of knowledgeable and well-advised briefings by professionals. 2) He needs to jettison embarrassing associations from among the coterie of "defunct socialist and fundo politicians, ex-Generals with messiah complexes, loan-defaulting businessmen and sundry bureaucrats". 3) Give top priority to a comprehensive economic policy as the corner stone of his political agenda. A lack



of an economic agenda would translate into political demise. 4) Identify target electorates, and develop appropriate slogans that are "pithy, hard-hitting and sincere". 5) Because administrative goodwill is a prerequisite for a successful political career, bureaucrats must know that they will be respected, adequately paid, and empowered to work without fear or favour under an Imran government. 6) Imran will need adequate media support, but the government is going to try and torpedo his plans each step of the way. "At the very best, he may need to buy a paper."

The BJP's Neighbourhood

March 1996

Party Confirms Poll strategy. The Bharatiya Janata Party, as expected, has decided to rely on the "Ram Mandir" card in the poll campaign. The last couple of years had seen the party trying to go beyond the one-issue (Hindutva) image that had brought it to national prominence, and its emerging plank had been of cleanliness and probity of its leadership (as compared, primarily, to the Congress party). The party has had to abandon this strategy, with the implication of its president L.K. Advani in the bribery scandal known as Hawala, and now has decided to go back to its old standby, the Hindutva theme. According to Indian

news sources, the principal campaign themes that the BJP plans to utilise in the run-up to the April-May general elections include: continued commitment to construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya (where the Babri Masjid stood), projection of Atal Behari Vajpayee as prime ministerial candidate, national security, and "the plight of farmers".



Gandhian Maoists vs Nehruvian Stalinists

March 1996

Civil Society and Mega Projects. The Islamabad-based Sustainable Development Policy Institute has taken the debate on mega projects in South Asia a step further in a report entitled "Civil Society and Mega Projects: Is Pakistan Ready". Answering the question with a definite negative, SDPI states that mega projects are "part of the World Bank's ongoing attempt to infuse large funds into the South to legitimise its continued existence in the face of embarrassing net negative transfers." Large-scale projects involve highly centralised forms of decision making. "To secure public support, the 'national interest' and 'development' are invoked, but though mega projects are potent physical signifiers of the *outcome* of development, development also implies a *process* of change that is often in conflict with lived local realities. Looking at the demographic distribution of the impact of such projects, mega projects are seen to serve the energy requirements of urban areas, and feed the need for urban/ industrial labour via the migration of displaced people. Mega-projects are also part and parcel of the homogenising idea of nation-building under modernisation. There is denial of the fact that local forms of governance are more responsive to people's needs."

Big Dam Trend Up. Meanwhile, *Vital Signs*, the Worldwatch Institute's annual review, reports that there is a spurt in the building of dams worldwide. The increase follows a general decline in the 1980s, when construction worldwide averaged less than half that of the preceding 25 years. "Data for the early 1990s, though incomplete, indicate a shift towards larger dams," says Worldwatch. "Construction of dams higher than 10 meters rose by some 27 percent between 1991 and 1993." There were 5000 dams in the world in 1950, and there are roughly 38,000 today. According to the data for 1993, counting structures higher than 10 metres, China, Turkey, Japan, South Korea, India and the United States are the top six dam-building countries. They have 311, 190, 140, 125, 76 and 55 dams under construction, respectively.

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NATURE'S PLAYGROUND

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The world's largest mangrove forest

Home of the Royal Bengal Tiger

Sparkling rivers

Endless fields of green

Quiet villages

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LET'S KEEP IT THAT WAY

The latest flareup regarding the nuclear programmes of India and Pakistan has subsided for the moment, but it is not an issue that will go away. The concern this time revolves around India's "getting ready" to detonate a second nuclear device, and the acquisition by Pakistan of 5000 ring magnets—needed to enrich uranium—from China.

Whenever there is the smallest perception of 'threat' in Indo-Pak relations, resident hawks in both countries use the opportunity to call upon their governments to discard the nuclear ambiguity that has kept the peace for 25 years and to go for nuclear deterrence. We are not sure that is such a good idea.

Fortunately, the level of nuclear paranoia has receded far enough in both countries that it is possible to at least discuss the matter. At one time, it used to be impossible for Pakistani or Indian intellectuals to be vocally anti-nuclear without risk of serious injury to one's career. Today, the worst that can happen is to be branded anti-nationalist under the pay of the CIA, RAW or ISI, but you still get invited to parties.

But that is not good enough. The voice of those against the bomb is drowned out in the patriotic babble, and the Pakistani and Indian media is very much part of the game. Reports and analyses written in nationalist ink are churned out, and it is unfortunate that Indian and Pakistani newspapers are not easily available in the other country to provide a perspective that allows a third, more logically humane, path.

The latest instalment of the South Asian nuclear drama started with the revelation in an American paper that satellite pictures showed "unusual movement" suggesting preparations for a nuclear explosion in the Pokharan range, where India's first test was conducted in 1974. Before India was through with its explanation, that the preparations were for testing the Prithvi missile, there was another leak from the Pentagon, this time accusing Islamabad of taking delivery of the ring magnets, as well as some M-11 missiles, from Beijing.

Give the Americans the credit of being even-handed about it. India received stern warnings to

keep its nuclear weapons programme firmly capped, while Pakistan was told that its USD 368 million-dollar weapons shipment might be in jeopardy. Any move by either country to acquire nuclear weapons would trigger massive sanctions under the 1994 Glenn amendment, which is applied on any non-nuclear state that goes nuclear.

Indian and Pakistani analysts reacted identically. Uncle Sam's warnings were perceived as unfair by both countries as regards themselves. Pakistan remonstrated that it is unduly marked as the villain every time, and India protested that Pakistan's nuclear capability was not being taken seriously in Washington DC.

The American evenhandedness with South Asians, sadly, is not reflected in its dealings on the very same matter with China, that great potential consumer and producer. If Pakistan bought the ring magnets in violation of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), it was China which sold them. However, China received nothing more than a hand-slapping, all in the name of American "national interest", that of maintaining a foot in the door of the Chinese economy.

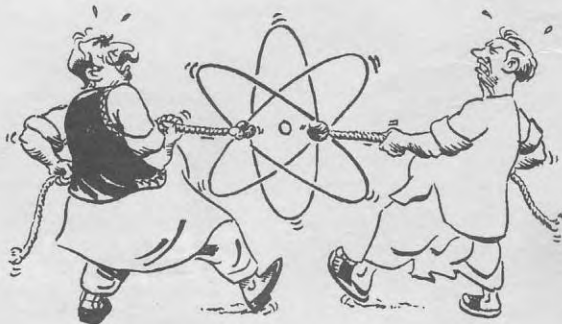
American partisanship when it comes to the South Asia versus East Asia is, however, a side shoe. The real concern is whether they should go openly nuclear, as the hawks are demanding. We think not.

New Delhi and Islamabad speak from the same side in international negotiations on nuclear arms. Both regard the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) as an unfair conspiracy of a few Western countries (plus China) to maintain nuclear superiority, somewhat like the Security Council membership issue. Both would like to see the comprehensive test ban treaty (CTBT) to be linked to a timebound phaseout of nuclear arms.

But there is good diplomatic posturing, and there is good policy. South Asia is said to be the one region in the post-Cold War world which could most easily be dragged into a nuclear war. A longterm vision must permeate the relationship of the two countries. Let India and Pakistan—even while agreeing to maintain the animus on all other areas, from Kashmir to cricket—agree never to be dragged to the nuclear precipice, whatsoever the excuse. New Delhi and Islamabad need not join the NPT or support the CTBT process, but let them have an understanding as neighbours not to go nuclear. This means not to test their capabilities, and if nothing else, at least to maintain the nuclear ambiguity.

In the nuclearised West, with a largely educated and aware population and good media, you could say that those who make nuclear policy speak for "the nation" as a whole. Not so in India and Pakistan, where the scholars, scientists, bureaucrats and generals who fashion and implement nuclear policy live in an incestuous bubble. Better that the conventional trigger be left in their hands, but not the nuclear. The average Pakistani and Indian (villager, mostly) would not have a clue why a mushroom cloud suddenly went up in their neighbourhood.

Nuclear weapons are not about one-upmanship. They are about annihilation, and if it is possible to



fight or negotiate without them on the table, so much the better.

There is reason to be optimistic, however. Despite the recent clamour of the hardliners, South Asia did not go for nuclear deterrence. If it was because of the threat of US reaction, then let us give some credit where due. We have maintained peace in South Asia for more than two decades without a nuclear test and without manufacturing atom bombs. Let's keep it that way. △

Nepal

DO YOU BELONG HERE, ABIMAEI?

Tourist brochures proclaim Nepal as a peaceful haven where there is communal harmony and (in subscript) none of the violence that racks different parts of the Subcontinent. But those who know better understand that such an idyll exists only in the mind. Peaceful societies often have bottled-up pressures waiting for release—ask Sri Lanka and Cambodia, two countries which, at one time, had an image somewhat akin to Nepal's.

On 12 February, the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) launched a "people's war" with the goal of "overthrowing reactionary state power and establishing a new people's state". In what was clearly a planned operation, cadres from one of the three factions of the CPN adhering to the Chinese Cultural Revolution ideology of the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM), started a terror campaign in the hills of west Nepal.

The opening salvo of the "people's war" was fired four months back with action against political opponets and some perceived feudals. This was subdued easily enough by the police in an operation code-named "Romeo". In February, the Maoists came back with a vengeance. There were a series of simultaneous attacks on police stations in the western districts of Rolpa and Rukum and in Sindhuli, south-east of Kathmandu. Masked activists chanting Maoist slogans moved about mountain villages, killing village heads, beating up of "class enemies", looting, and, in one instance, blowing up the house of a former minister.

The police retaliated with fury. Six peasant activists were killed in one encounter alone, which is a heart-stopping number in a country where political killings are relatively rare. This, by the way, is the same country where even accidental individual deaths have been exploited by the parties to bring down governments. Kathmandu's blase attitude towards these deaths showed that the mainstream political parties want this problem "dealt with".

That this was a mountain-based movement of peasantry immediately drew comparison with the (once again resurgent) Sendero Luminoso movement of the Peruvian highlands, led by Abimael Guzman or

Comrade Gonzalo, now in government custody. However, Maoist movements closer to home, in Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and southern Sri Lanka would be as instructive.

What do people do when a minimal level of inapplicable education has been achieved, and the state machinery and economic structure is incapable of delivering either good governance or productive opportunity? They, especially the young, turn to he who makes the most radical speeches. Announcing the "people's war", "Prachanda", the shadowy leader of the NCP (Maoist), stated, "As there is no other way to resolve the present crisis of the country, the people have launched an armed struggle and propaganda war against the state-sponsored terrorism, feudal bureaucrats and comprador capitalists."

In the ensuing month, pockets have reverberated with violence quite different from the variety that was seen when the People's Movement released the energies of the Nepali middle class in 1990. What the country is witnessing is not the genteel skirmishing of

'People's War: Overthrowing reactionary state power and establishing a new people's state'

intellectuals and police, nor the easy targetting of kingship as the evil force of autocracy. Instead, the Maoist warriors are led by leaders who deride the timid demands for human rights and democracy. They consider the 1990 Constitution a sham, and regard the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist), which ran the government for nine months last year, as revisionist. The Maoists say they are prepared for extended class war.

Party politics in Nepal's young democracy has quickly made cynics out of the public, and this disillusionment must have had a role in strengthening the Maoists' appeal. The politicians in Parliament—socialists, communists, as well as the so-called royalists—have failed as "representatives". All parties have had a go at government, but none has made an effort to chart a self-reliant path to socio-economic development for the country, or, more to the point, set about to release the central government's rigid hold over civil society. As the latest manoeuvres to bring down the government of Sher Bahadur Deuba proved, ideology and principle have been abandoned by most of the national players.

So much for the politicians, who come from all over the country. Kathmandu's economic elite, meanwhile, is further removed from the rural hinterland than ever before. The distance between the impoverished village and the conspicuously consuming Valley is more starkly visible today than five years ago.



Still, for all the growing disparities the country is seeing, Rukum and Rolpa might epitomise less than the archetypal class warfare. The two districts make up part of the heartland of the Magar, the largest and among the most economically backward of Nepal's hill ethnic groups. Is there an inter-twining of class and caste/ethnic elements in the "people's war"?

Similar conditions of poverty exist in pockets all over Nepal, so why was the Maoist flare-up concentrated here? The explanation might lie in, one, that the senior-most Maoist leader Mohan Bikram Singh is from these parts and he has built an effective organisation, and, two, that the Rapti zone which subsumes Rukum and Rolpa is also the base of the country's present Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka. Seen in this light, the class war also begins to take on the character of a turf war.

The radicals seem to have acted in large part to settle political scores against people who are considered local exploiters. The revolt seems to involve young people who have no real understanding of the theory of people's war or the issues involved, but are full of anger due to the illusions given by the media and inadequate schooling, and have been easily swayed by slogans.

The Maoists' accusations against "reactionary forces" sound timeworn and their tactics are of no proven efficacy. Theirs is nothing more than a mindless call to arms by a group that does not have the patience to carry out the much harder task of advocacy and activism. Instead of terrorising the populace, the proper goal would have been to use objectives and methods with which to excite that same populace. The flickering exhilaration of picking up the gun or khukuri is hardly a substitute for the long march to bring about social and economic advancement in the hills of Nepal. Besides, violence tends to legitimise violence and before long while the militants are dead or in jail, the peasantry is left to suffer under an oppressive police system.

The Maoist leaders will, of course, have read up on uprisings in other countries and continents, and will know that the solution favoured by governments everywhere has been to retaliate with overwhelming force—whether it is Alberto Fujimori crushing Mr Guzman's Shining Path, Indira Gandhi the Naxalites, or Ranasinghe Premadasa the JVP. Egged on by the national elite and international votaries of stability, it is unlikely that a Kathmandu government will be any different.

‘Nuclear weapons are not about one-upmanship. They are about annihilation’

The upshot of all this is that the Maoists' call is bound to rebound on the very poor farmers, who find that they are unable to defend themselves against police repression and politically dominant local groups, newly legitimised by the Maoists' own violence. Irresponsibly, the Maoists have unleashed a

war which will find favour in few places, given the prevailing international moods and the ever-present geopolitical situation of a small country. The losers then are not the shadowy Maoist leaders, nor the Kathmandu kingpins, but the terrorised peasantry of Nepal's hinterland.

And how do responsible leaders like former Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala react to the Maoist agitation? Following hallowed South Asian tradition, they blame the "foreign hand"!

Pakistan

TIME TO WOO THE MINORITIES

Pakistan's Electoral Reforms Committee has submitted a report that proposes a major change in the polling system. It would restore the right of dual vote to the country's religious minorities, allowing them to cast ballots in the national and provincial assemblies as well as for reserved seats for minority candidates in the assemblies.

Even though the final draft is not in, the report has been accepted by the federal cabinet. As expected, the action sparked immediate protest from the main opposition and the religious parties.

Non-Muslims form about 3.5 percent of Pakistan's 130 million population. Allowing them to vote for Muslim as well as non-Muslim candidates would be the first step toward removing the separate electorate system imposed in 1985 by Gen Ziaul Haq. Under the general's writ, non-Muslims were restricted to voting separately for a designated number of non-Muslim seats, and they were barred from contesting elections for (Muslim) national or provincial assembly seats.

The result had been to effectively marginalise the non-Muslim population, as the parties no longer had to woo them. The few non-Muslim representatives that were elected could do little to influence policies or legislation. The restricted voting system became the basis for growing discrimination against the country's religious minorities. These included, for example, the increasing use of the so-called "blasphemy law", also the late dictator's doing.

Section 295-C of the Constitution provides for capital punishment for anyone found guilty of disrespect toward the Prophet Mohammad. Although it applies to all Pakistanis, non-Muslims have been the most affected — the most well-known case being that of the 14-year-old Salamat Masih, who was finally acquitted by the Lahore High Court last year.

The Electoral Reform Committee's proposal still maintains a separation, but it can be seen as a step to bring minorities into political reckoning. The reason the proposal has been slammed by the political and religious opposition is that the non-Muslim vote has traditionally swung in favour of the Bhuttos' Pakistan People's Party. They have called the move a "cheap

political stunt" to pad the PPP's vote bank in preparation for the 1997 general elections.

Human rights activists are of the view that, no matter who stands to benefit, it is high time that the joint electorate system was restored. Whether or not politically motivated, the changes will reduce human rights violations. Powerful people will have to be more careful not to irritate the religious minorities in their constituencies, particularly where the minority votes might turn the balance. According to analysts, the minority vote could prove decisive in 20-25 percent of the present National Assembly, which would give them considerable clout.

The government has, before this, attempted to make changes to the procedures relating to Section 295-C, which would have made 'blasphemy' cases more difficult to register, and false accusations punishable. However, Ms Bhutto was forced to beat a hasty retreat in the face of an emotionally charged reaction by the right-wing religious parties, supported by the Nawaz Sharif-led opposition.

At present, there is some support within Mr Sharif's own Pakistan Muslim League for the proposed electoral changes. In fact, the changes are actually the result of suggestions originally made by PML-N leaders who were formerly with the PPP, and are presently engaged in giving the PML-N a more liberal outlook and image. They have, for example, pushed through their demand that all Pakistanis be allowed full membership in the party, and not just Muslims as was the case previously.

It is also noteworthy that the 1973 Constitution, which originally gave non-Muslim Pakistanis the right to vote for general and reserved minority seats in the assemblies, did have the acceptance of all the country's political parties, including the Jamat-i-Islami. Even today, the JI does not deny its role in the making of the 1973 Constitution. It says it opposes the government's present proposal because it is "politically motivated".

The Bhutto government has long dawdled over its professed commitment to remove or amend discriminatory laws, and the federal cabinet's recent decision is therefore welcome. However, a constitutional amendment to restore the joint electorate system requires a two-third majority, both in the National Assembly and in the Senate (upper house). For this, the PPP does not have enough strength, although it can easily muster support for passing ordinary bills, which requires only a simple majority.

There is a way out, however, to allow the minorities benefit of the vote as envisaged. Two months before the general elections in 1997, a presidential ordinance could be passed allowing joint electorates. These ordinances have a life span of four months, so the minorities would get to vote, in the spirit of the proposed changes.

The non-Muslim's potentially significant clout in Pakistan is somewhat out of proportion to their size, due to the balance of power between the government and the main opposition party. They have not been able to capitalise on this because of Gen Zia's legacy.

What is certain, however, is that if the country's non-Muslim voters are brought into the mainstream as proposed, both Ms Bhutto's PPP and Mr Sharif's PML-N will have to take time out to woo this long-neglected constituency. △

South Asia

PLAY UP! PLAY UP!

The World Cup Cricket 1996 is already receding in memory, but to scholars it will provide grist for sociological analysis long into the future. The discussion will centre on several subjects, including nationalism, regionalism and chauvinism. A long-playing show which had the entire Subcontinent in thrall for more than a month, the World Cup should be studied for what it revealed about us Subcontinentals.

Asians and Caribbeans alike have always been pleased to beat the former colonial masters. However, if the English team is unavailable, any white team will do. In this World Cup, that team happened to be Australia. Already unpopular because of earlier altercations with Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the Aussies' refusal to play Sri Lanka after the 31 January Colombo blast invited South Asia's collective wrath. That the anger was specifically directed at the Australians'


'It was the extravaganza of vulgarity and immorality in the name of culture that invited Allah's wrath'

white skin was obvious from the fact that the West Indies were not targeted at all, even though they too refused to travel to Colombo.

The Australian team is actually to be thanked for the regional solidarity that resulted from their action, for they have done more for South Asia comradeship than a handful of SAARC summits put together. Their boycott was what it took for India and Pakistan to field a joint team to play the goodwill match against Sri Lanka. The feeling engendered was, however, very much us-vs-them, or brown-vs-white. Not very healthy.

It was downhill all the way after Colombo, as nationalist sentiments and preference pushed regionalism to a corner. The fight was for flag, god and glory. Those who did not have national teams rooted for those that were geopolitically most correct. Bangladeshis rooted for Sri Lanka, for example, because Dhaka has no problems with Colombo. With Pakistan, it is 1971; and with India, it is Farakka; but with Sri Lanka, it is only garment buyers. Nepalis cheered Sri Lanka or Pakistan when they fought India, but backed India when they played the Australians.

A whole nation is thirsting for victory.



It's a long, hard-fought day ahead. Sipping your large cup, enjoy your team in cheering for glory and wins. At home or at the stadium. So keep a Coca-Cola close by. Because cheering can be strong work.

ALWAYS Coca-Cola

The blanket coverage provided by satellite television, and the coming of age of sponsored advertising in South Asia, seems to have reinforced nationalist fervour. With all the hype being beamed down, the public was carried along in the jingoistic wave. Commercials exhorted the teams to give no quarter. In Pakistan, the song "Hum Jeetenge" was played to distraction. Even multinationals got into the act. Coca Cola, which sells in both India and Pakistan, chose to back only India, through ads in the Indian press.

A cricket match between India and Pakistan is a substitute for war—"orgies of vicarious nationalism", according to one commentator. This time around the war dead were both the Indian and Pakistani players, who were taken to the pinnacle only to be violently dropped from the top by a disenchanted public. It was actually somewhat worse for the Pakistani players, for they had to face the ignominy of defeat to India.

But it is India, as the largest Test-playing nation, that takes cricket more strongly than any other country. It has the largest fan following, the biggest TV viewership, and an increasingly prosperous, and huge, middle-class, groping for mass icons. Every time India lose, fans go through a range of emotional upheavals: they are angry, hurt, mystified, disenchanted. Taking a detached view of cricket is just not the Indian approach.

Time was when boys doing well at sport in the elite public schools aspired for executive positions in once British owned companies. Those who played the game were not expected to fiddle the books. These

were the men who looked upon cricket as just a game. Losing did not mean the end of the world or the end of anything, by which token winning the World Cup did not mean that Sri Lankans were suddenly the most superior South Asians.

The sad truth is that the downslide in the sporting spirit both on and off the field has been directly proportional to the ascending monetary rewards and idolisation by the media and fans. When the Lankans started off this time, they were one of the few teams who did not expect to receive fabulous prizes if they won. But things turned out quite differently, and the old values have evaporated in the face of the cash deluge.

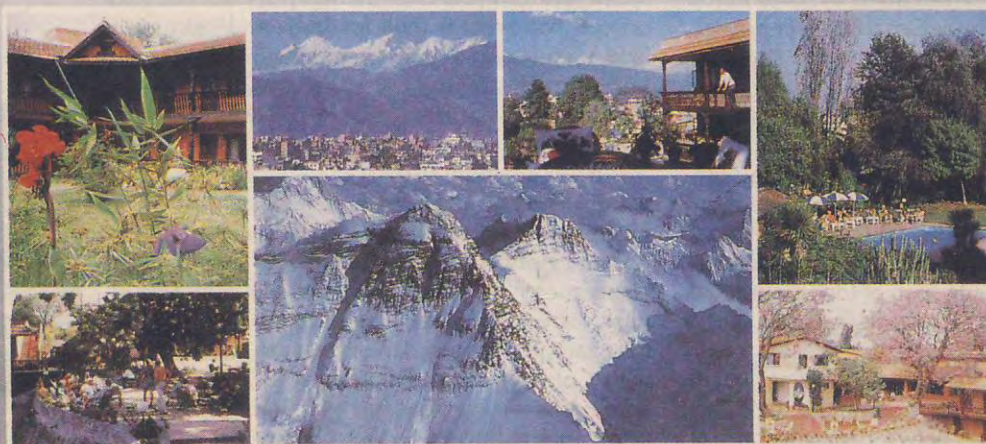
It is not only blazers and cream flannels that have gone out of fashion in cricket. Sportsmanship and respect for the umpire's word have been eroded as the tournaments are converted into war games. Most of us who read and speak English and watch cricket are familiar with the lines "Play up! play up! and play the game!" But not everybody would remember the full verse of "Vitai Lampada", in which Sir Henry Newbolt (1862-1938) so eloquently captured what cricket is all about:

There's a breathless hush in the Close tonight—
Ten to make and the match to win—
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote—
Play up! play up! and play the game.

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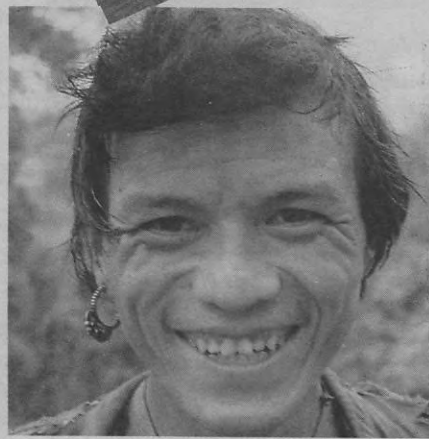
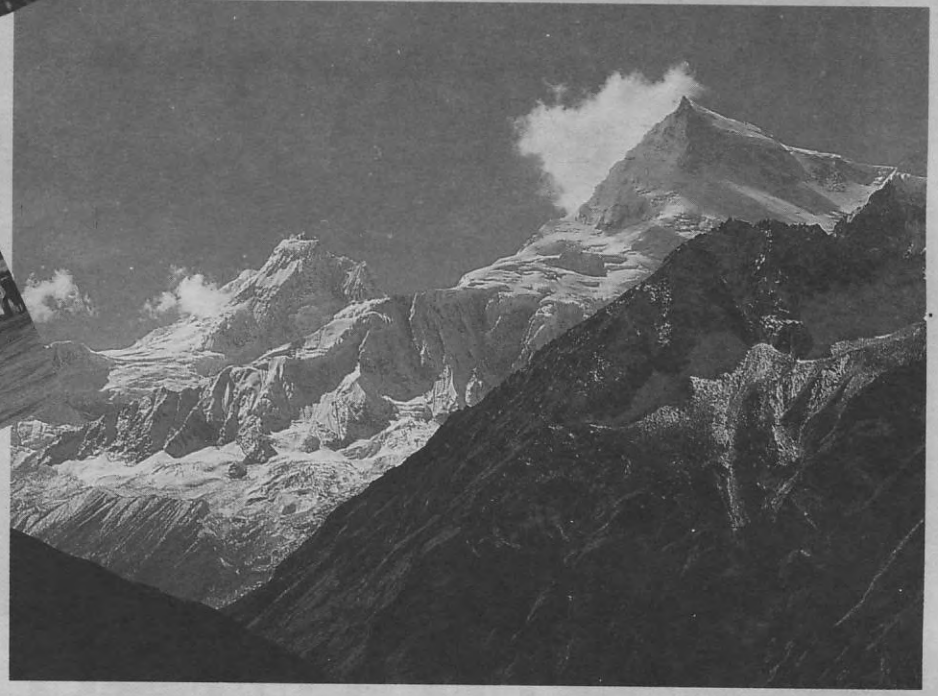


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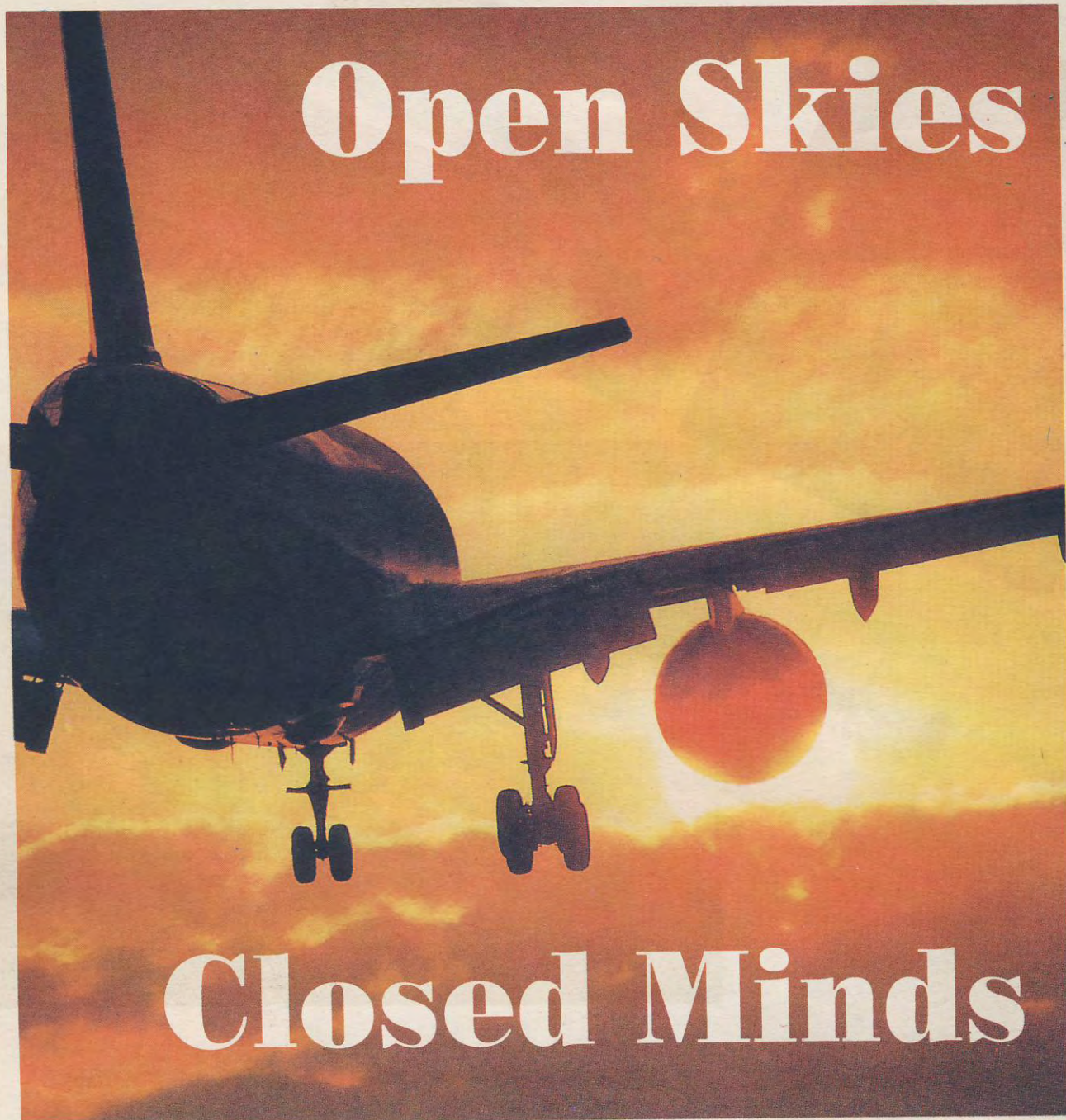


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South Asian countries have allowed private airlines to fly domestic routes, but the winds of liberalisation have not yet wafted over the region's international carriers. It is still as difficult as ever before to fly between South Asian countries.

by Hemant Arjyal

Flip through any aviation trade journal today, and the coverage is dominated by the Asia-Pacific, the region with the fastest growing airline market in the world. There are gushing reviews of the annual air shows in Dubai and Singapore and gasps about the phenomenal growth of aviation in the region.

