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Coordination by
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E-mail
sach_heritage@yahoo.co.uk

Website
www.sach-online.org

The second issue of SACH coincides with the Peace in South Asia consultation at Dhaka, Bangladesh. The consultation is being held at the backdrop of Serial bomb blast in whole of Bangladesh in August, large scale of destruction and death caused by earthquake in Pakistan and India, serial bomb blasts in New Delhi followed by blasts in Kashmir, India. Uttar Pradesh, India has long history of being prone to caste and communal conflict. Mau district of this province faced communal conflict of worst nature during the whole of October 2005 with carefully designed localization of media, the communal conflict of this magnitude went almost unnoticed. Only for a few days electronic and print media carried the news when death toll was rising everyday. Surprisingly no political party had anything substantial to say on this issue. The Congress party which is leading UPA government in the India could only question law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh. Here, it is important to mention that the ruling Samajvadi Party in Uttar Pradesh came to power in the name of championing the cause of secularism and protector of minorities.

Situation in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Nepal is no different. Unprecedented rise of fundamentalism in Bangladesh has served the notice by engineering serial bomb blasts and indicating towards its intentions and its capabilities. There is no let up in conflict situation in Pakistan. Non-Muslim minorities as well as minorities within Muslim community are constantly under threat. Islamic laws provide shield to those who want to suppress hapless minorities in the name of Islam.

With monarchy assuming power in Nepal, the country is facing multiple problems, invariably resulting into conflict. On one hand people are facing the wrath of armed forces, both of state and non-state and on the other the freedom and rights of people have been taken away by monarchy.

Guns and other arms have become way of life for the whole of South Asian region. The state forces use arms in the name of providing security to the 'people'. The non state forces take up arms to be 'secure' and 'protect' themselves from state sponsored armed forces. Ultimately it is the general masses that become-the targets of both the state and non-state actors. No one cares for them. In this context Peace in South Asia become the most important for all of us. Hence, the South Asian Composite Heritage is becoming probably the most potent tool to bring peace within countries and among countries of the whole region. With this background in mind, the second issue of SACH (South Asian Composite Heritage) is being published. Unfortunately, this issue does not contain contributions from Bangladesh and Nepal but our partners have assured that from next issue onwards they will make sure that SACH contains contributions from the whole region.

Asia Awakens

By : *Ali Sardar Jafri*

The land of Asia, the cradle of civilization, the abode of culture,
The first rays of the sun shone here
The dawn of humanism first unveiled here
The light of knowledge and wisdom spread from here
To lands afar, people and ages
From these heights were heard the Vedas
'We are all equal' so preached Gautama
The winds of our history have heard the words of Jesus
Our sun has shone on Prophet Mohammad
And now the stars in our ancient skies
Watch with ancient eyes, the youthful Asia

This is the soil that has borne
Pearls of golden grain;
This soil, ancient as the tales of mankind
Divine, as the lofty, peaks of Himalayas;
Beautiful as the fair nymphs of Ajanta;
Generous as the kind waters of Ganges and the Nile;
This fertile lap is laden with children fruits and flowers.

Our heritage extends from Mohenjo-daro to the great wall of China,
Our history, from the Taj and Sikri to the pyramids of Giza,
From the treasures of tradition, we have Babylon and Nineveh.
Since our childhood, eloquence has kissed our lips,
And poetry sung lullabies to us.
When we spoke, we uttered the Vedas, Gospels and the Quran.
Our imagination has touched
Those soaring heights, where shine
The suns of Firdausi and Saadi,
Nizami, Khayyam and Hafiz;
The heights, where hold sway
Valmiki, the revered Tulsi,
Kabeer and Surdas;
The heights, where resound
The lute of Iqbal, The songs of Tagore.

We have faced centuries
Of storms of terror
Gales of trouble and torture
Yet this precious land
Has retained its beauty, charm and grandeur
Our Rustams, our