But a note of caution: when they say Asia-Pacific, they do not include South Asia.

As far as the international airline industry is concerned, South Asia is

still that four hours of darkness between Burma and Afghanistan that you need to traverse on flights from East Asia to Europe.

South Asia's pioneer airlines, like Pakistan International and Air India, which used to be regarded as some of the best in the world in terms of service and equipment, now figure towards the bottom in passenger surveys. And while flying has got easier and better within South Asian countries, travelling between the region's capitals is still an ordeal.

So much of an ordeal, in fact, that on board a recent Singapore Airlines flight from Singapore to Kathmandu, were delegates from Sri Lanka on their way to Kathmandu to attend a UNICEF meeting. Despite the cost and hassle of travelling eight hours extra and a nightstop, South Asians find it more convenient to fly all the way to the edge of the Pacific than to get from one part of their region to another.

More and more, it is the non-South Asian airlines that are filling in as a bridge between SAARC capitals, with better and more reliable service: British Airways is the favourite Dhaka-Delhi operator, Lufthansa has taken over the Karachi-Kathmandu sector let go by Royal Nepal, and Malaysian Airlines offers one of the better connections from Delhi to Karachi.

South Asia's own airlines, instead of strengthening their regional routes have actually regressed, abandoning important regional links between Rangoon, Lhasa, Kathmandu and Colombo. Most SAARC capitals still do not have direct air links, take Colombo-Dhaka or Islamabad-Delhi.

With the notable exception of tiny Druk Air's Paro-Kathmandu-Delhi flights, and those to Bangkok via Dhaka or Calcutta, and PIA's Colombo-Male link, South Asian governments have been extremely reluctant to part with intra-SAARC "fifth freedom" rights for their fellow regional carriers (which allows airlines to pick up passengers for onward journeys). Ironically, these rights have been granted to non-South Asian airlines, which are thus able to take advantage of passenger traffic between South Asian countries.

Absence of flights has led to a huge shortage of seats on high-demand trunk routes such as Madras-Colombo, Delhi-Kathmandu or

Delhi-Lahore. The India-Nepal bilateral agreement allows 4,000 seats a week, parcelled out mainly between Indian Airlines and Royal Nepal, even though the sector can easily handle twice that volume. Nepali negotiators who are trying to convince the Indian authorities to enlarge the quota ask why the land border between the two countries is "open", but the skies incongruously "closed".

"I'm afraid people are just not looking at it on a regional basis and examining overall benefit," says retired captain, Lalit Manilal, a former Operations Manager for Indian Airlines.

Airline as Bureaucracies

In a sense, it would be too much to expect South Asia's nationalised airlines to be super-efficient when the governments that own them are themselves in disarray. And in inter-governmental negotiations, it seems everyone has decided to stand steadfastly by short-sighted protectionism.

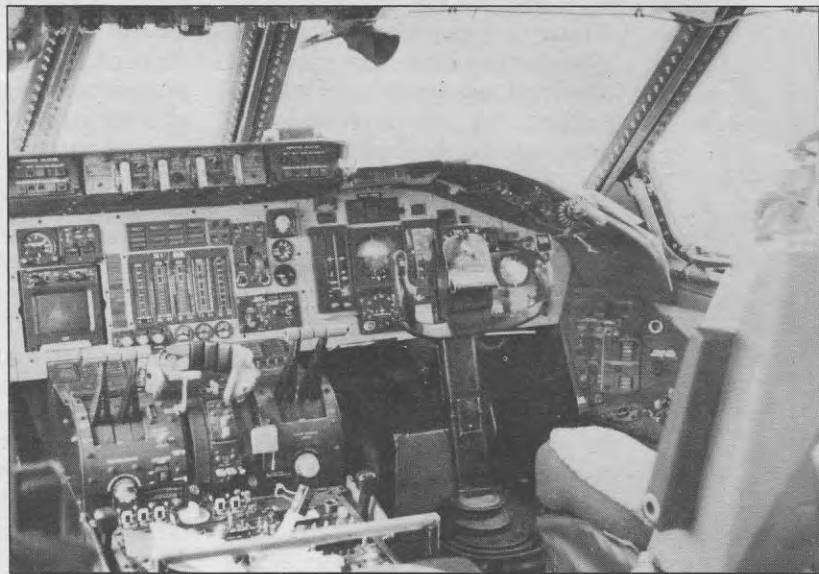
The faults and weaknesses of South Asian bureaucracies—mismanagement, ad-hocism, or lack of motivation—are reflected in their flag carriers. Privatisation would be an answer, but governments are reluctant to let go. Besides the all-important question of 'national pride', one reason is that the industry is kickback-driven, and airline purchases are second only to defence contracts and mega-projects as a vital source of slush funds.

Corruption in itself need not be an impediment to running a good airline, as the bigger Southeast Asian operators have shown. Governments, even in Japan, have been tainted by shady aircraft deals. The difference in South Asia seems to be the winner-takes-all attitude, the concept of raking it in while the going is good, and a crippling lack of managerial skills.

Airlines are seen only as cash cows—to be milked either for the national exchequer or personal enrichment. All this results in what is obvious to regular flyers: low staff motivation, indifferent service, safety shortcuts, delayed flights, confusion over livery, overstretched routes, and flag carriers that have become the butt of jibes. One Nepali travel agent jokes that Royal Nepal is the most competitive international airline: it covers half the world with only three jets.

Says an Air India captain who recently quit to go fly with a carrier in the Gulf: "Our officials want to prosper at the expense of the airline. One of the most sophisticated technologies the world has ever seen is in the hands of people who have difficulty running a bus service efficiently."

To be sure, there are South Asian operators that shine through the



No one at the controls of flag carriers

grime. Despite the troubles at home, stagnant tourism, and whiffs of corruption in aircraft purchases, Air Lanka stands out as the South Asian operator that is closest to East Asian airlines in equipment planning, service and attention for detail.

Air Myanmar, which once held the world record for the airline with the most crashes in a year, has been transformed by its tie-up with Malaysian Airlines. Bhutan's Druk Air, with its compact fleet and modest regional spread, has carefully nurtured an image that reflects the country's selective strategy for quality tourism. Some new domestic carriers in India have upgraded the quality of airline

service on ground and in-flight.

But these are exceptions, and protection has made the national flag carriers—Air India, Bangla Biman, Indian Airlines, Pakistan International

of Nepal's prestigious Soaltee Group, which has deliberately stayed out of the airline business.

There has been discussion of privatising PIA by the Islamabad authorities, but there the matter has stopped. Rather than privatise, the Nepali Government has tried to get Royal Nepal into a partnership with a reputed international carrier, but because of the severely



eroded image of Royal Nepal, there have been no takers. As for Biman, no government is willing to even utter the p-word for the wrath it would incur from the airline's workers' union.

Privatise and Fly

Air Lanka is the only airline that is being seriously considered for some amount of equity participation from the outside. The deal on offer is a 40 percent slice of the airline's equity plus the right to manage the company, and according to trade sources in Colombo, a Malaysian party "with no experience but plenty of money" is interested. The Sri Lankan government and its agencies will hold a controlling 51 percent so that the airline will continue to be the national carrier and benefit from Colombo's air traffic arrangements with other governments. Nine percent will be reserved for the airline's 4,585 staff—a sweetener devised by the late President Ranasinghe Premadasa to overcome employee resistance to privatisation which he preferred to call "peoplisation".

Not everyone is sure that privatisation will help, however, and there are government-owned operators that run efficiently, such as Singapore Airlines. As far as Air India and Indian Airlines are concerned, senior officials in both airlines maintain that they have what it takes to run super carriers, if they could function without political interference. Says R.N. Pathak, the Deputy General Manager of Indian Airlines, "I don't think Indian Airlines will be privatised. It will not help fulfil the airline's social and other obligatory roles. Besides, why should we be privatised if we have autonomy?"

and Royal Nepal—lazy and un-air-worthy. Held hostage to narrow nationalistic outlooks of governments and the airlines that they coddle, South Asia's air travellers have become fatalistic by now.

Besides opening up the domestic and international airways to competition, the quick answer in every tour operator's lip regarding seat capacity is to privatise the national carrier. "But seriously, Royal Nepal Airlines must be privatised. That is the only way the airline can be turned around," says Prabhakar Rana,

But there are the private airline operators who refuse to countenance the need for flag carriers. Says Anoop Rana of the new private Nepali airline, Necon Air: "The concept of national airline is archaic. If there are national airlines, what does that make us in the private sector: anti-national?"

There are places where the government's washing its hands of airlines has worked to the public's benefit. For example, when the American airlines were deregulated in the mid-1980s, it set in motion a chain of events that brought down dinosaurs like Pan Am and TWA. Fares declined by 15 percent and passengers benefited from increased frequency and safer travel. Meanwhile, South Asians pay the highest rates for air travel in comparison to the other world regions.

However, most observers do not see privatisation of the major South Asian airways anytime soon—the interest of national carriers is too zealously guarded by governments. Besides, says a senior Royal Nepal manager, "Privatisation has to go hand-in-hand with the government's ability to monitor and regulate, to ensure that issues of social equity, air safety and national interest are not ignored. Everyone knows that the Nepali government, at least, has no ability to protect the public from business's rapacious instincts."

But there are the private airline operators who refuse to countenance the need for flag carriers. Says Anoop Rana of the new private Nepali airline, Necon Air: "The concept of national airline is archaic. If there are national airlines, what does that make us in the private sector: anti-national?"

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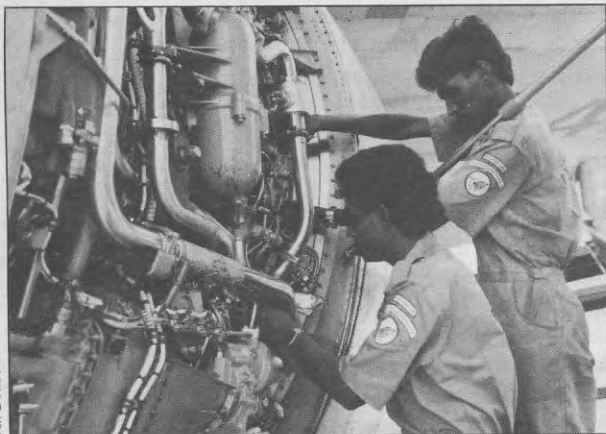
The Southern South Asians

While other South Asian airlines dither, Air Lanka and Air Maldives are forging ahead to cash in on stable tourism and upscale ethnic traffic. Sixteen years after it succeeded Air Ceylon, Air Lanka is now a national airline that is on the threshold of privatisation and the only South Asian airline that can be proud of its equipment and service.

In a region where decisions on new equipment can take years because of competing political interests, Air Lanka showed forward planning by being the first Asian airline to fly the long-range Airbus A340 last year. It now has three A340s on finance leases and two A320s for its regional routes.

Air Lanka made its highest-ever profit of SLR 432 million in 1994-95—up 129 percent from a year earlier. The group's net profit was even better at SLR 476 million.

Lankans like their jets



AIR LANKA

Traffic Jam over Calcutta

On any clear night, look up at the skies above Calcutta or Delhi and you see an endless procession of blinking lights heading from east to west. Just before dawn, the flow is reversed—the lights move west to east.

These are intercontinental passenger flights to and from Europe, East Asia and Australia, traversing South Asian airspace. As the economies of Pacific Asia grow, aircraft movement from Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore to Europe is expanding between 10 and 20 percent a year. Nearly 90 percent of these Asia-Europe flights are funnelled into narrow air corridors overflying Burma, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, where poor navigational and radar tracking limit the number of aircraft that can proceed safely.

Every night, an average of 75 Europe-bound flights converge over North India. The same number of planes return in the early hours. The task of separating the aircraft falls on air traffic controllers like those at Calcutta's Flight Information Region (FIR) at Dum Dum. Huddled over the ghostly green light of radar consoles, the controllers keep track of aircraft movements. When the planes fly out of range, they have to work with position reports relayed by pilots over unreliable shortwave frequencies.

Because of limited radar coverage, the planes need to be separated by at least 15 minutes' flying time and 2,000 ft vertical separation. However, there are limitations on the number of long-range airliners that can be "stacked" because as they come over the Subcontinent they have full tanks and hence are too heavy to fly above 29,000 feet.

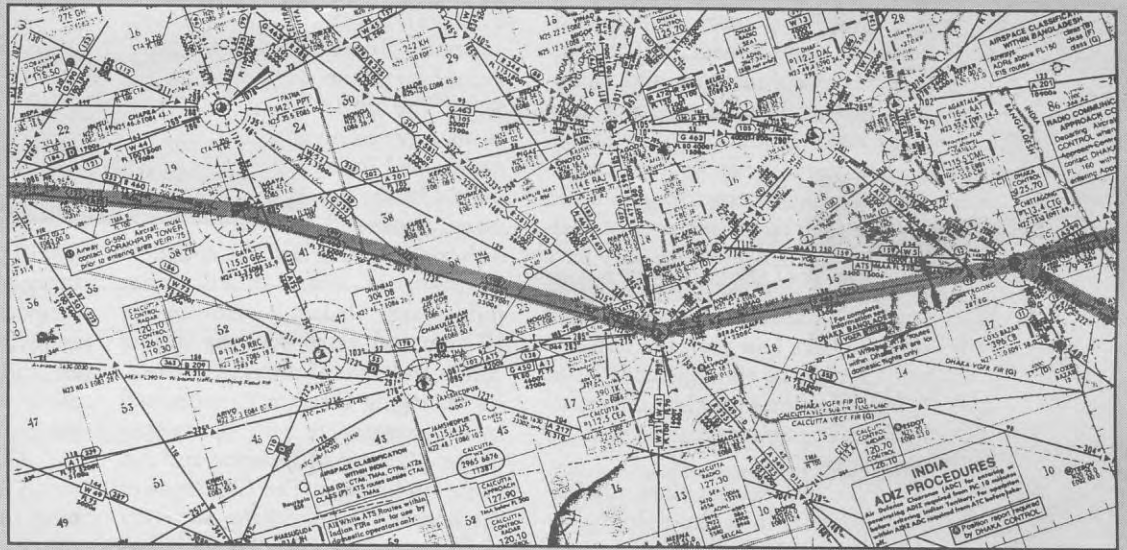
Today, the corridors over South Asia have reached saturation capacity with worrisome implications for air safety, say experts. It does not help that most west-bound traffic arrives at the North Indian air traffic bottleneck at the same time: in the couple of hours before and after midnight. As air traffic builds up, Europe-bound aircraft have been forced into fuel-guzzling holding patterns over India to wait for slots to continue their journey.

Then there was the incident in December 1995 when a Ukrainian registered cargo An-26 flying to Calcutta deviated 25 km off course, and, unnoticed, dipped down to parachute a large

cache of arms and ammunition near a village in West Bengal. The incident put into sharp focus what airline pilots had long been grumbling about—the lack of radar surveillance over Indian airspace and the consequent safety concerns.

"The North Indian-Pakistan air corridors are not overcrowded, they just need to be more efficiently managed," says Lalit Bickram Shah, Asia-Pacific representative of the UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in Bangkok. He says that, elsewhere, ICAO is presently involved in upgrading present "line-of-sight" air navigation to a satellite-based communications system, which would be able to squeeze three times the number of aircraft into an airspace without compromising safety.

Something like that would be ideal for South Asian airspace. The other solution would be to open up alternative air paths over Central Asia to lessen congestion over South Asia. Air traffic control services can be a good source of income for countries that are in flight paths. For example, Burma earns more than USD 17 million a year in fees from all the Europe-to-Asia traffic that overflies it. Countries like Nepal can profit from the opening up of trans-Himalayan routes ideal for Delhi-Hong Kong or Dubai-Tokyo flights.



Jeppesen pilots' route map indicates air corridor from Chittagong through Calcutta, Gaya and westward

Stop Press: Just as it was going to press, on 1 April, HIMAL has learnt from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) that the Indian Government is going in for a high-tech satellite-based system known as future air navigation system (FANS), to go into operation later this year and starting with the Calcutta FIR. FANS, it is said, will allow air traffic management without use of radar, and will increase the efficiency of controllers in handling the night-time air traffic over South Asia.

But these profits have only reduced and not erased accumulated past losses standing at SLR 1.5 billion.

Even tiny Maldives is now trying to enter the big league, linking up with a Malaysian operator to lease an Airbus A310. South Asia's newest

airline is linking Male with Colombo, Kuala Lumpur, and Dubai. Servicing Colombo has, for the first time, given the Maldivians a slice of airfare revenue out of their lucrative tourism industry. This has naturally hurt Air Lanka, which had a near-

monopoly on the Colombo-Male traffic.

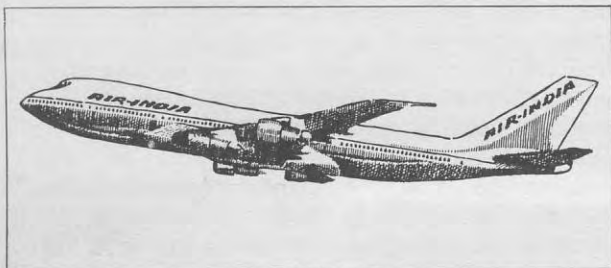
Helpless PIA

Aside from the 'south South Asians', the outlook for the region's national airlines looks bleak indeed. And no-

Time for (this page) PIA and Air India to replace their Boeing 747-200s, and (facing page) Bangla Biman its DC-10s, Indian Airlines its Airbus A-310s

where is the malaise of South Asian aviation more apparent than in Pakistan International and Air India. Once the region's flagship carriers, both are buffeted by severe management turbulence, crippled by government interference, undercut by competition, and weighed down by an ageing fleet.

The downturn in both airlines began at about the same time, in the early 1980s. In the case of PIA, airline insiders point to the blunder of sell-



ing off McDonnell Douglas DC-10s and buying second-hand Boeing 747-200s as when the slide began. An airline that was once the standard-setter in management, inflight service, technical facilities and equipment, PIA today is in a nosedive, with news reports pointing to deterioration in virtually every department. The main cause seems to be politicised recruitment. Helpless airline officials say over the last few years they have had to add 700 personnel to an already bloated and overstaffed organisation. Last year, the Employees Council of PIA appealed to the Prime Minister through an advertisement in the newspapers to stop the interference.

"We just do not have market-oriented people at the helm," confided one airline staffer in Lahore. "Discipline is not enough. Overstaffing with incompetent people and the 'officer mentality' has ruined PIA.

Today, we look back with nostalgia to those days when one was proud to be a PIA employee."

The airline also reported to the federal Anti-Corruption Committee about the 10,000 free or discounted tickets worth PKR 1 billion that were handed out to ministers, officials and families, generals, judges, ambassadors, journalists, religious leaders and sportsmen. The report cited one official, a joint secretary at the Ministry of Defence, as taking 17 discounted flights to London, Paris, Singapore and New York for his family.

PIA does expect to make a profit of PKR 752 million in fiscal 1995-1996 on a projected revenue of PKR 31.3 billion, but this would obviously be more if, for instance, the government paid back the estimated PKR 461 million it owes the airline for VVIP travel.

Says a PIA commander, who wished to remain anonymous, like most airline personnel interviewed for this article, "The airline is merely being maintained to be milked by the politically powerful.

Although martial law has ended in Pakistan, the airline is still under military rule." In fact, it is true that for all practical purposes, the airline comes under the Ministry of Defence. Its Managing Director is appointed by the government with the consent of the Ministry of Defence and Air Force higher-ups. The Chairman of the Board is ex-officio the Secretary of Defence. That every PIA flight has fully armed guards for security—five in the case of a Boeing 747 flight—seems only to underline this point.

Maharaja on Hold

If it is the Ministry of Defence that has tied PIA down, it is the Ministry of Civil Aviation that has kept Air India on a never-ending holding pattern. Even its current charismatic and work-oriented chairman, Russi Mody, has not been able to keep officials out of his hair. And all the while, Air India is approaching stall speed: strikes often cripple operations, stranding thousands of cursing passengers forced to camp out at airports around the world.

In 1981, Air India had a 33 percent market share of traffic in and out of India. This had fallen to 20 percent by 1994. During the same period, the airline gave up more than 20 destinations. Its inability to expand or at the very least maintain international destinations has brought criticism that Air India is holding the India's tour-



ism to ransom. But the airline seems smug about its high load factors—pleased that the Airbus A310s it operates to Hong Kong or Johannesburg are full, although the routes could easily take Boeing 747s with twice the capacity.

All this has prompted a derisive media to call Air India "the country's most profitable under-achiever". Indian Airlines (IA) stepped in when Air India could not handle regional routes, but together they only operate 41.6 percent of the "bilateral entitlements", providing a gap that the private airlines would be only too happy to fill.

Overstaffing and staff disgruntlement is the bane of both Air India and Indian Airlines. Says one disenchanted airline manager, "We have 54 aircraft and 30,000 employees. That is an aircraft-employee ratio of 1:500, which just is not realistic."

It is interesting to compare, say, Air Lanka's optimism, as evident in its finely-produced annual report, with Indian Airlines' despondency, reflected in its own report containing

Royal Nepal: flight into darkness





a listing of why the last six years saw the airline lose a total of INR 9.2 billion: the grounding of the Airbus A320s in 1990-1992, foreign exchange fluctuations, delay in increase in fares, industrial unrest, operations in non-profit sectors like the Indian Northeast, emergence of private airlines and the "exodus of pilots and engineers". Since 1991, every year, Indian Airlines has reported losses averaging INR 2 billion, although, looking at the charts, a turnaround seems to have begun.

One of the world's largest domestic airlines, Indian Airlines saw a devastating crisis with the grounding of its entire new A320 fleet after a fatal crash in Bangalore in 1992. Indian Airlines officials have also had to deal with a crippling haemorrhage of crew to better-paying jobs with new private airlines; altogether 161 pilots left the airline in the last five years. During that period, the airline's market share dropped from 100 percent to 63.5 percent.

A survey last year by an Indian newspaper said 63 percent of Indians felt that Indian Airlines was unsafe, although a market study done by the group IMRB did say that IA was considered the safest airline in India. On the other hand, a report in 1993 by the International Airline Passengers Association ranked India, China, Colombia and South Korea as the least safe for passengers. Indian Airlines had eight Boeing 737 crashes in the last twenty years, four of them fatal. Southwest, an American airline with many more of the same aircraft, had only one non-fatal crash during the same period.

One private airline marketing manager had this to say about India's two national carriers: "Nothing that is government-owned, despite the tremendous infrastructure, will be able to keep up with the dynamic market. AI and IA can only react, they can never be proactive. The infatuation with socialism and nationalism just will not do in this market

known as aviation."

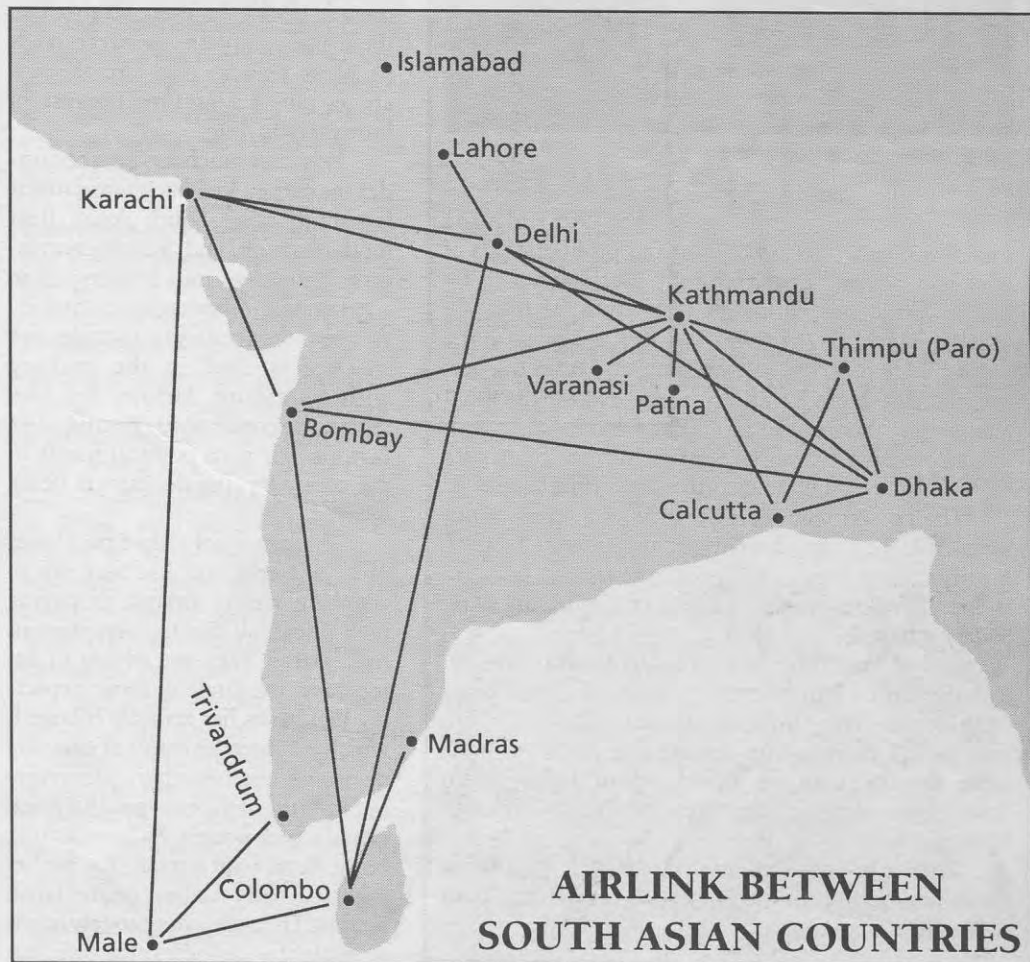
Ethnic Traffic

The main source of PIA's and Air India's income is Pakistanis and Indians travelling to the Gulf and to Europe and North America. While this ethnic traffic keeps the two airlines full, the flag carriers have lost heavily when they stopped catering, as in the past, to high-paying international clientele. "The moment we decided to become cattle carts to the Gulf is when we started to lose our spirit," says the former Air India commander now flying in the Gulf.

Bangla Biman is another airline that has profited heavily from ethnic traffic—ferrying its nationals to and from Europe and the Gulf. The airline has also been the most aggressive South Asian airline to cash in on the Europe-Asia traffic out of its Dhaka hub. Offering rock-bottom fares, Biman is the airline of choice for

budget travellers flying, for instance, to and from Amsterdam and Hong Kong, or New York and Kathmandu, via Dhaka.

Biman's growth was initially phenomenal, starting services after independence in 1971 with a lone Dakota donated by India. The mainstay of Biman has been four DC-10s, and it is already late to replace them with newer, more fuel-efficient planes. However, Biman, too, is under the thumb of the government and hence too sluggish in an airline market that requires fast reaction. Biman has a ten-member Board, seven of whom are secretary-level bureaucrats. Although the airline does plan to add two second-hand Airbus A310s later



Small Island, Big Airline

Two words hang on the lips of Air India or PIA pilots when you ask them to name their favourite competitor: "Singapore Airlines". The upstart airline from the tiny city-state on the tip of the Malay peninsula has grown to be a player of international stature, rising in size and clout and spreading wings all over the world from its ASEAN hub.

Take a look at the statistics: Singapore Airlines has 69 aircraft, among them 29 Boeing 747-400s and 23 Airbus 310s. While South Asian airlines continue to fly senile fleets that are averaging 20 years, SIA's average fleet age is just 5.5 years, and getting younger. Last year, the airline made a staggering order for 77 Boeing 777s, at a cost of Singapore \$1.77 billion. A little bit of Chinese numerology working there, but a bit of superstition is pardonable when you are making the largest order ever in history.



Wholesome sexual suggestion

With a staff of 12,862, the airline carried 5.4 million passengers in April-September 1995 and made total revenue of US\$ 2.4 billion, and profit after tax of US\$ 350 million. Everything SIA does is dictated by market principles, although it is, truth be told, 54 percent owned by the government. It is always in the cutting edge of airline innovations, and hires the best international crew for its airplanes—except the flight attendants who have to be "Singapore Girls". In fact, the wholesome sexual suggestion of the "Singapore Girl" has done much to improve the airline's mileage.

The person who led SIA since its modest beginnings in 1972 is, incidentally, a Singaporean of South Asian ancestry. It is J.Y. Pillay, who retired on 1 March, to hand over to another person of similar ancestry, S. Dhanabalan.

Singapore Airlines is not a South Asian airline, but it is the airline with the most extensive South Asian connections, flying from Singapore to all SAARC countries except Bhutan, and serving five points in India alone. Besides, it enjoys "fifth freedom" rights within South Asia, carrying passengers between Dhaka and Kathmandu.

With a young fleet, motivated staff, worldwide reach, and outstanding profits, SIA is everything South Asian airlines are not.

this year, this is not good enough, says one Biman official. "Unless ministerial control is relaxed and Biman is allowed to operate independently, dramatic improvements cannot be expected."

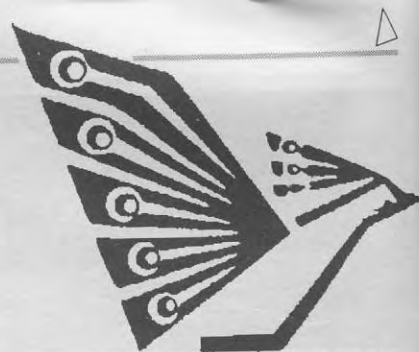
The Cooky Jar

Smart airlines try to maintain their fleets young, because new planes have better engines, fly higher and are more fuel efficient. Other than Air Lanka, all South Asian airlines have fleets whose average fleet age is two decades. If PIA and Air India aircraft were human, they would be octogenarians by now.

Air India has added four Boeing 747-400s since 1993, but it still has an average fleet age of 17 years—compared to Singapore Airlines' 5.5. Air India is in the market for medium-capacity long-range aircraft and wants to keep up with expected inbound traffic (to India) of five million by the year 2000. Brijesh Kumar, the new Managing Director of Air India says he wants to "emerge with a young, modern and economically efficient fleet". But this requires an investment of USD 5.7 billion. Meanwhile, the airline complains openly through its press releases that aircraft purchases take a long time because of bureaucratic drag.

However much it is brushed under the carpet, kickbacks are a major factor affecting South Asian fleet modernisation, and "power centres" turn themselves into brokers, often competing and sabotaging each other. PIA needs desperately to upgrade, and there is a deal in the making with Singapore Airlines for two (again, secondhand) Boeing 747 Bigtops, but with political hands in the cooky jar, the decision is being delayed.

The history of airline purchases of Royal Nepal, too, has been one of choosing wrong aircraft or paying high prices, all due to corruption in high places. With the advent of democracy, the circle of those expecting kickbacks has actually enlarged, which has had the result of delaying decisions even further. Observers question the high prices paid for Royal Nepal's two Boeing 757s—narrow-body, short-haul aircraft that are being asked to fly the Europe and Japan sectors. The airline desperately needs a couple of widebodies of its own, but



Air Lanka bird

the one A310 it hired on "wet-lease" turned out to be so expensive that it has swallowed all profits for the last two years.

Serves You Right

Many in the travel trade who have given up in despair of things ever improving say South Asians get the airlines they deserve. Why blame the airlines when greedy government officials create a scene, for example, when they are not upgraded to first class, or worse, take a leak on the aisle, as one minister recently did on a Calcutta-Delhi flight. South Asian kings and prime ministers have been known to "hijack" the most modern aircraft of their national airline when they go for NAM Summits or lengthy foreign tours, causing havoc to airline schedules.

Why blame the airline when toilets become unserviceable one hour into flights to and from the Subcontinent? (Some overseas operators post signs in Hindi reminding passengers of basic hygiene techniques and one even carries "sweepers" in its South Asian sector.) Why blame the airline when passengers harass flight attendants and treat them like servants, or when they throw violent tantrums when they are refused a beer for breakfast? Why blame the airline when the rate of loss of life jackets due to pilferage by passengers in South Asian airlines is the highest in the world?

Flight attendants and crew of East Asian and Gulf-based airlines say their least favourite destinations are Delhi, Calcutta, Dhaka and Karach—for the boorish, overbearing passengers they have to serve with a smile.

Still, airlines cannot pass all the buck to their passengers, to their governments, to the competition, to the world. Air India's expensive fiasco with the livery change of its motif on the tail which was aban-



Royal Nepal does not trust its Akash Bhairav

done after part of the fleet had been repainted is a case in point. The airline is now back to its old colours, and the Maharaja is back on board, but seems to have lost his zest.

Half-hearted change of colours have also taken place with PIA and Biman. Royal Nepal is stuck with a tacky signature and a generic tail stripe which it allegedly cannot change because King Birendra approved it. It has not been able to take advantage of Nepal's image as a travel destination, or of the snarling Akash Bhairav logo it has—because some German consultants told the airline a few years ago that passengers would be "scared".

Shoddy and tasteless advertisement campaigns simply draw passenger attention to the carriers' general sloppiness. The average quality of the advertisement copy of the major South Asian airlines have actually slipped over the last decade, together with the age of their fleets, the quality of their service, and the dip in their balance sheets.

The sooner South Asian governments realise that their airlines are really "flag-carriers", the sooner they are convinced that better and freer air travel is the path to prosperity—the sooner South Asia itself will take off. △

With reports from Azhar Abbas in Karachi, Suman Pradhan in New Delhi, and Sahabuddin Ahmed in Dhaka. H. Arjyal is a Kathmandu-based engineer and writer who specialises in civil aviation.



The Non-Flag Carriers

The internal airways of India, Pakistan and Nepal are in ferment as infant carriers grapple for a toehold in a market that might just expand beyond all expectation.

by Suman Shakya

The domestic airways of all major South Asian countries have been opened to some degree in the rush of liberalisation, and you would expect that big commercial houses would be into airlines by now. Not so. They are all playing safe, waiting for the smaller players who have jumped in to open up the market so that they can come on strong.

The story is the same in each country of South Asia: private operators are regarded as unwelcome pariahs by the civil aviation directorates and the entrenched state air corporations, but, given enough leeway, they end up proving that there is a market and that it can expand if airlines are run like businesses rather than bureaucracies.

The most dynamic private airlines are to be found in India, Nepal and Pakistan, in that order. Sri Lanka has a couple of small airlines, but they have been grounded for security reasons since September 1995, and the government is using some of their aircraft to maintain the air bridge to Jaffna peninsula. As for Bangladesh, there was a scramble for operating licences after the the government, in 1992, decided to allow small planes to fly in the private sector. However, there is only one private operator, Aero Bengal Airlines, which flies twice-weekly from Dhaka to Barisal on the coast.

Nepal was a pioneer in opening up domestic airways, when a particularly astute and well-connected adviser to the Ministry of Tourism provided the required political push in 1991. As a result, domestic airline passengers today fly on time, on Avros, Dorniers and Mi17 helicopters. The lobbying power of the private sector to extract maximum con-

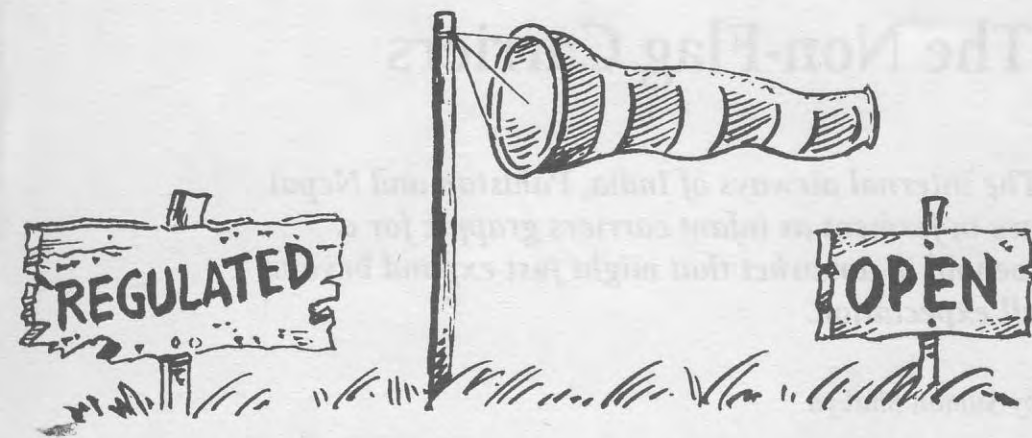
cessions from a reluctant government was seen when the Sherpa-owned Asian Helicopters was able to override security objections of even the army to fly choppers to remote airstrips.

But the private airlines have met insurmountable barriers when they have applied for international routes from the government, and Nepal's limited airspace and passenger traffic means that the market is pretty much saturated with supply. One of the more successful private carriers, Necon Air, says it has now captured 45 percent of the market on Nepal's trunk routes and it would like to serve Nepal-India feeder routes such as Biratnagar-Bagdora-Calcutta, or Bhairawa-Lucknow. Not pinning hopes on bilateral talks, however, the airline has gone into a joint venture tie-up with Bengal Air Services to help the airline link towns in India's Northeast.

In Pakistan, PIA's lockhold on domestic routes has given privatisation a bumpy ride. "The highflyers are not active because PIA has a monopoly," says one airline analyst. Domestic skies were opened in 1992, and the Civil Aviation Authority awarded licences to 17 operators. The first to take to the air was Hajveri Airlines, which brought in two Russian widebodies. However, the fuel-guzzling Il-86s proved uneconomical and the airline ceased operation. Bhoja Air has just resumed operations with its Yak-42s after suspending operations for a year.

It is Shaheen Airlines, however, that is doing the best with its Boeing 737s and MD-83 aircraft. Shaheen does well primarily because it is a "subsidiary" of the Pakistan Air Force. The airline is allowed to use the term

There is a market which can expand if airlines are run like businesses rather bureaucracies.



"flag carrier", was given a five-year tax holiday when it started, and has access to the Air Force's infrastructure and ex-Air Force personnel. Besides the main metros of Pakistan, which the other private airlines also serve, Shaheen Air has been allowed to fly internationally: Peshawar-Dubai.

The largest domestic aviation pie, however, is India. Originally allowed to fly euphemistically as "air taxi operators", who could not advertise their schedules, the competitors of Indian Airlines have now become legitimate "airlines". The Indian airspace is so large, and the potential for expansion so great, that both Airbus and Boeing are waiting for the domestics to begin ordering new aircraft.

Indian Domestics

Indian airports are now abuzz with the colourful tail fins of new airlines. The arena is also marked by extreme rivalry, much mud-slinging, and threats of corporate takeovers. For the moment, the operators are hemmed in by regulations, high cost of flying second-generation aircraft on lease, and aviation fuel which is said to be the highest priced in the world. On average, the short-haul jets, mostly Boeing 737s, have to be 76 percent full just to breakeven.

Says a senior official with Jet Airways, the carrier which was named Most Preferred Airline of 1995 in a passenger survey, "A typical airline budget breaks down to 45 percent cost of aircraft, 15 percent fuel, 15 percent spares and maintenance and 10 percent government tax. So, there is little room for manoeuvre when the fixed costs are 85 to 90 percent."

Indian civil aviation authorities have divided the country's air space into categories: I for metro cities, II

for hilly regions, III the rest of the country. An airline which flies one major route in Category I, is bound to fly 50 percent of seat/km ratio in Category III and ten percent in Category II.

Why then do private airlines continue to fly under such market conditions and regulatory restrictions? They are preparing for what they hope will be a sharp upturn in the market. The optimistic, such as Kapil Kaul, Vice President (Marketing) of East West Airways, believe that the airline industry will ride the wave of economic boom that is expected after the Indian general elections in late April.

Domestic airlines have differing strategies to become and remain solvent while awaiting that market upturn. The strategy adopted by NEPC, the aggressive Madras-based conglomerate, has been to gobble up rivals. In January, it took over Damania Airways and later made an abortive attempt on Modiluft, the airline which would actually like to be taken over by Lufthansa.

Sahara Airlines is the only private airline to have had a fatal crash, a training flight involving no passenger deaths. As its comeback strategy, the airline plans to branch out into feeder routes since it considers the main metro links saturated. "We are pioneering the hub and spoke arrangement with helicopters and small fixed wing aircraft," says Sanjay Bahadur, Chief Manager of Sahara. Mr Bahadur believes that despite the government's protectionist attitude towards Indian Airlines, "the private operators will come at par with IA within a decade."

East West Airlines, which saw a public relations disaster with the murder in January of its Chief Execu-

tive and talk of underworld links, has decided to go in for a corporate restructuring and development of new strategy with the help of the consulting firm Price Waterhouse.

Says East West's Mr Kaul: "We intend to take advantage of the capacity gap that has been left by the inadequate service of Air India and Indian Airlines. My airline would be able to fly international routes within three months of the government giving the go-ahead."

Besides the larger domestics, India also has smaller private operators who serve "Category II" routes, such as Archana Airways. Its proprietor Aditya Bhartiya says Archana has preferred to stay small, and profitable, unlike the over-extended airlines which insist on linking the big metros. Jagsons is another small player, with a fleet of three Dornier 228s serving Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.

UP Air has the distinction of being the first private airline owned by a state government. Started in April last year with the outright purchase of a Fokker F-50, the airline receives assistance in terms of free parking, subsidised fuel and credit from the Lucknow government. This could well be a trend, with Tamil Nadu and West Bengal both interested in starting their own airlines.

In the end, all private operators in South Asia are waiting for the other foot to fall. They can handle the national flag carriers—it is the "big houses" they are worried about, who they know will elbow in with massive bucks and managerial talent once they think the time is right and the ground prepared.

In India, private carriers are waiting nervously for the long-delayed Singapore Airlines-Tata joint venture to enter the airfield. The tie-up was thumbed down once by the Director General of Civil Aviation, but as long as the market is there it does not look as if SIA-Tata will lose interest. Airline experts feel that they might make a move after the April elections, depending on which way the wind sock swings.

With reports from Tom K. Maliti in Lahore, and Sahabuddin Ahmed in Dhaka.

Clash of the Titans

Competition is heating up between the world's two biggest aircraft manufacturers, Airbus and Boeing, for a larger slice of the estimated USD 4 billion in orders from South Asian airlines as they prepare to modernise their ageing fleets in the coming year or so.

Executives from both companies believe South Asian flag carriers and ministries of civil aviation will soon come out of their stupor to meet the needs of an expanding regional economy and growing demand for airline seats. Boeing's projection is that the number of air passengers in South Asia will soar to 23.6 million by the year 2010 from 7.6 million in 1996. Airbus predicts an increase in passenger traffic in India alone of 7 percent a year over the next 20 years, considerably higher than annual pas-

two-decade-old Boeing 747-200s and replace them with Boeing 747-400s. Boeing is also offering attractive buyout packages for the older 747s if the airlines order the new 777 twinjets. Smarting from its recent losses to Boeing in East Asia, Airbus is said to be trying to outbid Boeing with even more attractive terms of payments for its A340s for Air India.

"We feel the A340 is the ideal aircraft for Air India, in which the airline can make profits even with a load factor of around 70 percent," said Jean Pierson, Managing Director of Airbus Industrie, in India recently.

Boeing, for its part, set up an Indian office in Bombay in 1995 in acknowledgement of the growing importance of the South Asian market. Besides the flag carriers, it hopes to cash in on the mushroom growth of

private airlines, once they gain enough market momentum to buy new planes.

"As India's economy grows at 5.3 percent a year over the next 20 years, faster than the world average,

this will result in more air travel and the need for a large number of new aircraft," says Dinesh A. Keskar, President of Boeing India, who predicts a market for planes valued at USD 20 billion in the next 20 years.

Boeing spokesman Brij Bhardwaj says his company has a firm footing in South Asia, pointing out that the new private airlines in India almost exclusively use Boeing 737s. Some analysts, however, maintain that this is because of aircraft size limitations imposed on private airlines by the Indian government, rather than any intrinsic advantage of the airplane over its competition, the A320.

Overall, in India, Boeing holds 69.7 percent of the market share, says Mr Bhardwaj. For his part, the Managing Director of Airbus Industrie says that his company is aiming at "50 percent of the market share" worldwide as well as in South Asia.

Boeing says Air Lanka's purchase

of A340s was sweetened by a European Union grant to the Sri Lankan government. "Airbus did not receive any order for a single A340 in all of 1995," Bhardwaj claims.

Airbus has had a rough flight so far in South Asia. Indian Airlines' mammoth purchase of 30 A320s went sour with the crash of one of the fly-by-wire jets in Bangalore in 1992. All A320s were grounded for an incredible two years when IA pilots refused to fly the plane, leading to massive losses for the airline.

Since then, Airbus has tried to be more India-friendly by ordering 600 sets of forward passenger doors from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the A320 assembly line at Toulouse. HAL also contributes parts for the A320 nose undercarriage.

Airbus, for the moment, seems to have the edge in the medium-haul range in the subcontinent, with its Airbus 320s flying with Indian Airlines and Air Lanka, A310s with PIA and Air India, and A300s with PIA and IA. The battle now is for the replacement of first-generation 737s and 747s in South Asian fleets.

Knowing that it is partly inert and wrangling over kickbacks that is keeping the South Asian airlines from upgrading fleets that they desperately need, the manufacturers are seeking to prepare the ground with massive promos. The sweetening will be there, of course.

- Hemant Arjyal



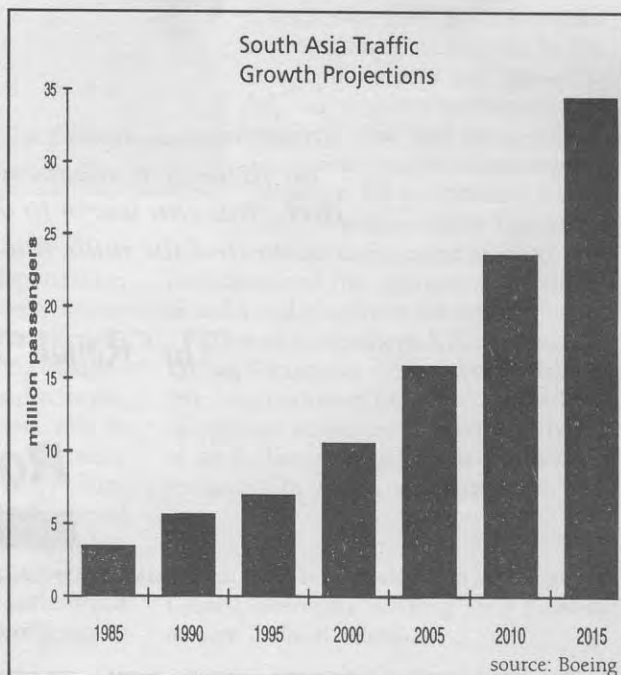
senger growth figures of 4.3 percent in "mature markets" like North America.

Predictably, both manufacturers say they have the right planes for the job of flying around or in and out of the Subcontinent. In the medium-range/medium-capacity market, Boeing is offering various versions of its best-selling twinjet, the 737, while Airbus is putting forth its popular A320 and A319 models.

McDonnell Douglas, which has had virtually no sales in South Asia since the days of the Dakota (other than the four DC-10s with Biman) is also offering its quiet rear-twin MD-95s to Indian Airlines as replacement for its vintage 737-200s. McDonnell is said to be interested in a license manufacture in India, along the lines of its high profile agreement to build the jets in China.

In the long-range class, both PIA and Air India need to phase out the

Indian Airlines does not have a problem anymore with Airbus A320s



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His Holiness the Ambassador

A Ladakhi Tibetan-Buddhist monk serving as Indian Ambassador to Mongolia.

by Martijn van Beek

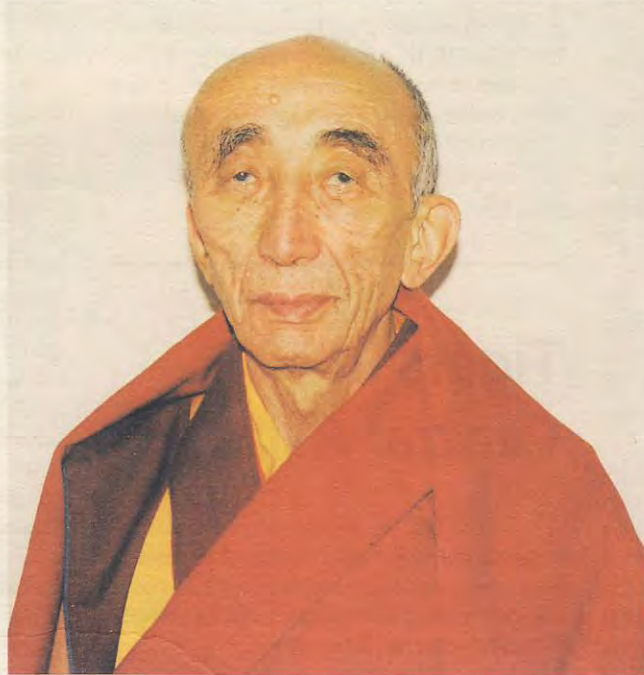
Since Ambassador Plenipotentiary Kushok G. Bakula Rimpoche became the Indian envoy in 1990, he has played a central role in the reconstruction of Buddhism in Mongolia and the neighbouring areas of Russia. However, his other antecedents are just as absorbing.

Bakula Rimpoche is without doubt one of the most central figures in modern Ladakhi history, and not an uncontroversial one. He was born on 19 May 1917, on a full moon, and was recognised as the 20th incarnation of Arhat Bakula at the age of six and enthroned at Spituk (*dPe-thub*) Monastery near Leh. At the age of ten, Bakula went to Tibet for higher studies, spending 14 years at the Loseling College of Drepung Monastery near Lhasa, where he received with honours, the Geshe Lharampa degree, the 'PhD' of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhism, from the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

In June 1949, during Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Ladakh, Bakula Rimpoche was made District President of the National Conference, and he soon established himself as the pre-eminent force in Ladakh's politics, emerging as an outspoken advocate of Ladakhi interests in the State Assembly in Srinagar. After Sheikh Abdullah's arrest and the rise of Bakshi as Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Bakula began a 14-year stint in various ministerial positions in the state, but mostly as Minister of State for Ladakh Affairs, before being elected to the Lok Sabha in 1967 for the first of two consecutive terms.

Although few will doubt his importance as an advocate of Ladakhi interests at crucial moments, the rimpoche's rise to power and political supremacy have not gone undisputed. Historically, Hemis Monastery's Stagsang Raspa was the more powerful 'Head Lama' of Ladakh, a label

that has been claimed by several eminent religious figures from the region. Bakula's rise to power in 1949 was the result of growing dissatisfaction with the dominance of the Kalon family within Ladakh. Since, at this time, Stagsang Raspa was too young to play a role in politics, Bakula was chosen instead. Stagsang Raspa later went to Tibet for further studies and was caught behind the ice curtain after the Chinese crackdown.



Kushok G. Bakula Rimpoche

During the years after Independence, Bakula and his associates, especially Sonam Wangyal, were credited with many beneficial reforms in Ladakh, including the abolition of corvée labour and land reforms. Bakula also played an important role in various campaigns against what were dubbed social and religious evils, including polyandry, excessive drinking, animal sacrifice and hunting. By the time elections were held in Ladakh for the first time in 1960, however, there was widespread disillusionment due to the lack of progress

in Ladakh and the alleged corruption of people around Bakula.

For more than a decade, Ladakhi society and politics were split into two deeply antagonistic factions: those supporting and those opposing "KGB" as he was referred to by the irreverent (see *Himal Mar/Apr 1995*).

By the early 1980s, political and religious forces in Ladakh had buried their differences and united to fight for "scheduled tribe" status and regional autonomy. By this time, Bakula was serving as member of the Minorities Commission in New Delhi, from where he regularly issued statements in support of the Ladakhi demands. During the at-times-violent and communalised campaign for Union Territory status for Ladakh, which began in

1989, Bakula mostly stayed out of the fray. Soon after that, he was appointed Indian Ambassador to Mongolia, the second Ladakhi in that position. The first was Sonam Norbu, Ladakh's renowned engineer and politician, who was posted there in 1969.

A recipient of the Padma Bhushan award from the Indian government, Bakula Rimpoche has been active throughout his life in promoting Buddhism in India and abroad. He was involved in creating the Ladakh Buddhist Vihara in New Delhi, and the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies in Choglamsar near Leh. In Mongolia and neighbouring regions, he has taught Buddhism and helped to rebuild religious institutions and practices that had been obliterated under the communist regime. Although he continues to be a controversial political figure, his contributions in the promotion of

Buddhism and the interests of Buddhists in India and elsewhere are undisputed.

One of his teachers, Kyabje Yongdzin Trijang Rimpoche, once wrote of Bakula: "He has conducted his life along the lines of a person who enters upon the activities of the Bodhisattvas to benefit others while remaining in the monastic tradition." △

M. van Beek is a development sociologist at Cornell University working on a book on modern Ladakhi politics.



Cleaner Air in Kathmandu

WHAT IS MADE in India, is powered by Bangladeshi batteries, charged with Nepali electricity, and runs on US-made DC motors?

Answer: Kathmandu's electric three-wheeler commuter vehicles.

Called Safa (Clean) Tempo, they are white in colour and green in nature. With zero emission, they are different from the 3,000 or so diesel-powered smoke-belching tempos that ply the narrow streets of Kathmandu.

It is a modest beginning—there are only seven Safa Tempos quietly doing their smokeless rounds in Kathmandu—but it is a unique initiative for a region where air pollution in cities is becoming a major health hazard.

Safa Tempos were built and test-run by the USAID-funded Global Resources Institute as a pilot project, and were bought by the Nepal Electric Vehicle Industry (NEVI), a newly-formed private group. During the six-month trial, the tempos ran over 125,000 km and ferried 250,000 passengers: proving that EVs were an economically viable and ecologically desirable mode of transport. Kathmandu, more than any other congested city in the region, desperately needs cleaner public transport. Vehicular emission from old diesel buses, trucks and tempos together with temperature inversion in the bowl-shaped valley make Kathmandu one of the most polluted cities in the region.

Kathmandu not only needs EVs, it is ideally suited for it too. The Valley has a relatively flat terrain, the distances travelled are short, average speed hovers around 35 km/hour, and there is ample hydroelectric power available, especially during the off-peak period when the batteries are charged.

NEVI plans to add 23 more tempos to the existing fleet, and set up battery-exchange facilities for at least 100 EVs to cater to private owners. "Our major challenge, however, is to convert all the other diesel tempos running in Kathmandu," says Bijay Man Sherchan, NEVI's managing director.

If all goes according to plan, NEVI expects to establish its own manufacturing and assembly unit to produce new EVs—two-, three- and four-wheelers.

Green transport is an idea whose time has come, and there are other private EV companies getting into the field in Nepal. The government and Kathmandu Municipality have lent support. The Finance Ministry has drastically reduced import duty on EVs and EV components, and the industry has been offered electricity at reduced rates. There is also talk of a comprehensive transportation master plan for Kathmandu Valley that will expand existing trolley bus routes and EV commuter services, and then banish diesel vehicles to outside the Ring Road.

Maybe Kathmandu can be a Safa City, after all.

Tigers in Central Asia

AS THE FIVE republics of Central Asia begin to convert from command to market economies, the Japanese and South Koreans are competing for influence and markets. Koreans have a headstart simply because hundreds of thousands have been living there ever since Stalin forcibly moved them to Kazakhstan from the Korean peninsula in the 1930s.

Korean multinationals have been quick to seize on the compatriot connection. Now, it seems the Japanese are not far behind. And both will be there much

ahead of India or Pakistan.

Officials from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan trooped to Tokyo in March. The former Soviet republics want friends who will help them exploit the natural resources on the vast and rugged hinterland along the former Silk Route.

Despite the proximity to South Asia and the economic logic of cooperating with nearby neighbours, it seems that the East Asian tigers will beat the others with their sheer economic clout.

Both Pakistan and India have been trying to access the Central Asian market, but the Afghan war is making a mess of Pakistani efforts, and Indian approaches via Iran seem too cumbersome. As is usually the case, the inability of New Delhi and Islamabad to hitch wagons means that the Central Asian gravy train, too, will pass them by.

Otherwise, the large investment, expertise and entrepreneurial base of the two countries pulling together would put South Asia, with its strategic location, in a much better position than other suitors.

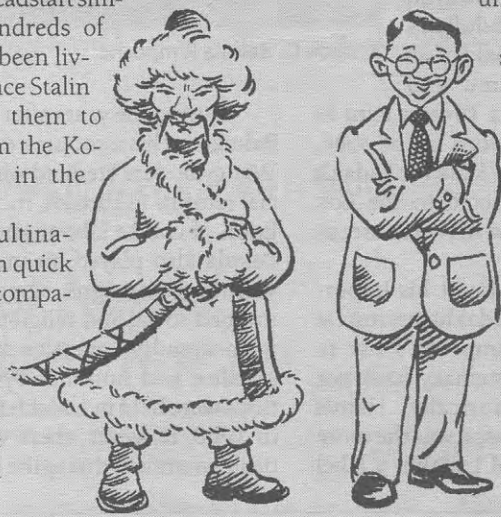
Japan is using its strong presence in the London-based European Bank for Reconstruction and Development to influence the Central Asians, according to the Bangkok-based *Asia Times*. The bank was founded to help former East European and Soviet bloc countries to adjust to the market economy. Asked if Japan was trying to take the lead role with aid and investment in Central Asia as it already has in Mongolia, the Japanese Director of the EBRD, Katsumoto Suzuki, replied: "We are ready."

The Japanese strategy in wooing the Central Asians includes using the "Asian card". Eisuke Sakakibara, the seniormost "Asianist" in the Japanese Foreign Ministry "likes this one very much", said an underling.

"His feelings are sympathetic to the area—and, of course, Central Asia is part of Asia."

And as Hideaki Nonaka of the Eastern Siberian Investment Fund noted, the Kyrgyz people were racially similar to East Asians and had "a similar mentality".

Sounds like another co prosperity sphere to us.



Out of Siberia

IF BIRDS COULD talk, the four Siberian cranes that glided down in formation for a touchdown at Bharatpur sanctuary in Rajasthan on 1 February would perhaps tell us why they skipped their winter vacation this year as well. Was it fear of Afghan sharpshooters waiting to ambush them on high passes of the Hindu Kush, or the state of Indian politics?

Whatever the reason, ornithologists and conservationists were ecstatic when the birds were spotted rummaging through the reeds in the marshlands outside Bharatpur town. For they did not turn up at all during the last two seasons.

The Siberian crane (*Grus leucogeranus*) is among the most endangered of migratory birds, with a total wild population of no more than 3,000. Those breeding in eastern Siberia during the summer spend their winters in Poyang Lake in China, while those from western Siberia migrate to Iran or the Bharatpur marshes.

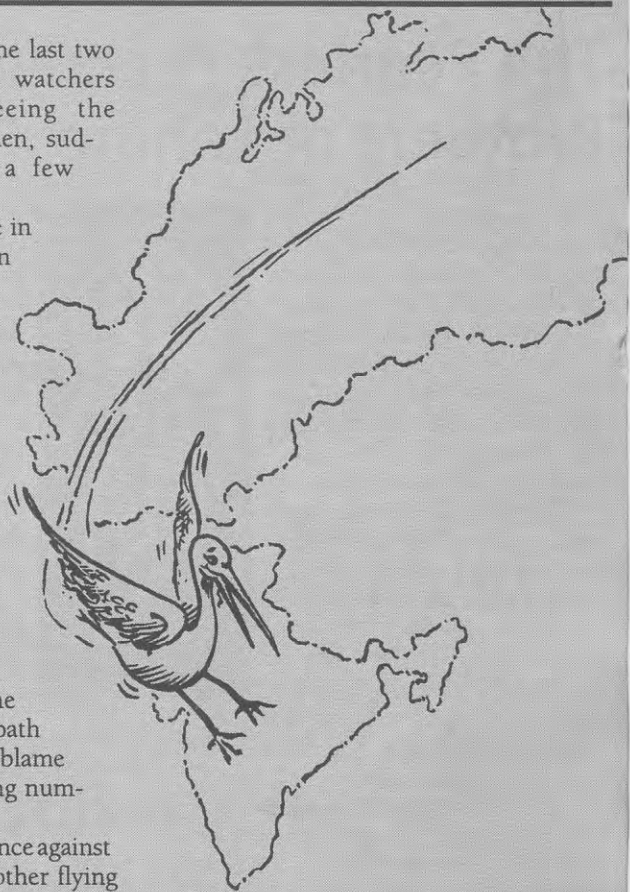
According to the World Wide Fund for Nature-India, the number of birds coming to Bharatpur had dwindled from 200 in

1963-64 to five in 1992-93. The last two winters saw none, and bird watchers had despaired of ever seeing the Siberian cranes back again when, suddenly, they arrived, albeit a few months late.

Normally, the cranes arrive in time to spend the whole winter in Bharatpur, and so the natural question: where did the four long-distance fliers spend the freezing months of December and January? For that matter, where did they travel to the previous two winters? Are there some warm climes elsewhere, too, which offer the same diet of the sedge called *Cyperus rotundus* that grows in the marshes?

The International Crane Foundation believes that trigger-happy mujahideen on the bird's migratory air corridor path over eastern Afghanistan are to blame for the Siberian crane's declining numbers in Bharatpur.

The cranes don't stand a chance against guerrillas who nearly made another flying object extinct: Soviet helicopter gunships.



Dead Eyes See Again

THERE IS A MAN in a Gujarat town who waits by the cremation ghats as the dead are brought in. He wants their eyes. Not for some gruesome ritual to please an animistic deity, but to make use of them in his mission of mercy.

When Dr Bhagwandas Seth of Siddhpur town lost his young son in a road accident 12 years ago, he decided to transform his personal tragedy into a boon for the sightless. The doctor himself extracted his son's dead eyes, and donated them.

Since then the doctor has worked like a man possessed. As he told the Press Trust of India: "There is nothing like giving someone a new life." Since 1984, he has removed nearly 3000 pairs of eyes from the dead to bring sight to the living blind.

Except for Sri Lanka, where eye donation has now become national in scope, voluntary organ donations are rare in South Asia. The superstitious believe that giving up eyes will mean being sightless in the next birth. But Dr Seth perseveres, spending a large part of his days inside the Siddhpur

crematorium, persuading distraught relatives of the dead to allow the eyes to be donated.

A large number of bodies, including those from outlying regions, are brought to Siddhpur for cremation because the town lies on the banks of the holy Saraswati. The doctor arrives with volunteers of the Red Cross Society at six every morning, and he stays till nine. If a body arrives at any other time, he is called from his home or clinic.

Getting eyes donated was much more difficult ten years ago than it is now. General awareness, the doctor's own personal example and his persuasiveness, have enabled Dr Seth's team to present the Red Cross with at least two pairs of eyes every day.

The Red Cross has long been the beneficiary of Dr Seth's mission. "We have more than 100 volunteers who go to the villages and try and remove superstitions concerning eye donations," says a Red Cross volunteer. "They have been successful in inculcating a scientific temper in the people."

A WORLD WITHOUT FICTIONS, part of an essay in *The Atlantic Monthly* by American humorist Garrison Keillor, written on the Whitewater scandal, is one perspective that should not be lost in the Hawala-related breast-beating in India.

A democracy needs good humor to keep it bumping along. When scandal breaks and we see the humanity of the great revealed, naked, dumb, there is always a cry for new rules or at least a new awareness and sensitivity that will prevent this terrible thing from ever happening again. We should be careful, though, not to make the world so fine and good that you and I can't enjoy living in it. A world that is safe from any sexual harassment will be a world in which there is no flirtation. A world that is safe from thieves will have no entrepreneurs. A government that knows no friendly connections or favors between politicians and businessmen would be the first in the history of the world. And a world without fictions, my friends, would be unbearable for all of us.



The Peerless Peerzada Brothers of Lahore

IS THERE ANYTHING that the Rafi Peer Theatre Workshop (RPTW) does not or cannot do? The Lahore-based cultural group, already known for organising everything from puppet theatre to Bharat Natyam, just put up Pakistan's first international drama festival.

It got rave reviews, with about a dozen foreign companies and five local ones staging performances for the better part of a month. The festival was the crowning glory of the Peerzada family, who have all by themselves managed to provide Lahore with a cultural boost over the course of more than a decade.

One could argue that this shouldn't be hard for the RPTW considering their experience in holding two biennial international puppet festivals in Lahore since 1992 and the dates October 10-20 are now on the calendars of puppeteers around the world.

The Workshop was originally started in 1936 by Rafi Peer, a well-known drama personality, but soon fell dormant. After his death in 1974, it was revived some years later by his children. At first, their main focus was inviting foreign one-person shows and staging puppet theatre.

In 1990, while participating in a national puppet festival sponsored by the government-run Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), Faizaan, one of the brothers, got the idea of organising an international puppet festival. Together, the Peerzada brothers, sisters, and in-laws, managed to pull it off, and the puppet festival was held successfully in October of that year.

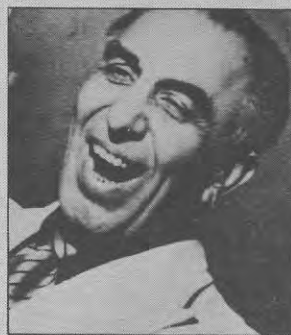
Pakistan shares a theatre and puppetry heritage with India, but India has had the higher profile because the performing arts there have always received more patronage. As Mustafa Sajjad Haider, director of theatre at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), says, there is so little support for theatre in Pakistan that people from "good backgrounds" are reluctant to venture into the profession.

Even though there are arts councils in all major towns of the country, these have remained dormant, and the private and



corporate sector generally hold a cynical view of the arts. Enter: the Peerzada family, with the conviction that a good show and brimming enthusiasm was all that was required to get some culture going.

The RPTW receives no grants from the government, and it survives by going 'corporate'. It has grown from a one-man show organiser and Karachi-based puppetry company to a cultural consultancy of sorts. Want to stage a national dance festival, but lack



Rafi Peer

the manpower or knowhow? Call the Workshop, as Bharat Natyam dancer Tehreema Mitha did last year. Result: the country's first national dance festival in November-December 1995. Want proper lighting for a big pop music concert? No problem for the RPTW (they did it for the Pakistan World Cup Cultural Committee).

Now, with an international theatre festival behind them, what more is there for the Peerzadas to do? Where is the challenge? Perhaps, might we suggest, an international film festival?

- Tom K. Maliti

Royal Reading



WITHIN ITS HANDFUL of states, South Asia has two kingships (three if you are to count the Dalai Lama of Tibet as god-king). And while we know that kings normally do not have time to read all the verbiage that social scientists turn out, King Birendra and King Jigme might want to find some time to brush up on what social anthropologist Declan Quigley, of (appropriately enough) The Queen's University in Belfast, has to say in the latest issue of *Anthropology Today*.

Kingship raises, writes Quigley, an exciting range of theoretical questions on the nature and functions of political ritual and the social roles of myth and symbolism. With reference to media accounts of the British monarchy, he writes that the declining public estimation of the monarchy is not so much in terms of what they do, but how it is reported. Royal dalliances, after all, hardly constitute historical novelty.

"The real harm, monarchists lament, is done by the instant and detailed publicity afforded by modern communications, since legitimisation of the crown demands that it retain an aura of mystery, and mystery sits uneasily with tabloid headlines screaming out the latest peccadillo."

Writes Quigley: "It is the sheer num-

bers who now have the opportunity to invade the royal domain through the media which strips the monarchy of the illusions of dignity so categorically. Of course, it is not only the royals who are sacrificed this way for the benefit of society: any public figure is open to the same fate, and the more public, the greater and more humiliatingly invasive the scrutiny."

As for the future of the royals, Quigley notes: "The paradoxes that persist may well ensure the survival of a number of monarchies well into the next millennium. If, as some have argued, the essential ingredients of all ritual are to be found in the heightened contrivances of royal ceremonies, then royalists may be right that we lose something very fundamental when we abolish monarchy. In any case (for those monarchists who need consolation), whether one looks at the installation rituals of republican presidents the world over, or the more mundane workings of caste systems where ritual centralisation remains an everyday political necessity, it would appear that many ostensibly non-monarchical systems live (prosper?) only by surreptitiously proclaiming: 'The kingdom is dead; long live the kingship.'"

Rickshaw in the Time of Hartal

AS DHAKA CITIZENS puzzled their way through the extended standoff between their government and opposition, the city had shut down and all vehicles running on internal combustion were off the streets, unless one counted the ambulances and stray autorickshaws with red banners flying, carrying journalists to work. Pedal power, however, was plying.

In normal times, Dhaka's Land Cruiser set tend to be exasperated by the rickshaw-wallahs who seem to have been brought to the city by the thousand simply to make it difficult for the rich and possibly famous to drive around.

During hartal time, however, even if your address is in upscale Banani No. 1, you hail a rickshaw. After all, you would rationalise, there might be too many rickshaws in this world (or, at least, in Bangladesh), but they are earth friendly and provide more employment than any other mode of private or mass transit. Even Sheikh Hasina arrived for a rally last month on her trusty tricycle.

What nobody had guessed was that the rickshaw-wallah is a serious capitalist at heart, who understands demand and supply better than the product of foreign universities who populate Dhaka and pretend to direct the affairs of state. Rickshaw fares rise and fall like a peaking flood, depending on the time of day, weather, heat and mood of the energy source. As yet, no NGO study has been funded on this precise subject, but we expect a donor to fill that gap before long.

During hartals, the demand for pedal power is understandably high, and so the supply sider is on the driver's seat. The more you bargain, the higher the fare. When the three-wheeler with seating arrangement is unavailable, no matter who you are and who is watching, it is okay to hail a flatbed rickshaw, generally used for ferrying vegetables and fowl to market. There is a hartal on, and there is work to be done.

The opposition seemed to have finally wised to the fact that the efficacy of hartals are severely compromised if everyone gets to go about by rickshaw. They held a brainstorming session to carry out a quick cost-benefit calculation. What would hurt the Cause more: losing the rickshaw-wallah vote or doing a semi-hartal? The decision was taken to ban the three wheelers.

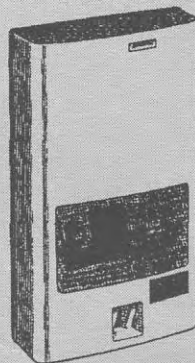
Which was how the main opposition party of Bangladesh came to declare in the Battle of the Begums that no rickshaws would ply from morning till afternoon in future hartals. Fortunately for the Dhaka rickshaw, Begum Zia gave in to Opposition demands just as the axe was about to fall. But, as they say, there is always a next time, especially when it comes to hartals.

Trusty Dhaka rickshaws are good for flood, drought and hartals.



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Preethi nifty idea

IT HAS BEEN nearly 25 years since Colombo ad man, Anandatissa de Alwis, who was to later serve the J.R. Jayawardane government as minister of information, broadcasting and tourism, picked "Preethi" ("happiness" in Sinhalese) as the name for a condom being pushed by an international agency

Colombo's Instant Condoms

spreading the family planning message in the Third World market.

It proved to be a brilliant idea that has become the stuff of marketing legend. Previously, condoms used to be sold only at pharmacies and druggists, and buying them was quite "shy making", as the locals would have it. But Preethi changed all that (although girls called Preethi had a thin time, much like men named Nirodh in India or Dhal Bahadur in Nepal), and the contraceptive became available in every corner shop and general store. That was a great leap forward.

Now a further advance has been made with the first condom vending machines being installed in Colombo and its suburbs. The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka, advertising the location of five such machines, described the new service as "Our contribution towards the eradication of AIDS from Sri Lanka."

Who are Nepal's Maoists?

A MAOIST INSURGENCY and police reaction has violently shattered the calm of Nepal's western midhills. The violence is centred in the Rapti Zone, which has been a stronghold for a far-left faction of the Nepal Communist Party from very early on, as it is the base of the prominent underground leader Mohan Bikram Singh.

Member of the central committee of what was known as the party's 2nd Congress (1957-78), Mr Singh was jailed from 1961 to 1971. Following his release, he formed the nucleus of a new party, around which he tried unsuccessfully to unite the old comrades, who had divided in 1967 following the Cultural Revolution with the split between Russia and China.

Working underground through the 70s and 80s, with much time spent in India, Mr Singh became close with the Revolutionary International Movement (RIM). Following RIM's lead after Mao Zedong's death, his party decided that China had become reactionary and counter-revolutionary. It distanced itself from the larger Maoist groups such as the Marxist-Leninists. (The Marxist-Leninists themselves had origins in the early

1970s, when some young Maoists in Jhapa district started a Nepali version of the Naxalite People's War, then in progress across the border in Naxalbari, West Bengal. These "Jhapali" later gave up violent means and took on the name Marxist-Leninist. After the People's Movement of 1990, they joined parliamentary politics, and even formed the government in 1994-95.)

In 1986, Mr Singh's party split into two, the majority staying with Mr Singh in CPN (Masal), and another leader, Nirmal Lama, forming the minority CPN (4th Congress). The issue was whether to accept the strategy of participating in the elections under the partyless Panchayat system of that time. Mr Lama, who saw feudalism as the main adversary and the 1950 overthrow of the Rana regime as an unsuccessful revolution, was for joining those fighting the Panchayat system in order to hasten the overthrow of feudal forces. Mr Singh, on the other hand, maintained that India was the principal enemy and that all democratic developments from 1950 onwards were part of the reactionary expansion of



Mao Zedong Centennial Celebrations, Kathmandu

Indian hegemonism. He was for "total revolution" and opposed any kind of joint action with any force to bring down the partyless system.

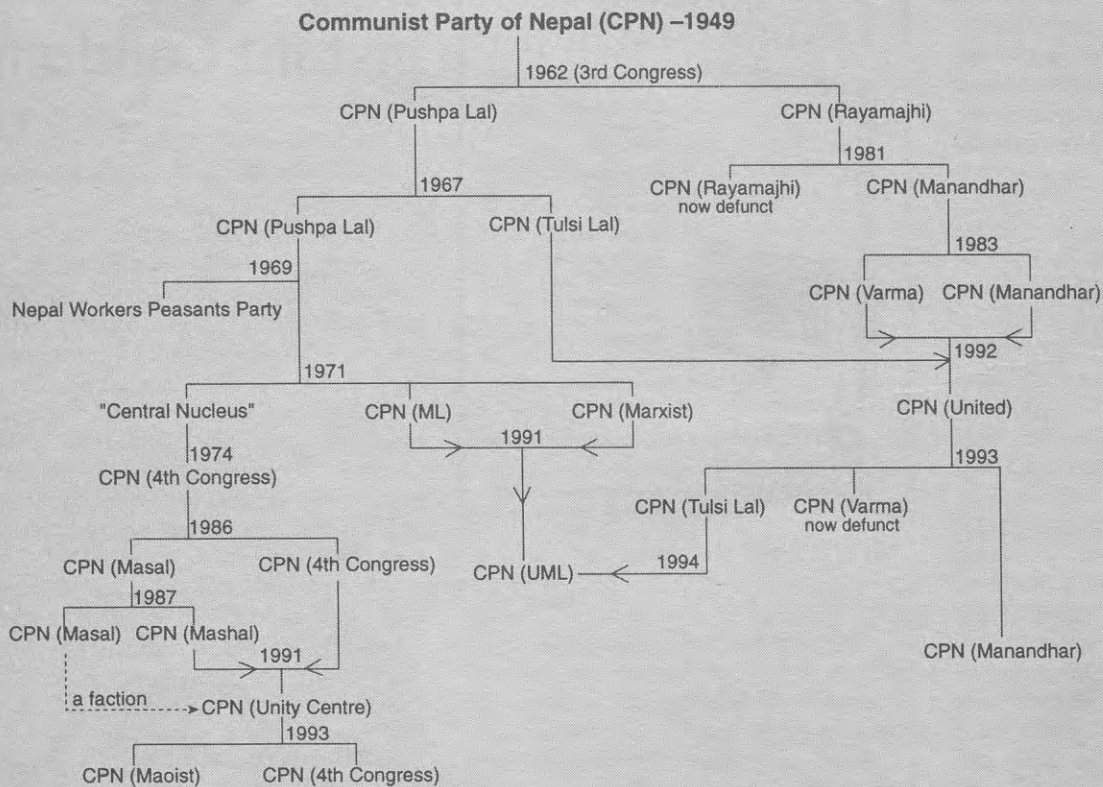
A year later, the Masal itself split into a CPN (Masal), this time with Mr Singh in the minority, and a CPN (Mashal), with Mohan Baidya in the majority. Mashal and the 4th Congress, together with a splinter of Masal, united after the 1990 People's Movement.

But their subsequent attempt to coalesce into a "Unity Centre" (with its political wing the United People's Front) failed when, in 1993, the "Centre" broke up into the CPN (4th Congress) of Nirmal Lama and Lila Mani Pokharel, and the CPN (Maoist) of Pushpa Kamal Subedi aka 'Prachanda' and its visible spokesman, Baburam Bhattarai.

It is this CPN (Maoist) group which has launched the "people's war", with a base in the mid-western hills of Nepal. The other two groups agree with the philosophy and objectives of such a war, but disagree with the timing and the fact that it serves the interests of the petit bourgeoisie, that is, small shopkeepers and landlords, and so do not perceive it to be a workers' movement.

-Stephen Mikesell

A Diagrammatical Look at Nepal's Communist Parties



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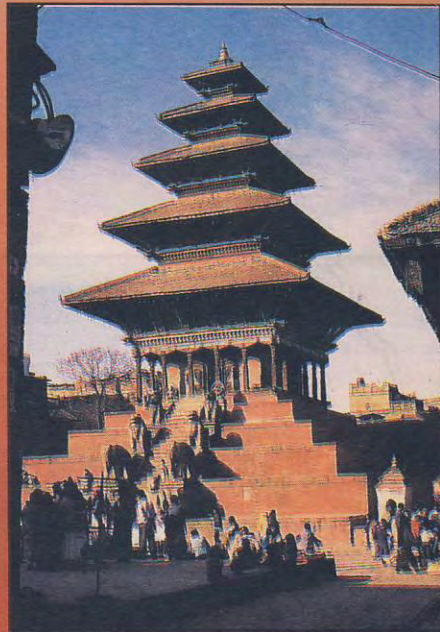
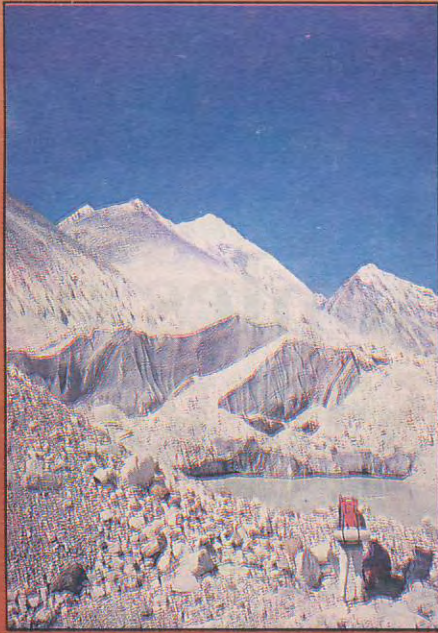
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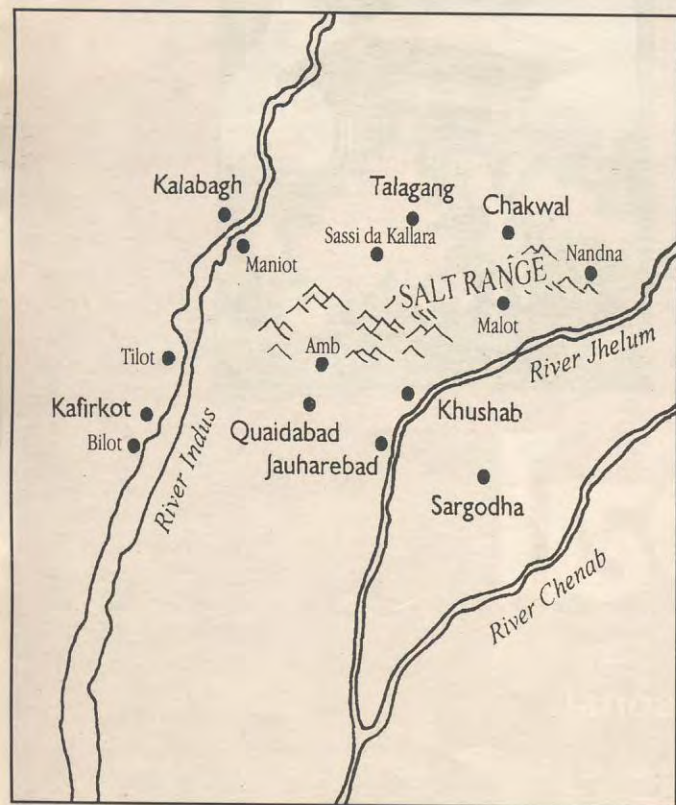
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Shaivite temple at Amb

Temples of the Salt Range

pictures and text by Salman Rashid



LONG BEFORE the Pathan general, Sher Shah Suri, built inns and mail stations along what has come to be known as the Grand Trunk Road, there was a network of highways criss-crossing the fertile Punjab plain and connecting it with regions beyond. One such was the road that crossed the Jhelum river near today's village of Rasul, entering the Salt Range through the Nandna Pass, and heading west across the Indus at Kalabagh before reaching Bannu, on its way to the markets of Kandahar. The Salt Range is so called because fine quality salt has been mined here since classical times.

Malot temple with Sikh lookout on top;
detail (below)

This road has seen its share of historical events. Alexander passed this way, and so did Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveller who visited India in the 7th century. Late in the 12th century, the doughty Khokhar Rajputs of the Salt Range revolted against the rule of Ghur, and the Ghorids had to struggle hard to keep this connection open. Babur took control of the area on his way to India, and later, Sher Shah Suri gave up claim to this road since he could not subdue the ferocious Gakkhars.

Perhaps the region's halcyon days were when it was under Kashmiri rule. King Lalitaditya Muktapada of the Karkota dynasty, who ruled Kashmir from AD 624 to 660, brought a large part of Punjab, including the Salt Range, Taxila and Hazara, under his control. Lalitaditya was not only a conqueror. He was a builder who initiated the era of devotional architecture in the Salt Range. The next two hundred years saw a series of fortified temples come up on the high road to Kandahar.

These buildings, which came to be known as Shahiya temples after a subsequent dynasty, saw religious activity for the next four centuries. However, with the advent of Islam, they suffered in varying degrees from the iconoclastic fervour that swept the Subcontinent. There are no pilgrims to these temple ruins today, only the odd visitor with an interest in history and archaeology, for whom these edifices of the Salt Range are deserted reminders of a glorious past.



Nandna. Perched on the eastern-most escarpment of the Salt Range on the Nandna Pass, the fortified temple of Nandna has long overseen the passage of caravans and armies. When Mahmud, the raider king of Ghazni, arrived in AD 1013 to lay siege on the fortress, the Raja of Lahore, Anandapal of the Shahiya dynasty, fled to Kashmir. The fort was taken easily enough and, though the defenders were spared, the invader took away everything of value.

Nandna appears to have been an important centre of learning, and attracted persons like Abu Rehan Al Beruni, who came from Ghazni to learn Sanskrit and Indian sciences. It was here, in 1017, that Al Beruni worked out the greatest wonder of his age, a calculation of the circumference of

the globe, the most accurate measurement of medieval times.

There is no mention of Nandna in the history books after 1221, when it witnessed fierce fighting between the fugitive Shah of Khwarazm and the Mongol invader Chinghis Khan. Moghul emperor Jehangir's memoir does refer to deer hunts in the district of Gurhgaj Nandna, but that is all.

Today, the temple edifice is a roofless hulk with only two walls standing intact. This gives little indication of the architectural style except that the doorway faced west. Below the ruin, on the northern and western flanks of the hill, the ancient fortification is still visible as a rough stone wall interspersed with massive semi-circular battlements. All around the wall and in the flat area below the fort can be seen the remains of the old settlement.

Malot. The most beautiful of the Salt Range temple ruins are surely those of Malot. Made of deep red sandstone, the building stands on a hill to the southwest of the village of that name. The temple comes alive every morning as the red sandstone facade is set aflame by the slanting rays of the sun, a time when the *lingam* in the inner sanctum would have seen light.

The most remarkable feature of the Malot temple is its Grecian character, seen in its two fluted columns and the Doric capitals of the main entrance which held up an arch that caved in long ago. The roof is crowned with an ugly wart, a lookout built by the Sikhs after they overran the region in 1810. Originally, the building rose beautifully in an ornate red spire or *sikhara*, evidence of which can be seen on the three





Brickwork at Sassi da Kallara

decorated with large rosettes, sunflowers and geometrical designs. Carved with great precision, these decorations are fine examples of the art of producing cut bricks of more than a millennium ago.

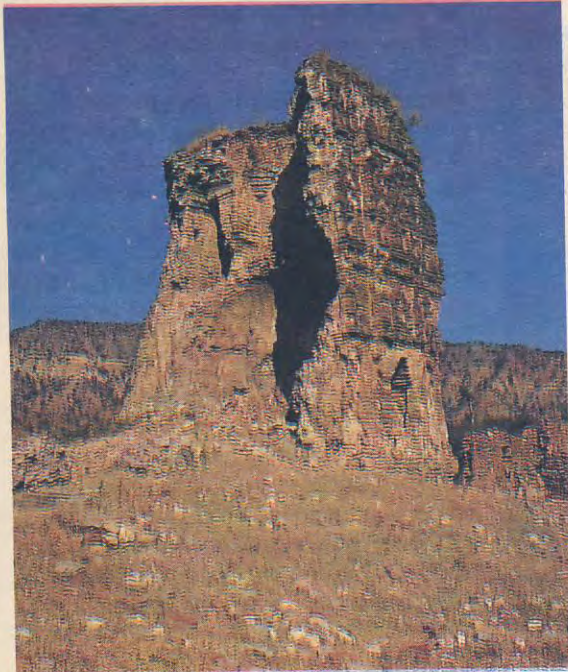
Amb. Lying almost 80 km south of Kallar and accessible by road from Quaidabad, are two temples known as *mahals* by the inhabitants of the nearby Amb

facades that replicate the complete building in miniature.

Malot must have been built early in the 9th century AD, when the rule of the Kashmiri kings had brought peace and prosperity. That was also the time when most of the Greek buildings of Taxila were still standing, providing inspiration to local stone masons to incorporate Western designs into their work.

Sassi da Kallara. Standing on a low hill in the southwest corner of Chakwal district, this is the least accessible of the Shahiya temples. But Sassi da Kallara, or Kallar, as it is also known, is unique because built of burnt bricks while all the others are stone structures.

Standing on the edge of a clay hill, the temple is seriously threatened by erosion, and, in fact, a porch has already been destroyed. The exterior of the temple is richly



Ruin at Nandna

village. The temples are walled in by massive fortifications, and the larger of the two is a more refined version of Nandna. There are some bulky Romanesque columns which, on closer inspection, reveal that they are the result of some well-meaning British era conservation work, an effort to shore up part of a collapsed porch. The outside walls of the temple are richly decorated with mock columns, arches and designs of the *amalaka* fruit, but the inside is empty. Historians believe that the two temples of Amb are more recent than the other Shahiya temples, but nevertheless at least a thousand years old.

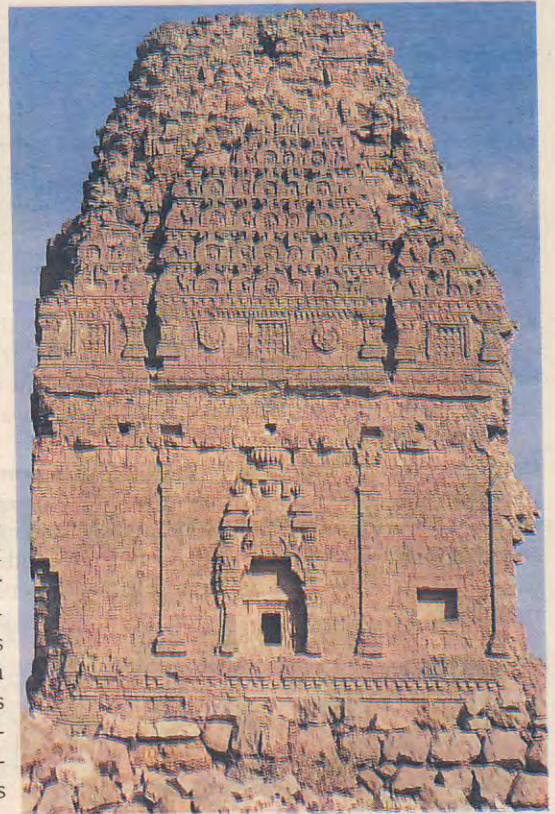
Maniot. The two temples of Maniot got their name from Manikot—Fort of Jewels. According to the Mianwali District Gazetteer, the name recalls an earlier time when quantities of "Kalabagh Diamonds" could be found on this hill. Of the two buildings—both facing east—the larger one leans heavily to one side and could collapse soon. Both buildings are constructed of the same calciferous limestone as the Nandna temple, and carry the same decorations.

Bilot and Tilot. Tilot of Kafirkot, named after a long-forgotten king named Raja Til, includes the remains of a settlement which sits on a tabletop hill on the west bank of the Indus, just west of the Chashma Barrage. Here are the ruins of three temples and the remains of a double-storeyed dwelling. Encircling the hill is a battlement with a series of massive semi-circular stone towers constructed of

large, dressed blocks of limestone.

Bilot, said to be named after Bil, a brother of Til, lies 35 kilometres downstream. This collection of nine magnificent buildings of various sizes and shapes is almost impressive collection of stone temples. There are stubby, flat-roofed temples, temples with spires intact, arched doorways, and doorways with lintels. The workmanship in the decorations, consisting of rosettes, amalaka fruit, horseshoe and geometrical patterns, and mock pillars, are noteworthy for their refinement.

The grandeur of these temples indicate that their benefactors must have been extremely wealthy, but, surprisingly, the names of Til and Bil do not figure in history books.



Temple at Bilot

The only evidence that they ever existed is the names given these forts and temples, and the vague legends that seem to make them contemporaries of Mahmud of Ghazni.

The devotees of Shiva and Vishnu are gone from the hills and gullies of the Salt Range, responding to remote and more recent pressures of history. However, the stones and bricks of the Shahiya temples remain, tantalising the odd visitor with visions of sublime, event-filled eras long past.

S. Rashid is a Lahore-based traveller and writer.

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South Asia to the Edge of Siberia

Mongolia's Mahayana Mania



UNITED NATIONS

While Chinghis Khan looks down from his newly-burnished pedestal, a Buddhist renaissance gains momentum on the steppes of Mongolia.

by Prabhu Ghatge

A gathering of almost 2 percent of a country's population is large by any standard. In Mongolia, given the near absence of roads and the sparseness of population, it is gigantic. Yet, an estimated 30,000 devotees attended the opening ceremonies of the Kalachakra initiation conducted by the Dalai Lama at the Gandan Hiid Monastery in Ulaan Bataar last August. They poured in from the countryside, many came from as far away as the south-Siberian Russian republic of Buryat.

The Kalachakra initiation is one of the highest tantric rites of Tibetan Buddhism, and this was the first time it was being held in Mongolia since the 1921 Communist Revolution. Before Sovietification, Mongolia had about 300 monasteries and an estimated 110,000 monks, or a third of the male population. By 1990, only Gandan Hiid had survived—primarily as a show-piece. The 200 or so monks there were mostly government appointees, and knowledge of ritual and observances, so important to Tibetan Buddhism, was practically lost.

But, incredibly, Buddhism survived in the minds of Mongolians, and the faith still burns. Today, there is a small temple in every town or rural settlement, many of them housed in *gers*, the traditional Mongolian octagonal tents.

As the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, the Dalai Lama has come calling more than once since 1990, despite loud protests from China. The Mongolian government maintains that the visits are purely religious, and avoids giving the Dalai Lama the formal reception reserved for visiting heads of state. However, the real importance it accords the visits is much greater.

The Dalai Lama's personal involvement in the week-long Kalachakra initiation was particularly replete with symbolism. After all, it was Kublai Khan, the grandson of the most famous Mongol, Chinghis Khan, who accepted Tibetan Buddhism as the state religion. He also started the relationship of patron and priest between the Mongolian ruler and the main Tibetan lama—the former providing political protection in exchange of spiritual guidance.

The Red Hero

Ulaan Bataar reminds one of a Russian town plunked in the middle of Ladakh. The centre of the town (whose name translates as "Red Hero") is dominated by attractive colonnaded pastel-shaded public buildings. Surrounding these, with plenty of dusty space between them, are the not-so-attractive blocks of Soviet-style flats. People do not have street addresses, only building

numbers. On the outskirts, about half the population still lives in *gers*. However, many of them prefer to do just that, since they are closer to grazing land for their cows, and can grow vegetables.

When the communist system was dismantled in 1990, religion was not the only force that moved in to fill the psychological and cultural vacuum in Mongolia. A sense of nationalism also came to the fore, which was responsible for the rehabilitation of Chinghis Khan after 70 years in the cold. The legislature initiated lengthy debates on weighty matters such as the design of the national flag, the national emblem, and on changing the name of the capital, which, however, remains Ulaan Bataar since no agreement could be reached. The nationalist sentiment has been taken to impractical extremes as well, such as when demands are made for the unification of all Mongols. More Mongols live outside Mongolia than in it, with the largest number, over three million, in Chinese Inner Mongolia.

Buddhism is not alone in the ongoing battle for the Mongolian soul. In the city (and Ulaan Bataar accounts for a quarter of the country's population), young people are more inclined to the West, and many are interested in Christianity. Among the Christian missionaries active in the cities, some are from India. Hindu sects also have a small presence, as they do in other Central Asian countries, most notably the Anand Margis, but also ISKCON and Ramakrishna Mission.

However, Buddhism has one distinct advantage—95 percent of Mongolians are Buddhist by birth, and Mahayanism is bound to figure prominently in the ongoing search



for a new Mongolian identity. As one official put it: "What is Mongolian culture without Buddhism? Even when atheists get together to have a drink they make the traditional offering in the four directions."

The Talé Lama

For centuries, Tibetan Buddhist lamaseries were the only permanent habitations in this land of nomads. These monasteries were the nuclei around which the first towns were founded, notable among them being the one that developed in the region of Urga around the residence of the Jebtsungdamba Khutugtu, the highest-ranking Mongolian monk. Today, this city is known as Ulaan Bataar.

The past is also on the side of Tibetan Buddhism. When the Mongols were ousted from the Chinese throne and returned to Mongolia, a Mongol prince Altan Khan, conferred the title *Talé* (ocean), on a visiting



The Gandan Hiid Monastery

The Lama and the Khan

INSTEAD OF THE DALAI LAMA initiating a Kalachakra ceremony, had things turned out differently, it might easily have been Pope John Paul II consecrating some Christian event in Ulaan Bataar. For when, in the 13th century, the Mongol rulers were toying with the idea of a state religion, Christianity, along with Islam, Taoism and Confucianism, was very much in the running. It so happened that Buddhism, that too its Tibetan Mahayana variation, found favour.

Contacts between Tibet and Mongolia began in 1207, just a year after Chinghis Khan assumed command of the Central Asian tribes and much before the Mongol conquest of China began. The envoys of Chinghis suddenly appeared in Tibet, which was then a much-fragmented country due to the incessant quarrels among the various schools of Buddhism, to demand submission to the warlord of the north. Tibet capitulated hastily, which was why it was the only country in central and northern Asia to be spared a Chingis Khan conquest.

Mongol interest in Tibet revived once again in 1239 when Chinghis Khan's grandson, Prince Godan of Kokonor (in the present-day northeastern Tibet province of Amdo), sent raiding parties into Tibet. Later, Godan seems to have been so impressed by the accounts of lamaism he heard from his men that he summoned a Tibetan representative to his court. This was perceived as a dubious honour, for there was no knowing what lay in store in the Mongol court. After much dithering, it was the head of the Sakyapa school, the Sakya Pandita, who travelled to Kokonor in 1244. As it turned out, the Sakya Pandita hit it off with the great Khan and was appointed Regent of Tibet. He was succeeded in this post by his nephew Phakpa.

Phakpa, one of the most exceptional characters in Tibetan history, soon won the confidence of the first Mongol ruler of China, Kublai Khan, another of Chinghis Khan's grandsons. Kublai Khan invested Phakpa with the title *kuo-shih* (instructor of the nation) in 1270 and gave him supreme authority over all of Tibet. Phakpa thus became the first lama sovereign of Tibet, although his status was more of the Mongol emperor's vassal-ruler.

This was the beginning of that relationship of "Patron and Priest" between Tibetan high priests and Chinese rulers, by which the ruling lama of Tibet became the religious adviser to the Emperor, whose role was that of patron and protector of the faith. It is the legacy of this arrangement, which was continued with other Chinese rulers, that is the mainstay of the Chinese claim over Tibet.

The Sakyapa's influence in the Mongolian court was much resented and envied by other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Having not completely accepted the Mongol emperor's rule by proxy, they, too, began to seek Mongolian patrons of their own. Different Buddhist orders cultivated different Mongol chiefs and waged war against each other with the help of their Mongol backers. This was the beginning of Mongolian involvement in Tibetan affairs, which was to last well into the 18th century.

After 1368, when the last Mongol emperor was driven out of China, Tibet slowly reverted to non-ecclesiastical rule, and contacts with Mongolia waned for a couple of centuries. The Ming rulers of China initially frowned upon any intercourse between the two regions, but they later changed their stance, hoping that Buddhist influences might temper Mongolian militancy.

For a while, Tibetan ties with Mongolia were maintained by



Monks in Ulaan Bataar

the Karmapa sect, the Sakyapa link having weakened after the eclipse of the Mongol dynasty in China. Even this was to change, however, with the emergence of another player, the religious order of the Gelugpa.

In 1578, the grand lama of the Gelugpa, Sonam Gyatso, was invited to meet Altan Khan, the only Mongolian prince who, after the decline of Mongol rule over China, had been able to terrorise the Chinese. The two leaders, one spiritual, the other temporal, met by the shore of Lake Kokonor. They exchanged honorific titles. Altan Khan took the name "Gyatso" (ocean) and honoured the monk with the title "Ocean of Wisdom". (*Gyatso*, translated into the Mongolian *Talé*, became the Europeanised *Dalai*). Meanwhile, the Khan himself received the title "King of Religion, Majestic Purity" from the newly invested Dalai Lama.

The khan and the lama were re-enacting the roles of "Patron and Priest" played three centuries earlier by Kublai Khan and Phakpa. But there was a notable difference: the patron did not have the authority to grant any part of Tibet to the priest. Sonam Gyatso did not seem to mind, for Mongolia represented a vast region awaiting his mission. His success as a preacher of the Buddhist faith was remarkable, and the new religion soon gained the allegiance of many Mongolian tribes.

When, in 1588, Sonam Gyatso died in Mongolia, his reincarnation was found in a great-grandson of Altan Khan. This was a master stroke on the part of the Gelugpa patriarchs; the ruling family of Mongolia now became their protector. The new Dalai Lama, still a child, was brought back to Tibet with great fanfare. As might have been expected, with the rise of the Gelugpa, its relations with the Karmapa and other sects plummeted. A seesaw battle for power continued for some decades until the next Dalai Lama, with the support of yet another Mongol warlord, Gusri Khan, was able, in 1640, to establish Gelugpa supremacy in Tibet once and for all.

Whereas, earlier, the links had been restricted to head lamas and khans, there now began a cultural flowering of the Tibet-Mongol connection. Students came over to study under Tibetan masters, mostly at Drepung monastery, the principal seat of the Dalai Lamas. Buddhism soon became the religion of the land of the steppes. Many of the Mongols themselves became eminent masters, and even up to 1959 most of the renowned teachers at Drepung were Mongols.

- Deepak Thapa

monk of the Gelugpa, or Yellow Hat, sect in 1578. It was not long before this new sect commanded the loyalty of most of the Mongol tribes. (see box)

Ever since Buddhism arrived among the fierce warrior tribes, it has figured prominently in the history of Mongolia. After their conquest of Mongolia in the 1680s, the Ming and Manchu emperors of China played the Mongol Buddhist clergy against each other to keep the Mongols divided. And, when Mongolians finally overthrew Chinese rule in 1911, they turned to religion for guidance. They installed the Jebtsungdamba Khutugtu as the Living Buddha, ruler of the country. (In 1920, during the Russian civil war, many Tsarist Russians took refuge in Mongolia and began ruling the country through the Living Buddha, while continuing their resistance to the Bolsheviks. Within a year, however, the communists had defeated the white Russians and a communist regime was established in Mongolia. When the Living Buddha died in 1924, Mongolia was declared a People's Republic.)

Democracy and the Monk

Much of the credit for the revival of Buddhism in Mongolia goes to Kushak Bakula (see profile on page 27), the 80-year-old Ladakhi monk who also happens to be the Indian ambassador to Mongolia. Bakula has brought some 50 Mongolian monks to India for studies in Dharamshala and Tibetan centres like the Institute of Higher Buddhist Learning in Sarnath, near Varanasi. Tibetan masters from Dharamshala visit Mongolia regularly and Bakula himself travels around the country, giving lectures and discourses. He has set up a school of Buddhist learning in Ulaan Bataar and has even ordained nuns for the first time in Mongolia. There are now three nunneries in the country.

When he was named Indian ambassador to Mongolia in 1989, the reincarnate lama thought there was nothing much he could do. "I was looking forward to a period of quiet contemplation and study and re-



Central Square, Soviet-style, Ulaan Bataar

newing my contacts with Mongolians whom I had been visiting since 1970," he recalls. But Bakula was in for some excitement.

March 1990 saw a sudden turn of events as the pro-democracy movement gathered pace in Ulaan Bataar. Hunger strikes were held and protests erupted in the square in front of parliament building. Bakula's ambassadorial rank suddenly took a back seat to his status as the spiritual head of Mongolia, since he was the highest ranking Buddhist in the country.

Bakula recalls that a Tiananmen-type situation was brewing when protestors came to see him one evening in March. He told them: "It would be improper for me to give you any advice on your movement. All I can say is never, ever, resort to violence." He did give the students the Buddhist sacred thread (*zangia* in Mongolian, *sungdhut* in Ladakhi). While taking leave, they asked for a few more. "I thought they were taking them for their family members. You can imagine my surprise when I saw them being distributed to the hunger strikers on national TV that evening!"

Whether it was the sacred thread, or the example of the excesses that had just taken place in Romania, good sense prevailed, and 80 percent of the Ulaan Bataar's communist party organisations voted in secret ballot that night for the resignation of the Politburo. Soon after, the government amended the

constitution to allow multiparty elections, which were held in July 1990. Freedom of speech, assembly and religion were granted. Bakula could not have arrived at a better time.

The Bodhisattva's Return

Ambassador Bakula has been using his personal clout to great advantage in reinstating Buddhism in Mongolia. Apart from the Kalachakra ceremony, in 1993, he had the satisfaction of persuading the Indian government to allow holy relics of the Buddha (housed in the National Museum in New Delhi) to be displayed outside India for the first time ever.

"Everyone, from the President on down, attended. Almost the whole of Mongolia turned up," he says with pardonable exaggeration. "The Mongolians kept their religious beliefs alive for the 70 long years of the previous regime. They are re-learning the rituals and the philosophy. What is important now is strengthening the observance of the Vinaya vows of monastic discipline."

The next major event, planned for the summer of 1996, is the consecration ceremony of a new 13-metre-tall gold-plated brass statue of Avalokitesvara (the bodhisattva who is the "universal saviour"), the original of which is said to have been melted down by the Russians for making ammunition. And the Dalai Lama is expected to preside again.

P. Ghatge is an economist and writer who divides his time between New Delhi and Madhya Pradesh.

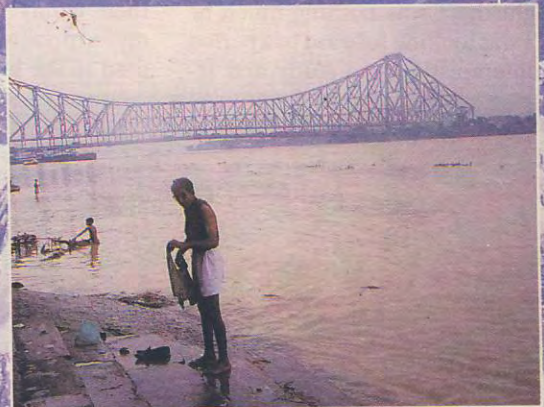


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Chakma children of Tripura refugee camp

Refugees Within, Refugees Without

The Chakma are too small to be so fragmented and scattered, but there is little incentive for anyone to try and redress their condition.

by Sanjoy Hazarika

On 15 August 1947, the Indian tricolour went up a flagpost in Rangamati, the main town in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The Chakma leaders had believed during the tortuous negotiations leading up to Partition that, given the religious composition of the largely Buddhist CHT, their district would be parcelled out to India.

Not so, decided Sir Cyril Radcliffe, head of the commission with the task of apportioning the territories, and the Hill Tracts were awarded to (East) Pakistan. On 18 August, Pakistani troops marched into Rangamati, pulled down the Indian flag, and sent up in its place the star and crescent of Pakistan.

The days of travail had begun for the Chakma, a minority which, over the following half century, has had more than its share of fragmentation, even by South Asian standards. Today, their own homeland, the CHT, is overrun with Bengali settlers from the overpopulated Bangladeshi mainland, and divided groups survive under trying circumstances in Tripura, Mizoram and Arunachal.

However, for all the tragedy they have suffered, the world knows too little about Chakmas. Within Bangladesh, they pale to insignificance before the size of the mainland population and the suffering that regularly visits it. In India, Chakmas make up three segregated groups whose problem is

one among so many in the increasingly violent Northeast, itself a region that suffers neglect from India's rulers.

Colony to Bahini

The Chakma form part of the great Tibeto-Burman language family whose antecedents, like those of the tribal communities stretching all the way east from central Nepal, go back to the central and eastern Asia of thousands of years ago. The jungles of the CHT are home to several such Tibeto-Burman tribes, among whom Chakmas and Marmas are the largest.

The Hill Tracts, an undulating curiosity in a Bangladesh that is otherwise remarkable for its deltaic flatness, became a refuge



for Buddhism even as the faith declined across the region in the face of a resurgent Hinduism and, later, Islam. The Buddhist character of what is today the CHT, in fact, seems to have been cemented in the 14th century when Sawngma (Chakma) Raja Marekyaja migrated from neighbouring Arakan hills into the Chittagong belt to establish his rule and dynasty here.

During colonial times, the Chakma did not take kindly to new demands for taxes by the British, who had to make at least three major offensives to subdue the tribals until an agreement was extracted from them. However, relations with the British became progressively cordial afterward, to the extent that Chakmas under Rani Kallendi sided with the imperial rulers during the Great Mutiny of 1857.

In 1860, the British divided the hill tracts into three subdivisions, under the control of three tribes. In 1900, in return perhaps for loyalty shown, they introduced a regulation banning the settlement of outsiders in the Hill Tracts and prohibiting the transfer of land to non-indigenous people. The 1935 Government of India Act defined the hills as a "Totally Excluded Area", taking it out of Bengal's control.

These actions to protect the tribal identity and economy were strongly resented in Dhaka and Calcutta. The displeasure found expression immediately after 1947 in the open season that was declared for settlers. Successive regimes in East Pakistan, and later Bangladesh, supported the influx of Bengali-speaking Muslim migrants into the 5,000 sq km Hill Tracts, which is sparsely populated in relation to the rest of the country. Today, as a result of the aggressive settlement policy, the Hill Tracts has a population of 900,000 which is evenly divided between Muslim homesteaders and the indigenous Buddhists.

If the first political blow suffered by the Chakma was when their territory was placed with East Pakistan, the following decades saw successive measures that fuelled discontent. It started with the crackdown on the anti-Pakistan demonstrations of 1947. Then came the inundation of prime agricultural lands by the Kaptai Dam reservoir, one of the first mega-projects in all South Asia. The reservoir displaced tens of thousand Chakmas.

During the 1971 war for Bangladesh's liberation, the CHT population backed the Mukti Bahini against the Pakistani army. The following year, Manobendra Larma, who had been elected to the national parliament from the Hill Tracts, called on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with a delegation, seeking to place Chakma concerns on the new nation's political agenda. As it became clear that Shiekh Mujibur and the new establish-

have supported the Chakma fighters and have provided training which is conducted for the most part in Tripura. During this period, the Bahini has carried out a series of attacks on Bangladeshi forces and on civilian targets as well.

There was a split in the Bahini in 1983 and a faction surrendered to the Dhaka authorities. However, the leftist group that is backed by India battles on. Manobendra Larma was killed during the factional infighting, but his brother, Shanto, has continued the campaign against Dhaka. The hills are presently quiet, as a ceasefire is in force while peace negotiations continue.

Fourfold Division

The number of Chakma who continue to live in their homeland of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is said to be about 300,000. Another 80,000 Chakmas are to be found concentrated in the southwest of Mizoram, the Indian state that is sandwiched between Burma and the CHT. Most of this population is now regarded as Indian, having lived in Mizoram for generations. A third group of most recent arrivals is located in Tripura, and numbers 50,000. Here since 1988, these

Chakma refugees fled the Bangladesh Army operations against their villages in the CHT. Today, they live in decrepit settlements that are euphemistically termed refugee camps by the Indian government.

A fourth group of Chakma consists of those displaced by the Kaptai Dam reservoir in 1964, who were forced to fend for themselves when the erstwhile government of East Pakistan failed to pay compensation. About 30,000 of these Chakma "develop-



ment he represented was in no mood to listen, Mr Larma set up the Jana Sanghata Samiti as a political group, and later, its armed wing, the Shanti Bahini.

Over the course of the following years, operations by the Bangladeshi army in the Hill Tracts against the Shanti Bahini led to an exodus of Chakma refugees into neighbouring Tripura, the Indian state which juts like a wedge into Bangladesh's east. Over the last 20 years, Indian security forces



Bangla military outpost in Rangamati, CHT



Chakma monks

ment refugees" ended up in the Cachar and Lushai hills (which later became the Mizo Hills, and then the state of Mizoram). At least 20,000 more left for the Arakan hills in Burma, where they are now settled.

"They came in a hopeless, pathetic condition, just with the clothes that they wore," recalls one senior Mizoram official, who was part of the Assam government team that received the Chakma in the Cachar and Lushai hills. At one point, the Indian authorities toyed with the idea of moving the Chakma en masse to the Andaman and Nicobar islands, but it was later decided to shift the refugees to the North East Frontier Agency, now the state of Arunachal Pradesh.

No Honour, Nor Dignity

The Chakma encampments in Tripura are not "refugee camps" as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees would define them. They have none of the facilities available to, say, the Bhutanese refugees in the Jhapa camps of Nepal. The Chakma huts are of mud and thatch, and for years they have received from the Government of India a measly daily quota of 400 grams of rice, some salt, and 20 paise on the side.

Because this dole is hardly enough, many Chakmas work outside the camps for wages lower than what the locals ask. This has created tension, and recently, the Tripura state government passed an order restricting the refugees to the camps. This year, for the first time since the Chakmas arrived in Tripura, refugee students were not allowed to sit for school-leaving examinations of the state education system.

Repatriation talks between the Bangladesh authorities, the Indian Government and the Chakma leadership have continued over the past few years, but there appears little hope that the refugees will be returning anytime soon with the "honour and dignity" that their leaders insist on. Assurances from the Bangladeshi authorities do not seem enough, and the Indian side does not favour forced repatriation. Conditions are far from settled, especially as the ceasefire between Dhaka and the Shanti Bahini is due to end on 31 March.

The Chakma of Mizoram, while they seem to be the most secure among the displaced groups, have problems of their own. Regarded as Congress party backers, they were granted an autonomous district council back in 1972. The local Mizo, who see a cultural and demographic threat in the Chakma presence (they now make up ten percent of Mizoram's population), resent the granting of the council, especially as it was done without consulting them. Besides, the Mizo also suspect that many of the state's Chakmas are subsequent migrants from Bangladesh, and not part of the original settlers.

The Mizo are predominantly Presbyterian and they recently celebrated 100 years of the coming of the Church to their hills. The growth of the Chakma population, whether natural or through illegal influx, has sparked a campaign of intimidation by the militant Mizo Students Union. Chakmas have been assaulted, their houses torched, and names struck off the electoral lists. The anti-Chakma campaign is set to

resume this spring and continue through the summer. "The Chakma are foreigners, and they do not belong here," is the refrain among the Mizo student leaders.

Another 70,000 or so Chakmas are into hard times in nearby Arunachal Pradesh, where a student-led campaign is underway to drive out the Kaptai 'oustees' who were settled here by the Indian government 32 years ago. Here, too, a campaign to frighten them is on, which recently forced hundreds to flee to the relative safety of Assam. The Supreme Court of India has given directives against the anti-Chakma drive, but Arunachali leaders and agitators insist that the campaign will continue. The Central government has appointed a committee to review the situation, but with both the state government and opposition agreed on the question, uncertain times loom ahead for the Chakma of Arunachal.

Demographic Threat

In their homeland of the Chittagong Hill Tracts as well as in their Northeast India exile, the Chakma are about as vulnerable as it is possible for any community to be. A tenuous peace prevails in the Hill Tracts themselves, and in the points of their diaspora in India—Tripura, Mizoram, and Arunachal—they face hostile locals and a rising threat of eviction. The politics of demography is all the rage in the Northeast, and the Chakma have no constituency. The New Delhi authorities may try to show understanding, but that is no match for the rising animosities on the ground. The fact that the Chakmas of the Northeast are fragmented into three different populations makes their voice that much weaker.

If there were to be a common effort by New Delhi politicians and bureaucrats, the chief ministers and opposition leaders of the Northeast states, the Chakma leaders, and eminent members of the public, a humane solution that addresses the interests of long-time residents as well as the demographic concerns of the locals may be found.

Even in the unlikely event of the Chakma problem in the Northeast being resolved in a few swift strokes, however, the problem of Chakma in the Chittagong Hill Tracts would remain. That was, after all, how it all began. △

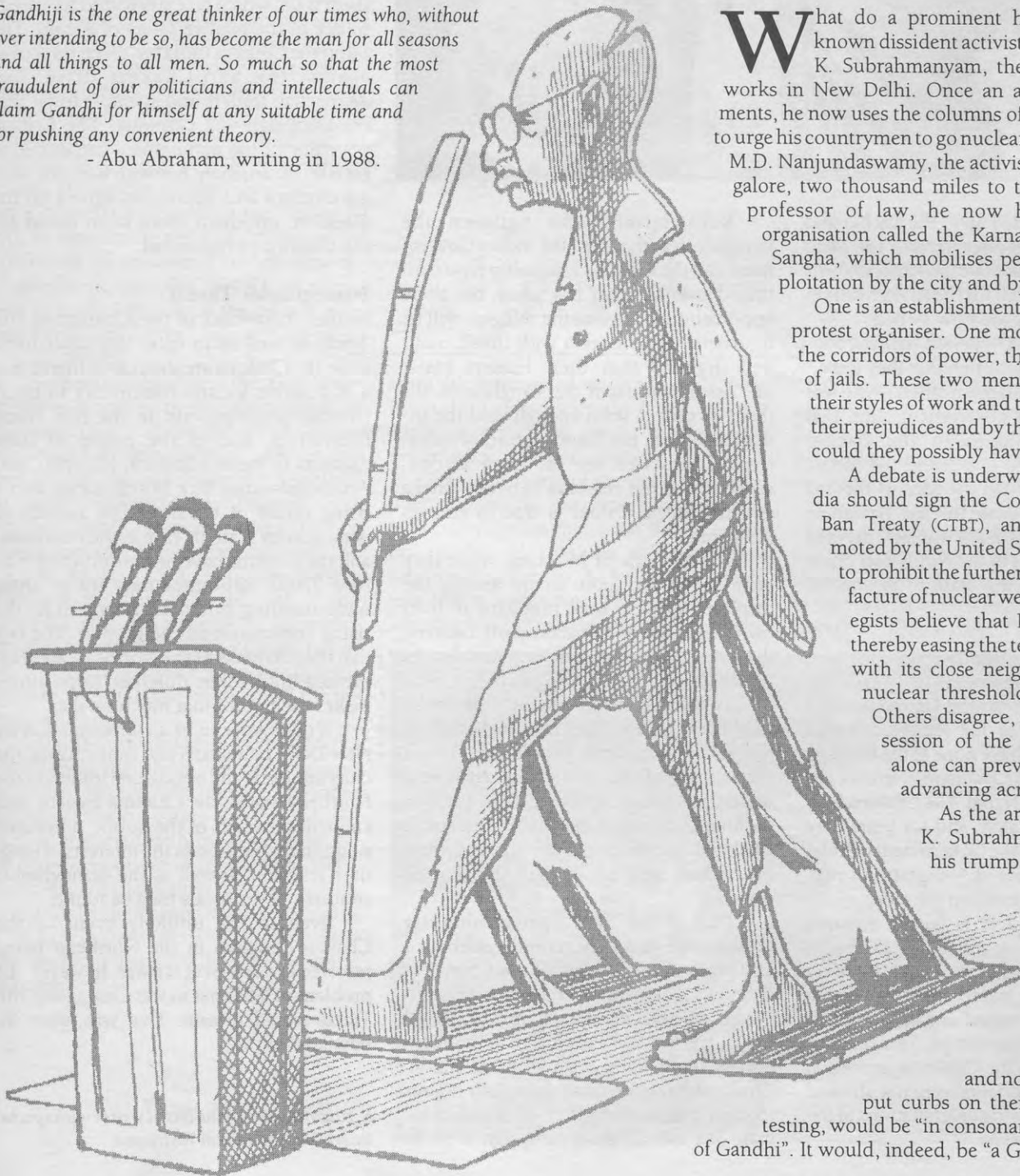
S. Hazarika is a Delhi-based writer with special interest in the Indian Northeast.

Using and Abusing Gandhi

by Ramachandra Guha

Gandhiji is the one great thinker of our times who, without ever intending to be so, has become the man for all seasons and all things to all men. So much so that the most fraudulent of our politicians and intellectuals can claim Gandhi for himself at any suitable time and for pushing any convenient theory.

- Abu Abraham, writing in 1988.



What do a prominent hawk and a well-known dissident activist have in common? K. Subrahmanyam, the hawk, lives and works in New Delhi. Once an adviser to governments, he now uses the columns of *The Times of India* to urge his countrymen to go nuclear, and stay nuclear. M.D. Nanjundaswamy, the activist, is based in Bangalore, two thousand miles to the south. Once a professor of law, he now heads a farmers' organisation called the Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, which mobilises peasants against exploitation by the city and by multinationals.

One is an establishment figure, the other a protest organiser. One moves in and out of the corridors of power, the other in and out of jails. These two men are separated by their styles of work and their ideologies, by their prejudices and by their affinities. What could they possibly have in common?

A debate is underway on whether India should sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), an instrument promoted by the United States and designed to prohibit the further testing and manufacture of nuclear weapons. Some strategists believe that India should sign, thereby easing the tension building up with its close neighbour and fellow nuclear threshold state, Pakistan.

Others disagree, claiming that possession of the nuclear deterrent alone can prevent Pakistan from advancing across the border.

As the argument proceeds, K. Subrahmanyam pulls out his trump card. Not to sign the CTBT, he argues, would be in the glorious Indian tradition of resistance to Western imperialism. To have atom bombs,

and not to allow others to put curbs on their production and testing, would be "in consonance with the tenets of Gandhi". It would, indeed, be "a Gandhian approach

of non-cooperation with nuclear imperialism". (*The Times of India*, 24 January 1996).

A parallel and in some ways more significant debate concerns the liberalisation of the Indian economy, and the recent moves to open it up to Western capital and multinational firms. Manmohan Singh, the finance minister and architect of these reforms, is the hero of millions of middle-class Indians, who hope that his initiatives will allow them to prosper and lift their country out of its stupefying poverty, indeed, to become the South Korea of the Subcontinent.

But Dr Singh is a villain to others, notably intellectuals and activists coming from a left-wing tradition, who think liberalisation will stifle indigenous industry and destroy indigenous agriculture, thus making India even more dependent on the West. This is why M.D. Nanjundaswamy has for some time been mobilising his Raitha Sangha against the entry of foreign firms. His first target was a seed-producing firm (Cargil), his second, a pharmaceutical company (W.R. Grace), his latest, Kentucky Fried Chicken or KFC, that stand-in for the American way of life.

The KFC restaurant in Bangalore, the first of a projected chain, is picketed consistently by farmers of the Raitha Sangha. In a daring action, some 200 activists enter the restaurant, smash window panes and furniture, yell at the customers and chefs, scatter leaflets, and depart.

Nanjundaswamy, who planned the raid but was not physically part of it, calls a press conference. The attack on KFC, he says, "was just to tell the entire world that multinational corporations will not be tolerated here." He then explains why they chose 30 January for the action: "This is how we observe Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary, to tell the whole world Gandhiji is still alive." (*Deccan Herald*, 31 January 1996).

The Foreign Hand

In differing ways, and for completely different ends, Subrahmanyam and Nanjundaswamy illustrate the point made by the cartoonist and columnist Abu Abraham, quoted above. Gandhi has his uses, or misuses. The two exemplars deftly twist the seer out of context to justify their actions. True, as Subrahmanyam points out, Gandhi was a celebrated fighter against imperialism, but would he have regarded Indian scientists who manufactured bombs as anti-colonial patriots? Hardly likely, since the Mahatma once remarked that "he who invented the atom bomb has committed the greatest sin in the world of science".

True, as Nanjundaswamy insists, Gandhi was a passionate believer in *swadeshi*, economic self-reliance, but would he have countenanced the issuing of threats and the destruction of property? Impossible, for it would be inconsistent with his belief in non-violence, in the intimate connection between means and ends.

Gandhi is for most Indians the ultimate touchstone of moral authority, playing a part in public discourse roughly equivalent to that of Thomas Jefferson in the United States or the Quran in Islamic countries. It is thus hardly surprising that he is quoted on every side of every major debate in India today. What is distinctive about the contemporary invocations of Gandhi, however, is that they are almost always attached to attacks on the West. The strategist hawk and the farmers' leader are at one in

this sense too, using Gandhi only to abuse the West.

Attacks on the West have, it appears, gathered force with every passing year of India's independence. Forty-eight years after the British departed, the theme of Western domination never strays far from the pages of our newspapers.

Right-wing Hindu conservatives who worry about the corrosion of our traditional culture by MTV and its ilk, left-wing nationalists who believe foreign capital will undermine development and increase poverty, mandarins in government who are concerned about the possibility of US political domination in a new unipolar world—all believe that a "foreign hand" is at work, undermining the unity, self-reliance and integrity of India. The colour of this foreign hand is always white, although its precise nationality is sometimes hard to establish.

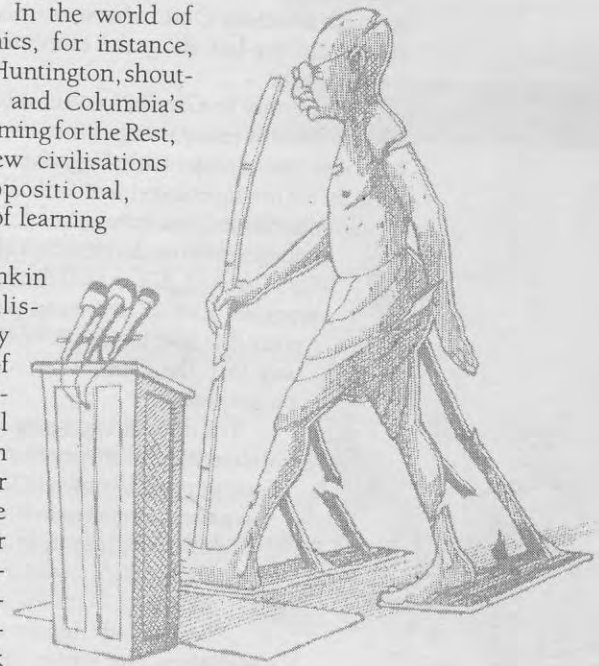
Indigenism is rampant in India today, as evidenced by the fashion codes of my own tribe, the intellectuals. There was a time when most were Marxists. Today, most of us are multiculturalists. The categories of culture and civilisation have replaced the categories of class and capitalism as the prisms by which scholars and social scientists view the world. Where there is scholarship, there is polemic, and nowhere is this shift more clearly marked than in the changing vocabulary of abuse.

Thus, in the golden age of Marxism, a writer one disagreed with was dismissed as a lackey of capitalism or a running dog of imperialism. Now, in the brown epoch of multiculturalism, the offenders are accused of being Eurocentric or of exhibiting cultural arrogance. The class struggle between capitalists and workers has effortlessly been transformed into a 'civilisational' struggle between the West and the Rest.

There is, in this respect, a curious affinity between bitter ideological opponents—and not just in India. In the world of American academics, for instance, Harvard's Samuel Huntington, shouting for the West, and Columbia's Edward Said, screaming for the Rest, both seem to view civilisations as exclusive, oppositional, largely incapable of learning from each other.

Those who think in these broad civilisational terms easily place Gandhi east of Suez, in an ideological and physical sense. Thus, British Tories berate him for not recognising the superiority of their culture, while Indian indigenists celebrate him for offering what they think

What is distinctive about the contemporary invocations of Gandhi is that they are almost always attached to attacks on the West.



The class struggle between capitalists and workers has effortlessly been transformed into a 'civilisational' struggle between the West and the Rest.

civilisation. "I think it would be a good idea," he replied.

Beyond this witticism, it might be thought that there is good reason for the indigenists to hope that Gandhi would be on their side. For, in his politics, he worked tirelessly to free his country from foreign rule, in his economics he promoted *swadeshi*, hand-spun khadi over Manchester mill-made cotton, and in his ethics he drew deep nourishment from the Vaishnava traditions of his native Gujarat. It is thus that Indian politicians and intellectuals, fraudulent or otherwise, when looking for an indigenous alternative to Western imperialism, run straight to Gandhi.

Was Gandhi, then, a quintessentially Indian, even Hindu, thinker? Karl Marx's most famous disciple, V.I. Lenin, once remarked that his master's thought was a synthesis of German philosophy, British political economy, and French historiography. I rather suspect that a similar inventory of influences would reveal Gandhi's thought to be a distinctively Indian blend of Russian populism (via Leo Tolstoy), American radical democracy (through Henry David Thoreau), and English anti-industrialism (from John Ruskin).

This Hindu mahatma's intellectual debts were most certainly Western in origin. What's more, he said so himself—witness the guide to further reading appended at the end of his best-known work, *Hind Swaraj* (1909): six books by Tolstoy, two each of Thoreau's and Ruskin's, works by Plato, Mazzini, Edward Carpenter and others. The only Indians on the list are Dadabhai Naoroji and Romesh Chander Dutt, who wrote not on the glories of Hindu culture but about the economic effects of British rule in India.

Testimony to Gandhi's cultural broad-mindedness, and his love of many things Western, might be found in his close friendships with Englishmen and South Africans, in his loving engagement with Christianity, or in his concern for the survival of England and English civilisation in the darkest days of the Second World War. Some of this is well documented, but I now want to offer as clinching proof a little-known story that has, to my knowledge, never found its way into the Gandhi anthologies and Gandhi biographies.

The *dramatis personae* are an Indian, Yusuf Meherally, and an American, Bertram D. Wolfe. Both were well known in their day, but seem to have been forgotten in ours. Meherally, was a freedom fighter, founding-member of the Congress Socialist Party, and sometime Mayor of Bombay, and Wolfe, an early, brave and rigorous left-wing critic of Stalinism, the writer of *Three Who Made a*

is a civilisational alternative to Western domination. Tories and indigenists both fall back on what is perhaps the most famous of Gandhi stories. On a visit to London in 1931, for a conference on determining India's political future, Gandhi was asked by a British journalist what he thought of Western

Revolution and other books.

In 1946, Yusuf Meherally was in the United States. He was dying of tuberculosis, and had come to rest from his labours in India. His past ten years had been spent mostly in prison, yet Bertram Wolfe, his host in New York, found his friend in an unusually mellow mood towards the British.

On earlier visits, Meherally had been full of righteous indignation about the evils of colonialism, but this time around, he was even willing to offer the British some praise. Wolfe was puzzled at this change, this 180-degree shift in tone and attitude. He asked for an explanation. "They are leaving," answered Meherally. "Any day now, we will be free. Gandhiji says that now that they are going, we must remember the best of British civilisation—the rule of law, their sense of fair play, and so on. Remember it, and keep it."

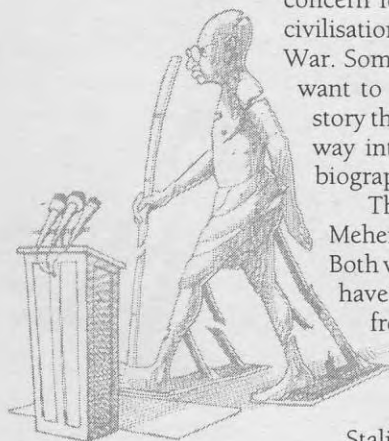
Half a century later, this advice seems as sensible as when it was first offered. I am no partisan of MTV and KFC, but I do know that the best of Western civilisation is still on offer, and we are yet to grasp it. The most humane of their governments, say Finland and Norway, treat the poor and women more fairly. The best of their scientists, in Germany and the United States, turn their research to practical consequence for human betterment—ours accumulate strings of research papers (many of dubious quality) and chairmanships of committees. Their industrialists donate their surplus money to foundations funding the arts, ours put it away in Swiss bank accounts.

Meanwhile, what is distressing is that those Indians who admire the West do so for the wrong reasons. Many of us prefer Madonna to Ravi Shankar, Danielle Steele to R.K. Narayan, T-shirts to kurtas, Kentucky Fried to tandoori. Professionals warm to the artefacts of a high-consumption lifestyle, the vacuum cleaners and the Peugeotts, but ignore Western inventions that are relevant to a society such as ours. No one looks for where we can properly emulate the West—that is, in crafting public institutions that capably, consistently, impersonally, serve the society they are part of.

They have law courts where the judges cannot be bought; universities where the teachers take classes and students are not perennially on strike; systems of transportation that are safe and reliable; hospitals where rich and poor alike are served with the same courtesy and promptness.

A large, mature democracy, an old, self-renewing culture—this is what India is thought by some to be. Does it not then possess the confidence, the dignity, to take what it wants from the West, and quietly ignore the rest? That, precisely, is what Japan has done, what Singapore has put into practice. Back in the 1940s, Yusuf Meherally and Mahatma Gandhi knew when it was time to stop talking of 'Western imperialism' and start thinking of what India could borrow from this most powerful and dynamic of modern civilisations. We, who have never seen the inside of a British prison, do not.

R. Guha is a historian and writer living in Bangalore. His books include *The Unquiet Woods* and *Spin and Other Turns*.



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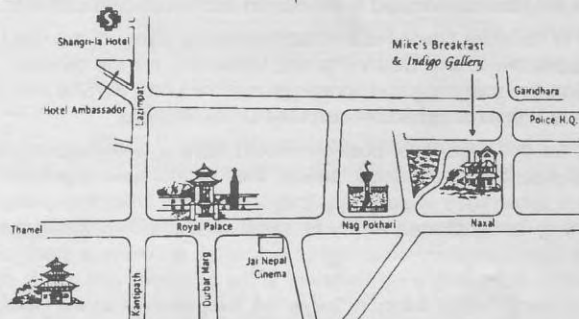
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Pakistan's Music Scene Would Billo or Chief Saab Approve?

Urdu and Punjabi pop have swept Pakistani teenagers, as well as adults, off their feet.

by Arif Shamim

Pakistan is swinging these days—and one is not talking about the inswings or outswings of cricket batsmen. The country is swinging to the beat of popular music, suddenly all the rage. Youngsters are dancing to the tunes of “*Sayen Sayen Mera Sucha Sayen Too Hai*” (God you are my truth) by Ali Azmat or “*Assan te Jana Billo de Ghar, Kinne Kinne Jana Billo de Ghar*” (We all want to go to Billo’s house, who’s coming to Billo’s house?) by Abrar-ul Haq, or “*Bus Bhai Bus Zyada Baat Nahin Chief Saab*” (Enough’s enough, boss) by Sajjad Ali—not to mention the all-time favourite, “*Mast Mast*” by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

The initial wave was started by state-owned Pakistan Television, which tapped the pulse of the times by airing music videos by local groups in the programmes *Pepsi Top of the Pops* and *Lollywood Top Ten*. This was indeed a far cry from 1989, when the religious right created such a furore over PTV’s broadcasting a pop music programme that it nearly toppled Benazir Bhutto’s first government.

In Pakistan, pop music can generate as much controversy as its nuclear programme, but PTV was willing to try again. This time, the music scene really took off with the cultural festivities associated with the Cricket World Cup. Lahori boys and girls, who are generally segregated in public, could be seen swinging to the tune of “*Billo De Ghar*” on television. The move invited the wrath of the clergy and the scandal-loving opposition, but there was no stopping the music craze.

Enough’s Enough

When the Karachi-based Sajjad Ali sang “*Chief Saab*”, he hardly expected the Urdu song to create such an impact in Pakistan’s



Abrar who sang of Billo

music scene, to the extent of inspiring a full length feature film. Similarly, Abrar’s Punjabi language *Billo*, with its catchy bhangra-beat, was a runaway hit all over the country. It blared from car decks, at weddings and at the swankiest New Year parties.

Abrar’s maiden cassette release is said to have sold 200,000 copies, and, unlike popular local tunes of the past, the song seems to have struck a chord with everyone. Even a maulvi in a Lahore mosque was recently heard calling the faithful with a tuneful “*Kinne Kinne Jana Rasool de Ghar*” (Who’s coming to the house of the Prophet?). The song has also been featured in a film, *Munda Tera Devana* (The boy’s crazy about

you) and a host of plagiarised variations have been recorded.

The boyish-looking Abrar, an unknown before the release of *Billo*, used to teach geography at Lahore’s elite Aitchison College for Boys (the Chief’s College of colonial times). *Billo* instantly found an audience even among young urban sophisticates whose musical interests rarely lean towards anything local. Rumour has it that Abrar was kicked out of the college because of the notoriety of his song, but he denies this, saying he quit teaching to concentrate on his music and studies.

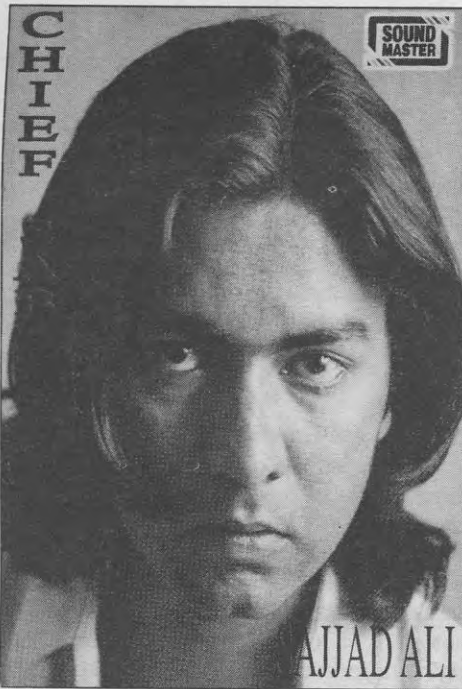
Pop Commentators

It could be said that both *Chief Saab* and *Billo* reflect the present-day social and political psyche of Pakistanis. Specifically, they seem to speak the public’s mind against the mindless violence that has overtaken the land, and on the need to free the social agenda from the clergy’s grip.

If Sajjad Ali’s song focuses around a man who, fed up with criminal life, finally tells his Chief Saab that he’s quitting, Abrar’s *Billo* speaks of the innocent desires of a young man expressing sentiments for his beloved. *Chief Saab*, in particular, is a commentary on the never-ending violence in Karachi, the bomb blasts that are rocking different parts of the country, and the overall environment of fear and discontent.

Although there is nothing new in the idea of a hero’s defection from a criminal gang in *Chief Saab* or in a young man’s love for his Billo, the expressive, street-smart lyrics and lively tunes of these songs have made all the difference. In *Billo*, Abrar skillfully employs the slang of self-conscious urban youth, with lyrics like “*Gel shel la key, kangi shangi wa key*” (After putting on hair gel, combing and grooming...).

Sajjad Ali may have had no political target in mind when he penned the lyrics to his song, but it is said to have reached (and offended) a certain “*Chief Saab*” in Karachi. (Eyes turned to Afaq Ahmed, leader of the Haqiqi group which defected from the Mohajir Qaumi Movement, who is called Chief Saab by his comrades.) According to some reports, the singer even received a



thrashing from the Chief Saab's henchmen—which Sajjad Ali denies.

As for *Billo*, it has remained for months on top of Pakistan's music charts, and critics have rated it the best song of 1995. However, it too has attracted the ire of members

of the public, particularly young men whose sisters happen to be named Billo (a popular nickname in Punjab). The streets of Lahore are dangerous for potential Romeos singing the song near the homes of real-life Billos. Some women's organisations have objected to the Abrar's lyrics, terming it anti-feminist. A certain grandmother doesn't like him because her nickname happens to be Billo, and only her late husband was allowed to call her thus. Someone else has even moved the Lahore High Court on the matter, but, if anything, these reactions have made the song even more popular.

"Although I still love and own Billo, I apologise to those who have or had any problems with the song," says singer and lyricist Abrar. "It was not meant to start fights and quarrels, it is about love and love only."

"Who is Billo?" Abrar was asked before the release of his album. "Nobody," he replied. "It's only a fantasy." But a fantasy that has struck a chord in the country.

Billo and Chief Saab both speak to unsettled times in Pakistan, one a paen to love, and the other a rebuke to brutality and chaos. △

A. Shamim reports for The News on Friday, Lahore.

tension. They feel snowed under and want advice on how to cope."

Married working women face additional stress of a kind that are altogether different, having to do with expectations of husbands and society. The economically empowered woman is gaining a new perspective on life and is questioning traditional social mores and social conventions. She is willing to compromise less than before with, say, than an unsupportive husband or a harassing boss.

"This newfound assertiveness causes quite a few ripples in personal lives," says Dr Vimla Lal, of the Psychological Foundation in New Delhi. "By force of circumstance, the women are rebelling on more than one front, and more often than not they are alone and without understanding and support."

Ripples are also being caused by sex-related problems that have arrived with the changed lifestyles. Contraceptives have increased the sexual freedom for high-living urbanites, and the professional workplace provides more opportunity for extra-marital relationships. This, too, is leading to new problems among spouses and problems of sexual maladjustment. Says Dr N.K. Bohra, a Delhi-based psycho-counsellor, "Thirty to forty percent of my cases fall within this category, where the couple's sexual life is in turmoil."

While independent-minded adults are facing their own challenges with sexuality, India's MTV generation is growing up without guidance at home or school while being bombarded with sexually suggestive programming produced for a Western teenage audience. As a result, says Dr Dhawan, there is a lot of sexual confusion and misinformation among Indian teenagers. "The traditional role models having broken down, and youngsters are now looking for them in the permissive West, through satellite television."

It was inevitable. The mechanics of modern living has brought sophistication as well as psychological dislocation, and with the fallback of family ties no longer there, the only option is to go for paid professional service. And the one good trend in all this is that those in need of counselling are willing to shed their inhibitions and visit the clinic for a session. △

N. Lal is a Delhi-based writer.

Time Now for Counselling

by Neeta Lal

If psychological counselling is an indicator of rising affluence, then Indian Finance Minister Manmohan Singh has every reason to feel satisfied. For, the cities of India are seeing a spurt in the demand for psychiatric help by men and women on the fast track.

Professional counselling is no longer seen as the recourse of crazies, and patients are walking in through the doors of clinics with the kinds of stress-related problems that their ancestors never had to face. "People no longer feel that it is only the 'mad' who need to go see a counsellor," says Dr Rajesh Parikh, a neuro-psychiatrist with the prestigious Jaslok Hospital in Bombay.

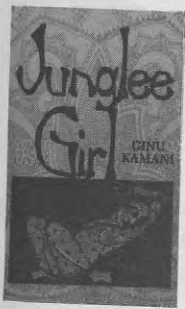
One of the many changes that the Nervous Nineties have brought with them is the breakup of joint-families. The dynamics of family-living having undergone a complete transformation for millions, and the traditional 'buffers' in the form of live-in parents and relatives are being replaced by artificial

support systems, such as maids and creches. As adult children spin off to lead independent lives and, subsequently, to raise nuclear families, a host of psycho-social tensions arise.

The new problems have their origins primarily in the sudden transition, and the inability to meet demands and expectations. For a city-based couple trying to juggle work, children and housekeeping, while also maintaining a social life, the management of it all can be quite unnerving. For many, it leads to mental breakdown.

Personal anxieties that were looked into sympathetically by family elders have now to be resolved by professional counsellors. "Psychiatric counselling is a new phenomenon in India, simply because the problems we're facing as a society are also new," says Dr Preeti S. Dhawan, a leading practitioner in Delhi. "The increased responsibilities of the couple give rise to a lot of psychological

Out of the Jungle



Jungle Girl

by Ginu Kamani
Aunt Lute Books,
San Francisco
\$10

by Farhan Haq

The growing number of South Asian women who challenge traditional racial or gender roles—and write about them—now includes one more North America-based author. Bombay-born California resident Ginu Kamani has just published her first book, which is a pensive and lyrical short story collection. Ms Kamani shares a desire with some others of her kind to uncover truths about South Asian cultural identity and sexuality, matters that have rarely been touched in fiction.

The author seems willing to take on almost any taboo subject of South Asian society: incest, homosexuality and the sexual degradation/oppression of women. In the 11 short stories that comprise *Jungle Girl*, Ms Kamani seeks to explore the differences between 'normal' and 'wild' women. 'Jungle' itself refers to wild, or uncontrollable, women, and the author means to reclaim and redefine the subject.

In most of the stories, the narrator is a young Indian woman who must come to terms with her sexuality or desires, from the 17-year-old confused by her feelings for her maid in "Maria", to the poor worker hired to strip hair from rich women's bodies in "Waxing the Thing".

Some of the stories may seem excessively coy in their efforts to talk about sex without being obvious—a trait Ms Kamani may have inherited from working in film production for three years in the Bollywood movie industry. That coyness tends to obscure the horrors of incest as depicted in "Younger Wife", and the abuses that are hinted in many of the other stories.

At their best, the stories in this collection explore honestly the confusion of women who feel torn between multiple identities, whether Indian or American, demure or desirous. In "Ciphers", an Indian-American woman aboard a train is alternately startled and pleased to be recognised as Gujarati by a fellow traveller. "After all my

years in America, being Gujarati had lost its potency," she confesses. "In the West, I was Indian. Nothing further. In India we had never been Indian."

The protagonist's discovery of feeling Gujarati is further complicated by her realisation, looking at her fellow passenger, about "how sensuality abruptly descends on the sternest of Indian women when they loosen their thick dark hair." That knowledge is part and parcel of Ms Kamani's outlook: that sexuality and cultural identity are tightly intertwined.

The author's playfulness makes up for some repetitiveness that is there, and allows the stories as a whole to enchant and provoke. As the novelist Alice Walker has said, Ms Kamani's is "a new subversive voice: engaging and fresh".

F. Haq is a New York-based writer.

Heavy, Dated Reading

Post Cold War Developments in South Asia

Ramakant and P.L. Bhola (eds)
RBSA Publishers, Jaipur

by Shanta Nedungadi Varma

As with all regions of the world, South Asia did not remain unaffected by the end of the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This book, out of the Department of South Asian Studies of the University of Rajasthan, attempts a look at the changed scenario in the context of the politics within each regional state. There are sixteen chapters, four each on India and Pakistan, three each on Nepal and Sri Lanka, only one on Bangladesh, and another on the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Most of the submissions are dated.

Nalineet Ghildial reports of the impact of the Soviet Union's collapse on India but is silent on the new Indo-Russian Treaty of 1993. Neither does she probe with any depth into the multi-dimensional nature of current Indo-Russian relations. Dheeraj Kumar analyses US perception of India (during the Bush presidency), and provides some

useful insights on the emerging area of Indo-US defence cooperation. B.M. Jain, writing on India's defence policy, underlines New Delhi's challenge of balancing domestic opposition to higher defence spending with the need to modernise its armed forces. His solution: involve the private industrial sector in defence manufacturing.

Three of the chapters on Pakistan hark back to the time of Nawaz Sharif as prime minister, one looking at Mr Sharif's New Industrial Policy, the 25-point Reform for the Financial Sector, and the Indus Water Accord, another at his economic liberalisation programme, and a third at Pakistan's search for a "Muslim international order".

The central point in Ranjan Mahan's study of the communal aspect of India-Pakistan relations is that the crisis of Pakistan's cultural identity stands in the way of better relations. He believes that a more secular Pakistan and a mutual commitment for improving the communal situation are prerequisites for healthier ties between the two countries.

Nepal's transition to multi-party democracy is presented by R.S. Chauhan and B.C. Upreti, who note that the internal cleavages within the Nepali Congress Party (this, at least, is a subject that continues to be relevant) indicate the birth pangs of democracy in Nepal. Nirmala Agarwal provides an adequate overview of the 1989 trade and transit deadlock that marked the low point of Indo-Nepal relations. On Sri Lanka, Krishan Gopal details the Tamil secessionist movement as well as the IPKF adventure, and Olive Peacock writes about the Burghers and the Moors.

The book promises a lot as it endeavours to combine internal developments with external relations in each of the South Asian states covered. However, the book is short on delivery. By and large, the articles are under-researched, and rely too much on newspaper reports. There are few citations of primary sources and the editing is shoddy. The token chapter of SAARC was best left out.

One of the problems in publishing seminar papers in book form is that they read heavily and date easily. It is not very useful to deliver a book on geopolitics when everything that is written stops in 1992-93, and the editors make no effort to provide updates. South Asia is being served rather poorly if even a book dedicated to the region cannot do more than this.

S.N. Varma is a university professor in Delhi.

DEPARTURE

Razia Bhatti, Rita Sebastian

Two South Asian women journalists who set new standards of professionalism and lived courageous lives died in March.

Razia Bhatti, trail-blazing Pakistani editor, died of a brain haemorrhage in Karachi on 12 March. Veteran Sri Lankan journalist Rita Sebastian died on 29 March in Colombo after a brief illness.

Both were women with solid professional credentials, both survived threats and regularly put their lives at risk, both went beyond the day-to-day of journalism to try to bring people to their senses amidst the anarchy and carnage in their two cities: Karachi and Colombo.

Rita Sebastian was a fearless reporter and editor who lived through the darkest days of Sri Lanka's civil war and violence, always working to the high professional standards that she set for herself even in the most trying of times.

Razia Bhatti was at the height of her career as the editor of *Newsline*. Armed only with her insight, sense of balance, and powerful writing style, she took on political bullies and social injustices with a courage few could match. She was respected even by the adversaries she so mercilessly exposed in the face of, literally, death-defying odds.

For all her reputation as a crusading editor, there was nothing intimidating about the mild-mannered Ms Bhatti: no condescension, arrogance, weight-throwing or bombast. Instead, there was an almost dreamy calmness, and a willingness to listen.

When she left the popular *Herald* magazine in mid-1988 following differences with the management, almost the entire editorial staff left with her to start the monthly *Newsline*, a unique magazine, which was owned by the journalists who wrote for it.

In the award-winning *Newsline*, Ms Bhatti ensured extensive coverage of issues that are often sidelined by editors: literacy, population, education, health, environment, crime, violence, child abuse, women's rights, corruption, human rights and religious persecution.

In 1994, the International Women's Media Foundation in New York awarded her the Courage in Journalism Award, citing Ms Bhatti as "a courageous editor who set standards in journalism by breaking taboos and transgressing limits imposed on freedom of expression, not only by authoritarian regimes but also a very conservative society".

At home, Ms Bhatti was a woman of few words. She saved her insights for her editorials, fearless darts which invited the wrath of governments, including the present one. Other publications far more powerful than *Newsline* allowed themselves to be intimidated by the government or Karachi's warlords, but Ms Bhatti would not be cowed.

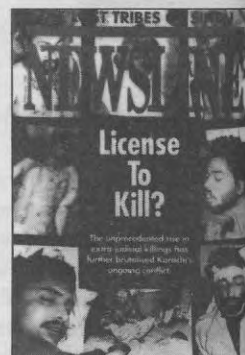
"If the bloodshed in Karachi has proved anything conclusively, it is that violence never comes without a price," Ms Bhatti warned in her last editorial.

Like Razia Bhatti, Rita Sebastian had to deal with the violence and terror of Sri Lanka's twin insurgencies: the Tamil separatist war in the north and the JVP insurgency in the south.

Ms Sebastian's fluency in Sinhala and Tamil made her a versatile reporter, much sought after by international news organisations for coverage of the conflicts. Even as the wars polarised society and



Razia Bhatti and her last issue



tore at Sri Lanka's socio-political fabric, Ms Sebastian refused to be drawn into taking sides. She often said that there is just too much bad blood in Sri Lanka for violence to be the answer: either by the rebels or the government.

Her moderate approach made Ms Sebastian unpopular with extremists on all sides. She was often caught in the crossfire—sometimes literally as she dodged bullets from Tamil Tiger guerrillas and government helicopter gunships while covering the frontlines.

She covered some of the most appalling massacres, mind-numbing bombings, and horrific assassinations (often of people she knew well) with a deep reservoir of personal fortitude and compassion.

Even as her editors demanded antiseptic detachment and "objectivity" in writing about the events around her, Ms Sebastian was always deeply troubled by the bloodshed that had engulfed her beloved homeland. Overcoming a bout with cancer three years ago, she continued to "file" and live by her strong code of personal ethics, decency and morality.

After her studies in London, Ms Sebastian became the first woman to edit the *Sunday Times* newspaper in Colombo. Since 1989, she had served as Sri Lanka correspondent for Inter Press Service, the *Indian Express* and *Kyodo*.

Razia Bhatti and Rita Sebastian. Their work will live on.

-Beena Sarwar, Kunda Dixit



Rita Sebastian (with glasses) alighting from IPKF chopper in Jaffna



AJIT NINAN

- * Is the world passing you by? Do you feel left out by international magazines that treat South Asia as a periphery?
- * As a thinking South Asian, are you frustrated to be better informed about the Gulf and East Asia than about your own neighbourhood?

- * Does your staple newsweekly give you a blow-by-blow account of China's economic reforms, but blank out India?
- * Do you miss a South Asian perspective on events and trends? When was the last time you read about the smaller South Asians: Bhutan, the Maldives or Nepal?

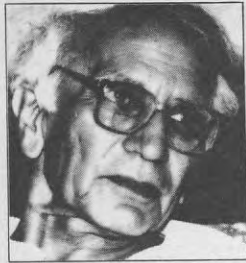
This region of 1.3 billion people—stretching in an arc from Afghanistan to Burma—needs a common voice, even to listen to itself. Southern Asia is a zone of great cultures, varied geography and close historical affinity. Yet, neighbours barely talk to each other.

Petty nationalism and short-term geopolitics have kept South Asians apart, and hindered progress. By highlighting rifts, an insular press has reinforced prejudice.

South Asia falls in the media blind spot between international newsweeklies and Hong Kong-based magazines preoccupied with Pacific Asia.

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The prescription of nationalism which brought wealth and dignity to the imperial nations failed to produce for the countries of South Asia.

by Mubashir Hasan

Caught in the Nationalist Web

They were all staunch nationalists: Gandhi and Jinnah, their seniors Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta, Syed Ahmad Khan, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and their juniors, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, Liaquat Ali, to name but a few of the galaxy of leaders from three generations of freedom fighters.

In their appreciation of the ideology of nationalism, they demanded self-determination for India, first in dominion status and then complete independence. They really believed that once India achieved freedom, all its problems would be solved. India would be rid of oppression and injustice and would become a strong and prosperous country.

The training grounds of many of South Asia's founding fathers were the institutions of higher learning in Britain, where they found a civilisation very different from their own. As they read and travelled, they discovered that the lands of Europe and North America were divided into countries, each inhabited by a nation. The polities were structured and organised as nation-states. They also learned that Western nations were politically powerful, technologically advanced, and far more prosperous than their country.

The young students from India learned that elected parliaments governed the nation-states. Elections were regularly held, after which new governments were formed without strife or turmoil. The system of governance was called democracy. It was depicted as government of the people, by the people, for the people.

There was rule of law. Compared to the centuries gone by, there was considerable individual freedom. "Liberty, Equality, Fra-

ternity" was the motto bestowed to the peoples of Europe by the French Revolution. People with equal money were equal. And, but for the war in Crimea and a relatively brief German attack on France in the 1870s, Europe had enjoyed a long era of peace following the Napoleonic wars.

They also learnt that every nation of the West had strong faith in its superiority over other nations. Its inhabitants were no longer subject to the arbitrary rule of a lord or a king. They had become citizens, and, as citizens, acquired rights that were enforceable through courts of law.

Under this social contract, the citizens owed highest loyalty to their nation-state,

"National armies fought national wars, claimed national victories and produced national martyrs."

where they lived and for which they were prepared to die. They were nationalists. The nation-state considered itself sovereign. It could do no wrong. It was answerable to none. The young students had arrived in Europe at the height of the era of nationalism—a powerful driving force. Dedication to the principles of nationalism was akin to a political religion.

Patriots but Poor

Half a century has elapsed since the achievement of independence. To the dismay of a billion-plus people, the prescription of nationalism that had brought wealth, prosper-

ity, power, creativity and dignity to the industrialising imperial nations of Europe and America has failed to produce the same results in South Asia.

We, the peoples of the Subcontinent, did become intensely nationalist, but we have remained poor, backward, illiterate and ill-nourished. We pay lip service to the concepts of liberty, equality and fraternity. Our individual constitutions guarantee all the liberties enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, our ruling elites and governments continue to act in a highly authoritarian manner. Inequalities abound in our polities. We remain in the grip of the hydra-headed monster of religious, ethnic, and racial intolerance.

Above all, we remain imperial, ever ready to use force to suppress and oppress racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups demanding liberty, autonomy, self-determination, or independence from the clutches of our highly centralised and exploitative administrations in New Delhi, Islamabad, Dhaka and Colombo.

What went wrong? Why did the ideology of nationalism not deliver the same results in terms of progress and prosperity in the Subcontinent as it did in Europe, North America and Japan?

Why has the ideology of nationalism in the Subcontinent proved to be a hindrance rather than a vehicle for peace and progress? India and Pakistan fought three wars in support of their national cause, but both sides incurred huge losses rather than make any gain. Separatist and secessionist tendencies have cropped up all over South Asia, and the achievement of nationhood seems only to have opened the way for claims for the creation of further nation-states.

A Matter of Faith

The ideology of nationalism that took root in Europe and North America two centuries



Liberté, égalité, fraternité in South Asia (with a bow to Delacroix)

ago developed along the medieval Christian Church model. It emerged as a religion in form and content. The religion of yester-years became a matter of personal faith. In this manner, nationalist faith took over the secular domain. The nation-state replaced the church in claiming the highest loyalty and devotion for political, social, economic and cultural questions.

National constitutions acquired the sanctity of sacred texts. National heroes emerged more easily than religious saints used to in the old days. An eruption of nationalism followed in the form of great national causes, national destiny, national will, national honour, national struggles, national days, national pride, national culture, national language and national dress. National armies fought national wars, claimed national victories and produced national martyrs.

By completely swallowing the ideology of nationalism that had developed in the imperial nations of the West, the nations of South Asia stumbled on three major counts:

1. The ideology of nationalism carried the deadly virus of national superiority. Infected by it, every nation came to believe, as a matter of faith, in its superiority over all other nations.
2. The ideology of nationalism had a built-in imperial component. Territorial boundaries became sacrosanct, no matter how immorally or unjustly the domain had been established, and it was the right, even the duty, of every nation to wage wars and extend its territory.
3. The ideology of nationalism failed to define the underlying criteria for a group of people to be correctly called a nation. Was it race, language, ethnicity, religion, culture or the accidents of history in the immediate past that outlined its present political boundaries?

The intelligentsia of South Asian countries need to rethink the phenomenon of nationalism, study the havoc it has wrought all over the world during the last two centuries, and evolve an ideology of a new kind of nationalism.

M. Hasan, former Finance Minister of Pakistan, is a Council Member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Chairman of the Independent Planning Commission, and founding member of the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy.



Amidst all the chaos of political violence, Sri Lanka is engaged in fashioning a workable system of regional self-government which will interest the other South Asians.

by Neelan Tiruchelvam

Revolution to Devolution

dev.o.lu.tion (dēvə-lōō'shən) *n.*

1. A passing down through successive stages. 2. The passing to a successor of anything, such as properties, rights, and qualities. 3. A delegating of authorities or duties to a subordinate or substitute. 4. Biological degeneration, as distinguished from evolution. (*The American Heritage Dictionary*)

Leonard Woolf, a literary critic and publisher, a colonial civil servant in Ceylon from 1904 to 1911, served both in Jaffna in the extreme north and in Hambantota in the deep south. Many years later in 1938, as an adviser to the Labour Party, he reflected on the questions of minority protection and constitutional reform.

Woolf argued in favour of a constitutional arrangement that ensured a large measure of devolution, or the introduction of a federal system on the Swiss model. Woolf said, "The Swiss federal canton system had proved extraordinarily successful under circumstances very similar to those in Ceylon, i.e. the coexistence in a single democratic state of communities of very different sizes, sharply distinguished from one another by race, language and religion."

Despite the foresight of Woolf almost six decades ago, Sri Lanka's failure to lay down the constitutional foundations of a multi-ethnic society based on equality, ethnic pluralism, and the sharing of power has exacerbated the ethnic conflict. Consequently, the country has been besieged for years by ethnic fratricide and political violence. The proposals of 3 August 1995 presented by President Chandrika Kumaratunga represented the boldest at-

tempt to redress the imbalance in the relationship among different ethnic groups, through devolution of power to the regions. Among other things, the proposals would grant Sinhala and Tamil equal status as official languages, and would create eight or nine regional councils through which the Tamil and Muslim minorities would have more self-government than before.

The legal text of the chapter on devolution released by the government on 16 January 1996 is a further step in constitutional reform. Within the Parliament's Select Committee on Constitutional Reform, the debate will now focus on the continuities and discontinuities between the August proposals and the more recent legal text. The continuities are seen in the definition of the nature of the state, the political structures of the devolved units, and the subjects and functions devolved. However, some Tamil political parties have complained of a tilt in favour of the Centre in relation to the powers of dissolution, in the distribution of police powers, and in areas such as irrigation. The unit of devolution would remain the most contentious issue, but this is an issue that is likely to be addressed if a consensus is forged on the substance of devolution.

The position of the United National Party would be a critical factor to securing the required two-third majority in Parliament to push through the devolution package. A further hurdle is a national referendum that needs to be conducted throughout the island. If, however, the two major southern political parties, UNP and the People's Alliance, are supportive, there are realistic prospects of success at the referendum.

Centre and Province

One of the limitations of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, which provided the basis for the Provincial Council scheme introduced in 1988, was that while it called for a re-definition of the Sri Lankan polity, the Accord did not bring about a change in the unitary character of the Sri Lankan state. It did declare that Sri Lanka was a multiethnic, multilingual plural society consisting primarily of four main ethnic groups — Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers — but the Accord envisaged no change in Section 2 of the Sri Lankan Constitution which entrenched the unitary state. It is this conception of the unitary state which has always influenced the outlook of the bureaucracy as well as the judiciary when it comes to centre-provincial disputes.

Various disingenuous methods have been employed down through the years to retain powers in the Centre, particularly in the areas of transportation, agrarian services and education. The 3 August proposals, however, drawing on the language of the Indian Constitution, define the nature of the state as a "union of regions". Sri Lanka is further described as a "united and sovereign Republic".

In the present legal text, there is a reworking of the language without any attempt to alter the substantial impact of this provision. The Republic of Sri Lanka is now described as an "indissoluble Union of Regions", using an archaic phrase drawn from the Australian Constitution. This framework was necessary to ensure that exclusive legislative and executive competence could be assigned to the regions within the devolved sphere.

With regard to the subjects and functions to be devolved on the regions, most that were previously in the concurrent list are to be transferred to the regional list. These include the ability to form policy on education and health, industry, agriculture, irrigation, fisheries, transport, energy, roads,

waterways, housing, construction and broadcasting. This would significantly strengthen the capacity of the devolved authorities to adopt an integrated approach to social and economic development of their regions and thereby seek to redress regional disparities in development.

Devolution of powers in relation to land has been a contentious issue. The legal text of January makes it clear that state land shall vest in the region and the regional administration shall be entitled to transfer or alienate land and engage in land use and land settlement schemes. The Centre may, however, for the purposes of a reserved subject, request a regional administration to transfer state land to the Centre.

There is an obligation of the Centre to consult the region about such requirements. The legal text also provides that inter-regional irrigation projects where the command area falls within two or more regions would be the responsibility of the Centre. This provision is also found in the Provincial Council scheme, although the selection of allottees and the alienation of land under such schemes were within the powers of the Provincial Council. This matter requires further clarification.

Law and order have been assigned to the regions, although there are disputes as to whether the investigation of offences relating to the reserved list of subjects should

be vested with the regional or national police service.

An innovative arrangement envisaged by the scheme for the settlement of inter-regional disputes is the Chief Ministers' Conference. With the chief ministers of all regions as members, the CMC would have the power to take actions and measures necessary to ensure full compliance with the chapter on devolution, in accordance with the spirit and intention of the Constitution. The Conference would have the authority to settle disputes between the regions through mediation and conciliation, and where such efforts fail, to refer the matter for adjudication to an arbitral tribunal constituted by the disputing Regional Councils. If the Conference is to play an effective role, however, it must be given jurisdiction over Centre-regional disputes as well.

Clearly, the government sees the devolution proposals as the answer to the pressing national question. For this to happen, the January legal text needs to be further refined and strengthened so that it adequately reconciles the competing interests of the centre and the regions.

In the final analysis, any constitutional reform exercise must also be part of the overall effort to end the war in the North-east. Several groups have already urged the Chandrika Government to, directly or through an intermediary, present the devo-

lution proposal to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, and to try to revive the process of negotiations.

With the legacy of distrust that exists, this process is likely to be complex. To begin with, consensus between the two major political parties on the power-sharing scheme would advance the process of peace and reconciliation.

N. Tiruchelvam is a jurist, long-time activist, and member of the Sri Lankan Parliament as well as its Select Committee on Constitutional Reform.

Next on Himal South Asia

(May 1996 Issue)



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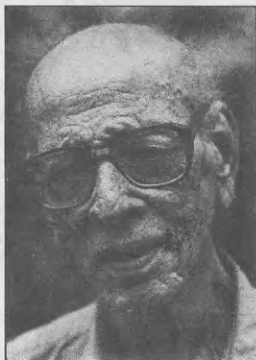
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How should a tiny South Asian state look upon a giant neighbour? Well, in the newly globalised world, as a **marketing opportunity**. King Jigme Singye Wangchuk said so. Already, Drukyl exports jam, jelly, squash, lotteries, plyboard and electricity to India. Said the king to *The Indian Express*, "We don't look upon India's size with any suspicion. We look upon the 900 million population of India as an advantage. It is a big market for anything we produce." Listen in, Adam Smith.

M. Krishnan, naturalist, photographer, and writer of the fortnightly "**Country Notebook**" in *The Statesman* since 1950, died on 18 February at 83. The dour Mr Krishnan, as one obituarist noted, was "an old-style naturalist rather than a new-style ecologist" who did not go with the scier tific fashions and never sought patronage. Rather than write eloquent photo-spreads in glossy journals about exotic creatures such as the snow leopard, he stuck resolutely to the everyday offerings of peninsular India. His signatures were the black and white images with which he always began his *Statesman* columns, followed by use of spare language on subjects such as the common crow, the neighbourhood jackal, or the rhesus monkey. A man and a column to be missed.



The North West Frontier Province cabinet has decided to do away with both **whipping** and keeping prisoners in **fetters**, reports *Dawn*, and we are glad. But there is a distance between the cup and the mouth, in Pakistan as elsewhere. A month ago, at Lahore's incredibly swanky Press Club, *Chhetria Patrakar* came across a photograph on exhibition, where the flash reveals a naked man bound hand and foot and hung from a pole with three policemen standing by. Human degradation continues despite laws, it seems, and there are courageous news photographers in Pakistan.

The *Express Magazine* has exposed the shameful victimisation of two Maldivian women by Indian security agencies under what is known as the "**ISRO spy scandal**". The report reveals that Mariam Rasheeda and Fauzia Hassan were falsely implicated in a case of espionage, used as "honey traps" set by Pakistani, Dutch and Korean

interests to lure scientists from the Indian Space Research Organisation. The CBI, which took over the case after it was sensationalised by the Kerala police and the Intelligence Bureau, says there was no story. The sister agencies had goofed up. Mariam Rasheeda told the magazine, "The Indian newspapers have written all sorts of bad things about me. But in Male we do not have a single, not a single prostitute." For all the hoopla when the story first broke, there is not much coverage in the press once the fiasco was laid bare.

You can bet your bottom taka that for *Chhetria Patrakar* it will be a long **crusade for the differentiation of ASEAN and ASIA**. How do perfectly intelligent people, world leaders, chief editors, senior diplomats, insist on calling Southeast Asia, Asia, when as clear as Adams peak on a sunny day you know that there is also South Asia right there in the middle? The Europe-Asia Summit which met in Bangkok last month — was a summit between *East Asians* and Europe, right? Take a look at the latest *Far Eastern Economic Review*

cover story on the overwhelming use of English in Asia, and *Asiaweek's* a few issues before that on 20 "Asian" something or the other. Someone please these guys that their Asia is only 'ASEA'.

In the Dhaka *Independent's* **Eid-ul-Fitr** supplement, former ambassador Ahmed Farid was engaged in a tirade against Western media, which he said was engaged in "destabilising Muslim societies and bludgeoning their members into psychological submission." The coverage by the press and electronic media was "carefully manipulated to black out the Muslim version". Halftruths and downright falsehood are dished out to prejudice world opinion. "This media domination is invisible and extremely subtle. It is beyond the capability of the Muslim side to match this Goebbelsian avalanche of propaganda." *Chhetria Patrakar* cannot go along with the theory of a worldwide con-

spiracy, however, and will await Mr Farid's book, on the subject "Islamic resurgence and the media", to see if he has anything more to offer.

Mad Cows and Bangladesh—there is a link according to a email notice that just arrived. "Scientists have postulated a link between the ongoing political crisis in the South Asian country of Bangladesh and the epidemic of mad cow disease in Britain. The disease in both cattle and humans is a degenerative disorder and in humans leads to a protracted period of irrational behaviour." The point is that there is a link between British exports of cattle and Bangladesh's tailspin into chaos and who's been been eating what. A vicious rumour, no doubt, and we will not believe it.

A Harley Davidson, and, half a bosom showing, a woman clad in leathers with cigar in hand—this is what Living Media Inc. has decided is the need of the hour for *apna Bharat* to remain *mahan*. All of the above are to be found on the cover of the first *India Today Plus*, a quarterly meant to titillate you into forking over IRS 75 for

a few pages of glossy fluff. After starting a children's magazine, opening an art gallery, and a classical music company, Living Media seems to have decided to live it up by going, what I firmly believe is down-market. Perhaps they had no choice but to take the low road, with *Outlook*, the upstart edited by Vinod Mehta, going in for Indian nudes. By the way, can one define nudes by nationality like Indian miniatures?

A magazine arrived at Chhetria Patrakar's desk, *SAARC News*, inaugural issue dated 1 March 1996. All very well and good, with "**SAARC Salient Features**", Bhutan as "The Land of Thunder", and Maldives as "The Islands in the Making". But the map-making department needs to, well, take a good look at a map. Presented alongside, the magazine's rendering of Nepal (a malformed butterfly), Maldives (dots), Bangladesh (sans coastal belt and CHT) and India (which has lost its chicken-neck to the Northeast).

-*Chhetria Patrakar*



The SAARCONOMY section contains a short commentary on regional economic issues or trends, as well as basic financial statistics from five countries of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Given the impact any upheaval in the Indian political economy has on the rest of South Asia, we also include in this Saarconomy edition reviews of the Economic Survey of 1995-96 brought out by the P.V. Narasimha Rao government, and of the state of liberalisation in India.

Believing the Economic Survey 1995-96

by Mukul

THE ECONOMIC Survey brought out annually by the Government of India is normally seen as a state-of-the-nation report that provides the background to the fiscal strategy being pursued over the next financial year. But the Economic Survey 1995-96 is not a report of projected economic performance over the coming year, but an aggressive self-assessment.

In summarising the four-and-a-half-year track record of P.V. Narasimha Rao and his finance minister, Manmohan Singh, the survey argues that the "economic reform" has been successful not merely in speedily turning around an economy in deep crisis, but also in putting it on a high and sustainable growth path.

It should come as no surprise that a corruption-tainted Government, beleaguered by a volatile rupee, sharply declining reserves and a sluggish stock market, and facing an election to boot, is likely to resort to a subjective and rose-tinted assessment of its performance.

In the introduction to its Macroeconomic Overview, the Survey states: "Growth of GDP at factor cost, which had fallen to a mere 0.8 percent in the crisis year 1992-93 recovered within a year to reach 5.1 percent in 1993-94. This represents one of the fastest economic recoveries from a macroeconomic crisis." The Survey goes on to argue that economic reform is now delivering both sustainable growth and poverty alleviation.

Despite a relatively high rate of growth,

it says, inflation is down to 5 percent. Total foreign investment flows, direct and portfolio, have risen sharply to USD 4.11 billion in 1993-94 and further to USD 4.89 billion in 1994-95. Thus, there is a rise in foreign currency reserves. The fall-out of this sustainable growth has been a sharp rise in employment generation and, of course, a decline in the poverty ratio from 25.5 percent in 1987-88 to 19 percent in 1993-94.

Several economists and commentators have already pointed out the series of misstatements and wild claims that the Survey resorts to. First, imports are rising rapidly, so that despite a significant devaluation-induced rise in exports, the trade deficit which had crossed the USD 4 billion mark by January is likely to hover around USD 5 billion at the end of 1996. Second, to finance this deficit and its consequences for the value of the rupee, the Government, in just over 10 months, has had to use up USD 4.5 billion of the foreign exchange reserves, which went down from USD 20.9 billion at the end of March 1995 to USD 16.3 billion by end of January 1996. Third, though the doctored inflation figures point to a collapse of the point-to-point inflation rate, retail prices maintain their

relatively high rates of post-reform increase. Not surprisingly, the consumer price indices for industrial workers and agricultural labourers do not reflect at all the so-called success on the inflation front, which is running in double digits.

The segment of the Economic Survey which speaks of the agenda for the coming year is also significant. There are three elements here: it accepts that the current level of the fiscal deficit is "unsustainable", so that a sharp reduction in the same in the coming years is inevitable; it says that the principal way in which the deficit

should be reduced is through the sale of public sector equity and assets; third, it calls for accelerating the process of liberalising and opening the Indian economy in a variety of areas. These are, of course, statements to satisfy the demands of IMF and other international finance institutions, which are both worried by the "inadequate" pace

of reforms and the uncertainties being generated by the changing political scenario.

The Economic Survey 1995-96 ends up as an attempt to please the voter by Mr Rao's government. However, the government's weakness and vulnerability increases its dependence on "investor confidence" and the international financial institutions' ability to help sustain that confidence. Meanwhile, these finance institutions, partners in subterfuge as they are, do understand the rough-and-tumble of Indian electoral politics, and will turn a blind eye to the claims of the Economic Survey 1995-96, as long as New Delhi does not deviate from the path that they have decreed. But whether the people of India will be as indulgent, will be seen in the near future.

Mukul is with The Navbharat Times in Delhi.



Liberalisation Only in Name

by Brij Khindaria

AFTER MORE than four decades of following the socialist and mixed economy models, India's political economy entered uncharted waters after the country reached the edge of bankruptcy in 1991. At that time, Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Finance Minister Manmohan Singh initiated the process of economic reform which will now doubtless be affected by the outcome of the forthcoming general elections.

The process has been erroneously described both by the Rao regime and various commentators as market-oriented liberalisation based upon the model set by the United States and, to a lesser extent, by Western Europe. In line with this description, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as many Western and Indian analysts, are attempting to chart a course for India based on the Western experience. Others have tried to draw lessons from the experiences of the Southeast Asian tigers and China, which began serious economic liberalisation programmes in the mid-1970s, well ahead of India.

But what India is doing is unlike anything done before in any nation. It is trying to graft a modern 21st-century market economy upon a population which remains illiterate or semi-literate except for an upper crust of about 10 percent, and an infrastructure which can be described as backward at best. How India handles this experiment and emerges from it will be of particular interest to other countries in the region.

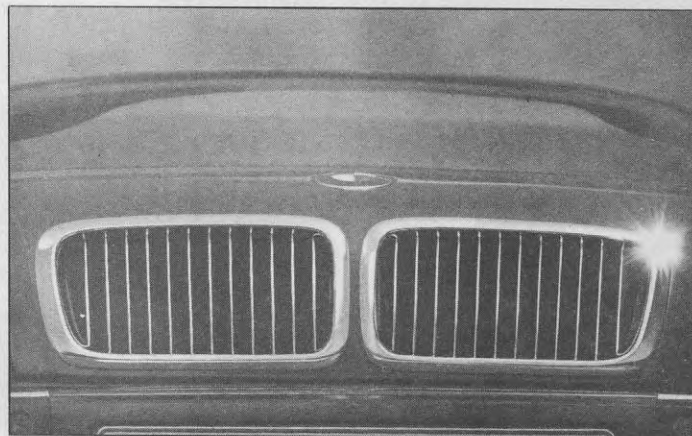
India's politics and economy mirror the rotten conditions found generally in the region; the only difference is that, in India, it is on a grander scale: corruption, nepotism, mud-slinging, misuse of legal fora, inefficiency and uninterrupted political infighting. Big business buys the political influence needed to capture domestic markets to make profits from goods in scarce supply, without investing in research and develop-

ment or finding new ways to provide improved goods or services to consumers.

In India, economic reform, liberalisation and market-orientation have meant little more than the removal of irrational and constricting rules to facilitate the import of new generations of technologies. All that

The economics of scarcity is simply being played out at a higher level of price and quality.

has been done so far is to use the liberalised atmosphere to produce goods that were previously imported illegally or at huge cost. These goods are now made locally by



A BMW grill looks nice on any economy, don't you think?

indigenous firms working in collaboration with foreign counterparts from whom those goods were previously imported. No skills are acquired and neither is research and development done to independently produce goods and services of standards capable of competing in the international market.

Liberalisation, thus, is being used only to upgrade the range of goods and services offered in the local market place. The economics of scarcity is simply being played out at a higher level of price and quality. In a world economy where the shelf-life of

both products and series is measured in months, India is bound to again fall behind within two or three years once the technologies being imported at present become obsolete.

It is wishful thinking that the country will be able to afford the import of latest generation technology without indigenously developing technology-intensive and higher value-added products and services for export. Genuine market orientation facilitates such indigenous developments because it encourages competition. A simple process of lifting constraints for competition among foreign goods made in India and not of producing goods capable of competing internationally is far from enough.

There is much pride in India that Mercedeses, BMWs, Opels and Toyotas will now be made locally. But all of those products were developed to serve the consumers of countries that have nothing to do with India and who live in societies and environments completely different from those of Indian consumers. There is no merit in simply transplanting products and services. The goods and services relevant to Western cultures and economies cannot be introduced in India without modification.

What is happening in India is far indeed from market-orientation or competition-based economic reform. So far, India has simply dabbled in dismantling onerous regulations which have in the past enriched big business and politicians. Deregulation has been egalitarian to the extent that it has widened the scope of enrichment. Medium-sized local companies can now aspire for large profits and small-time politicians can also hope to have bank accounts in Switzerland, Jersey and the Bahamas.

But even before this hazardous experiment finds its feet, it faces the threat of being unravelled by the elections in India, especially if they result, as is very likely, in a prolonged period of political uncertainty arising from a weak government at the Centre. Against this backdrop, a retreat into governance by politicians, big business and Indian mafiosi will deal a heavy blow to hopes for genuine political and economic reforms. The true victims and sufferers of such a retreat will be India's long-suffering people.

B. Khindaria is an economist presently based in Europe.

Black and White Money

TWO MONTHS ago, the Hawala took politicians by surprise in India and raised certain fundamental questions regarding the incestuous association between national-level politicians and the businessmen who have been holding the reins of the Indian economy. The Supreme Court's directives to the Central Bureau of Investigation is the start, hopefully, of a much-needed drive against a rot that everyone knows exists but which has flourished unhindered thus far. The overall economic implications of such a drive is to make the Indian economy more transparent, efficient and productive. To that extent, the decision handed down by the justices is a positive economic step.

If the politics and economies of South Asia were more inter-linked, the repercussions

of Hawala would have travelled swiftly to all other capitals. As things stand, however, commentators in each of India's neighbours seem content to draw parallels and leave it at that. It is clear that none of these polities are ready, as India seems to be, to dip into the cesspool. In Karachi as in Kathmandu, they would rather pinch their noses and look away in a show of distaste.

Fingers have been raised at the prime minister of Pakistan relating to business connections of her husband, the former prime minister of Nepal, Girija Prasad Koirala, is in a tangle relating to the national flag carrier, and Gen Ershad is still fighting cases in Bangladesh for massive fraud. Nowhere, however, have things been as open and relatively transparent as in India, which

speaks of a good prognosis. While India as a whole might be lagging on entrepreneurial fire, compared to China, the predictability and quality of its judiciary is one of the things that puts it in good stead versus that other Asian colossus. Hawala will benefit, not harm India in the long run.

The Hawala racket is essentially about the ill-gotten, tax-free, unreported "black money" that exists in abundance in all South Asian countries and practically runs a parallel economy in them. This black money is generated with the blessings of the politicians, who end up feeding in the same trough as partial beneficiaries. Politicians and political parties have always made money by protecting industries during the so-called socialist era, and by pushing MNCs and other bidders in the liberalised era.

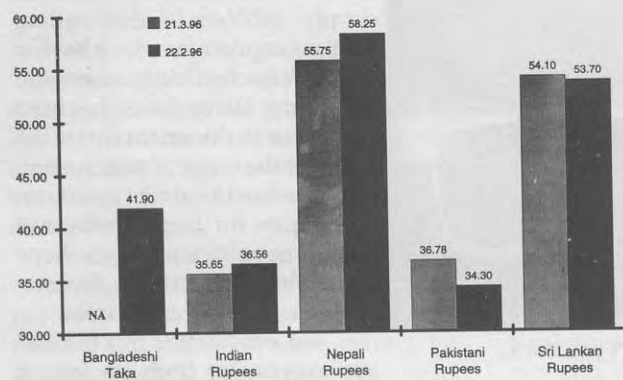
Hawala was really a way to finance political expenditure. Something which is an open secret is being pushed behind a Gandhian veil that everyone sees through. It has become necessary to find a means to formalise these expenses. Though state-funded politics would be a dream, contributions to a certain extent should be openly allowed. The underlying understanding behind this idea should be that the cost of black money to the economy is higher than the cost of white money.

- *Sujeev Shakya*

STOCK EXCHANGE INDICATORS ▲ ▼

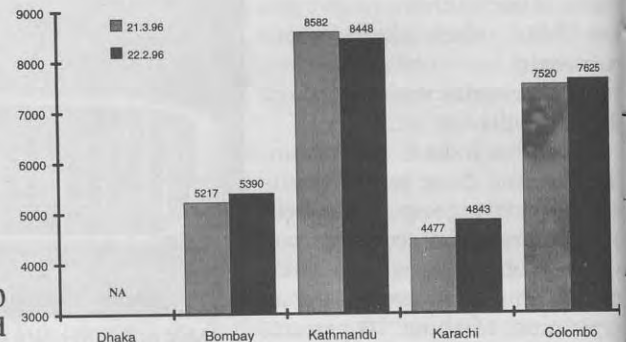
↓ (-208.55)	↑ +30.83		↓ (-234.21)	↓ (-2.23)
3291.93	-688.13	NA	1581.79	193.57
BOMBAY	COLOMBO	DHAKA	KARACHI	KATHMANDU
BSE SENSEX	COMPOSITE CSE	DSE INDEX	KSE 100 INDEX	NEPSE

As of 21 March '96 compared with 22 February '96.



Price of a Dollar

Price of 10 Grams of Gold (in local currency)



KEY ECONOMIC INDICATORS

	GNP USD b	GNP per capita USD	GDP (PPP) per capita USD	INFLATION %	HDI RANK (Human Development Index)	PRIME LENDING Rates (%)
BANGLADESH	24.80	220	1230	7	146	14
INDIA	274.20	300	1230	8	134	15
NEPAL	3.40	190	1170	8	151	15
PAKISTAN	54.30	440	2890	10	128	16
SRI LANKA	9.90	540	2850	11	97	14



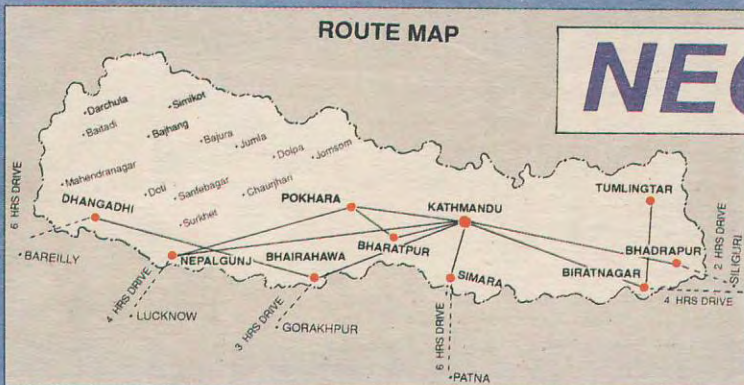
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A Russian-built Antonov biplane which flew briefly with Royal Nepal Airlines in the 1960s

PUSHPAKS TO DAKOTAS

WHILE SOME OF you might have heard stories of a flying machine known as *pushpak biman* flying the Subcontinental skies in ancient times (Ram, Sita and Laxman are said to have used one on the return leg from Lanka), all scientific evidence suggests that powered flight is a 20th century invention. The propulsion systems, material for airframes, and electrical advances required for heavier-than-air flying just were not available back then.

Like photography, railroads and the motor car, airplanes too were discoveries of the West. It is generally agreed that flying was invented by two American bicycle mechanic brothers who wanted to more than wheel along. The first planes to cross South Asian skies were flown in by the British colonists, some years after Orville and Wilbur Wright perfected their flying machine in 1903 and test flew it on the hill of Kitty Hawk.

The first planes were made up of wire, wood and fabric. In order to maximise the wing area required to lift the airplane into the air, they had two wings, one above and the other below the fuselage, which was why they were called biplanes.

As often happens, it is the demands of the military that push development of advanced technology, and this was true of air travel as well. The need to dominate the skies led the warring sides in both the First and Second World Wars to develop

fighting flying machines.

In South Asia, some interesting things happened in between the wars. There was, for example, the eccentric Englishman who in 1937 had a novel idea on how to climb Mount Everest — crash land on to the side of the mountain somewhere above 25,000 feet, and then walk up to the summit. However, his plane was confiscated in Bombay on his way in, and the crazy plan could not be carried out. (He did disguise himself as a Tibetan and get to Everest, but only to die on its slopes.)

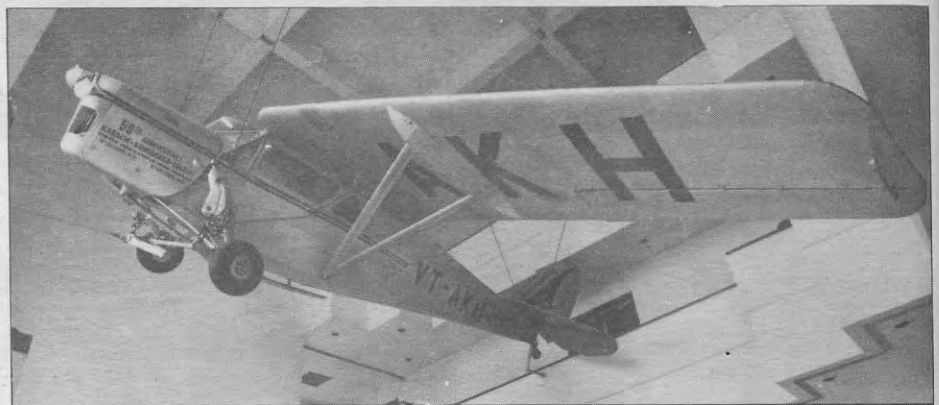
Carrying mail was one of the first tasks of airplanes, and our region saw the inaugural mail service when J.R.D. Tata flew a tiny Puss Moth monoplane (one wing) from Karachi to Bombay via

Ahmedabad on 11 October 1932. He commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of that pioneering flight on 11 October 1982 in a replica of the original, which is today a museum piece hanging overhead at the Aero Club of India at New Delhi's Safdarjang Airport.

Mr Tata was a scion of a famous Parsi industrial family (whose Tata trucks can be found today all over Asia and Africa). We can safely describe him as the father of South Asian civil aviation, for he went on to establish Tata Airlines, which was renamed Air India 1947. This airline is one of the most successful international airlines in the world (although its reputation has slipped a bit in recent years, especially after the Government took it over from the Tatas). Mr. Tata died two years ago, an octogenarian.

To go back to the chronology of events, the air war during 1914-1918 was mostly restricted to Europe, and it was the Second World War (1939-1945) which firmly established flying in South Asia. Swarms of fighters, bombers, and transport aircraft arrived from Europe and North America to provide defence for the Allies against the Japanese forces who were advancing up the Burma front.

The airfields of Eastern India, in particular, were full of the drone of piston engines as planes flew sorties against the enemy or transported soldiers and sup-



The Puss Moth replica flown by JRD Tata in 1982, which hangs at Safdarjang

plies to the war front. One of the largest air campaigns ever conducted was what came to be known as "flying over the hump". Airplanes, mostly Douglas DC-3s and their military cousins, C-47s, flew thousands of sorties from huge air bases in Assam, flying north over the rugged mountain terrain of the Eastern Himalaya, into Yunan in southern China. They were supplying the army of Chiang Kai Sek, who was in retreat from the Japanese invasion of the Chinese mainland.

The DC-3 (known popularly as the "Dakota") is considered one of the best designed airplanes ever, and it has seen a very successful career that continues to this day, half a century later. More Dakotas have been built than any other airplane in history, 10,150 in all.

Many of the Dakotas brought over to South Asia by the Allies stayed on after the war was over, which was how "civil aviation" (the carrying of non-military passengers) began in the Subcontinent. The first "silver bird" that the people in the far corners were to see, from the Andaman Islands to Balochistan in Pakistan's west, was, more likely than not, a Dakota. It is said the DC-3 arrived in the valley of Pokhara (in central Nepal) before the bullock cart.

In time, piston engines (which run with spark plugs much like car engines)



Old Indian Airlines DC3 with registration VT-ATU

gave way to turbo-props and jet engines, but the piston-engined Dakota continues to fly in South Asia. You can still see one of these trusty aluminum birds parked on the tarmac when you fly to Delhi's Palam airport, and the distinctive drone of a DC-3, although it is now rarely heard, is enough to make old-timers very nostalgic indeed.

In the beginning, there were quite a few small airlines in British India, many of them started by maharajas and princes, who had money on the side and the urge to fly. With Independence, however, it was thought appropriate that each country have its own "flag carrier", as a symbol

of modernisation and national pride. This was how Pakistan International Airlines, Indian Airlines, Air India and Royal Nepal Airlines were born, often through a merging of existing airlines and collection of their airplanes. Bangla Biman came later, when Bangladesh became independent in 1971.

While airplanes are a modern, convenient and safe way to travel, while discussing flying we must remember that it is still a very expensive way of travel. Only the relatively rich are able to fly, and we must not forget that most of South Asia's people travel by bus or train; if not by donkey, bullock cart, camel, and foot. △

A Hobby

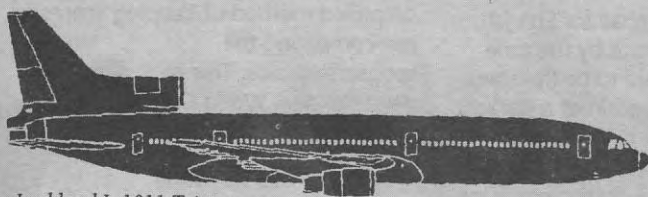
Watching airplanes is a hobby made difficult in most South Asian cities because the airports are located so far away from the city centers—Dum Dum in Calcutta, Palam in Delhi, Katunayake in Colombo, and ZIA in Dhaka. In that sense, Kathmandu is the plane-watcher's capital of South Asia because all planes are forced to circle over the valley in which the city is located before they head out. This allows the airplane buff to identify airlines and aircraft makes.

For those who have taken to "airplane watching" as a hobby, there is great satisfaction in being able to distinguish between one aircraft type from another (a McDonald Douglas DC-10 from a Lockheed L-1011 Tristar, a Boeing 767 from an

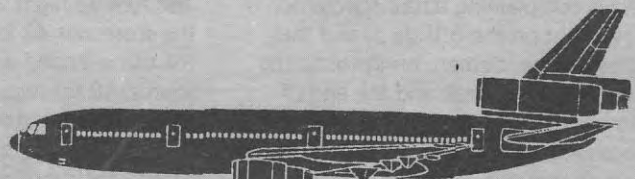
Airbus 310, a Tupolev 154 from a Boeing 727) and between airlines (the red tail of Indian Airlines from the green of Pakistan International, or the peacock motif of Air Lanka).

The surest way to recognise which country an airline belongs to, of course, is to check its registration markings, which are clearly written on the wings and on the fuselage. All aircraft registered in the United States, for example, begin with N followed by a dash and numbers and letters. In South Asia, the registration prefix is 'VT' for India, '9N' for Nepal, 'S2' for Bangladesh, 'AP' for Pakistan and '4R' for Sri Lanka.

Elsewhere, there are plane-watching clubs whose members have their eyes firmly glued to the skies and ears straining for the roar of aircraft engines. So far as we know, there is as yet no such club in any of the countries of South Asia. Maybe it is time someone started one. △



Lockheed L-1011 Tristar



McDonnell Douglas DC-10

Abominably Yours

At risk of being called a spoilsport, I want to quote Arthur (*Rendezvous with Rama*) Clarke and his controversial proclamation on Cricket. Clarke may be an American, but he is the inventor of the geo-stationary satellite so his comments cannot be taken too lightly.

Provoked by a Sri Lankan journalist who was goading the island's most famous expatriate to comment on the World Cup victory, Clarke blurted out that Cricket was "the slowest form of animal life". Predictably, the hack misquoted the sci-fi sage: "the lowest form of animal life" was what the world was told he said.

It is difficult to gauge which of the remarks is actually more insulting to Cricket as an institution. The question of whether the game is "slow" or "low" is academic when the sport has taken on a religious dimension, and both adjectives are equally blasphemous. When the Clarke remark found its way out of the Colombo press, Cricket fundamentalists across South Asia took offence. Flush with victory themselves, many Sri Lankans demanded a *fatwa*: send Clarke into low-earth orbit.

Be that as it may, the writer of *2001: A Space Odyssey* does have a point. The game is named after a locust-like insect, and listening to a Cricket test on the radio does sound a lot like the running commentary of Winston Churchill's funeral. Compare the two:

Radio narrator in hushed

monotone: "The gun-carriage now approaches Ludgate Hill. Cannons boom solemnly in the background. Lady Churchill, heavily veiled, accompanies kings, presidents, heads of states and ambassadors from 97 countries... (voice-over of Churchill's recorded speech) '...never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few...'"

Cricket commentary in gruff mono-

tone: "Now that the stadium lights are back to full intensity, Shane Warne can now complete his fifth over, his first maiden ... no he will have to wait as de Silva is complaining about spectator movement on the offside ... and that, ladies and gentlemen, brings us to the fifteenth drink break and the end of another exciting over in which no one scored any runs. It looked for a moment there that match referee Clive Lloyd had nodded off, but no, he is, yes, he is looking at his watch...we don't know what is running through de Silva's mind

but he is chewing his gum slightly more nervously now than during the semifinal against India. Faroukh has now joined me in the commentator's booth. Not much out there in the wicket for the bowlers, but Faroukh, can you explain to me in clear English without mumbling what Mark Waugh is doing rubbing the cricket ball furiously on the front of his trousers? *Faroukh:* Well, ah Geoff, (mumble mumble) as you know the friction between the ball's leather and the trouser's fabric bring the



temperature of the ball to about 55 degree Celsius which is regarded as the optimum ball temperature for spinners. Yeah, and I guess he is also trying keep some of the shine on the old ball..."

See what I mean? It is not exactly American football. When an Indian Airlines flight left Bombay for Sharjah, the score was 42 for two and by the time the plane landed it was said to be (reliable source) 48 for two. The captain of a Karachi to Islamabad shuttle came over the p.a. system midflight to announce the tragedy of Pakistan's loss to India in Bangalore. (One has to wonder if the cockpit is hooked to STAR Plus on cable, and if the crew watches *Bold and the Beautiful* when Cricket is not

on.) There was hushed silence in the cabin, a dignified snuffle from the stewardess, and a muffled wail emanated from inside the cockpit.

The beauty of the World Cup was the proof it provided, once and for all, that you do not have to be physically fit to be world champion. While the tightly wound Australians polished their balls and flexed their muscles, the Sri Lankan captain leaned on his bat and flaunted his paunch. He was reluctant to take runs for the effort it required, and breathed heavily into the sultry Lahori night.

The Sri Lankans did not just win the World Cup, they also won a lot of cash. A Sri Lankan businessman offered SLR 1000 for every run, 300,000 for every half-century and 20,000 for every catch or wicket. So, what was the tally for Sri Lanka in the final match?

245 runs.....	245,000
10 wickets and catches.....	200,000
A. Gurusinghe (65).....	300,000
Aravinda de Silva (107):.....	600,000
GRAND TOTAL.....	SLR 1,345,000

My question is, is this tax-deductible?

This opens up possibilities for a whole new scoring system to replace the antiquated colonial method of keeping cricket scores. Take a typical cricket tally:

M Taylor c Jayasuriya b de Silva	74
M Waugh c Jayasuriya b Vaas.....	12
Fall of wickets.....	1-36 2-137 3-152 4-156
Vaas.....	6-1-30-1
Dharmasena.....	10-0-0-47
Jayasuriya.....	8-0-43-1
de Silva.....	9-0-42-3

Give me a break, Queen Victoria. How can you have a scoreboard that looks like a computer printout of the NASDAQ Composite for International Stock Indices?

There is nothing official about it yet, but I hear that the International Cricket Board is deliberating on a much more simplified method of keeping scores by just comparing the sponsorship bids. This is what the next World Cup scores may look like:

Coke.....	US\$ 3.5 million
Pepsi.....	US\$ 2.1 million

Maybe then the game will move a little faster?



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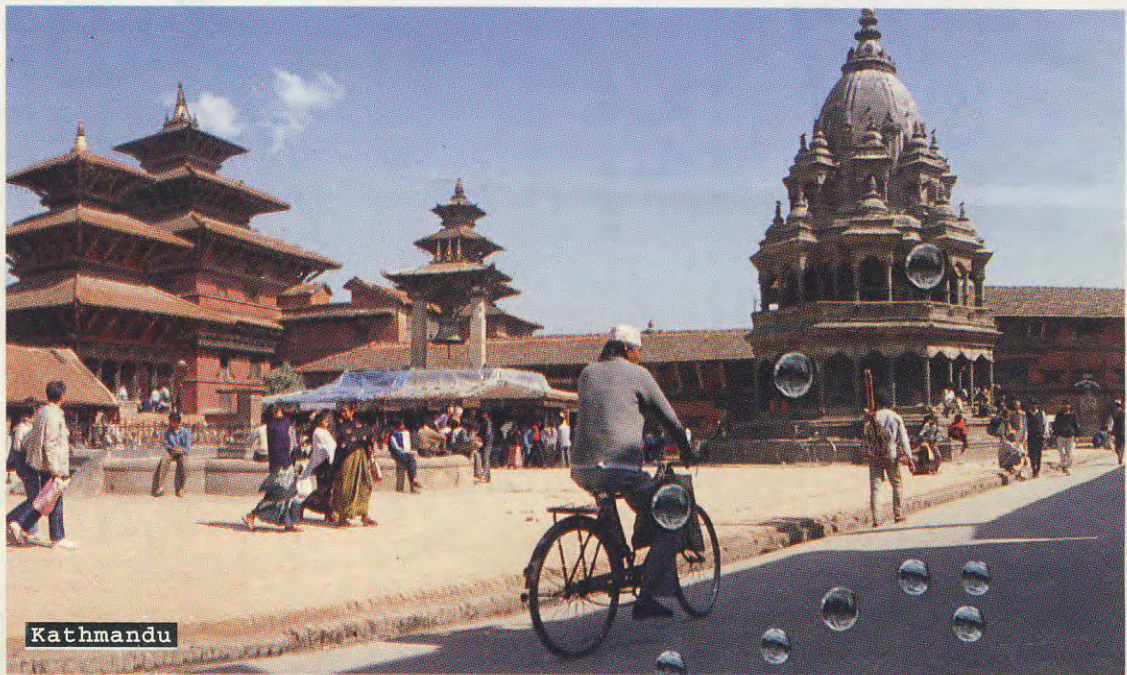


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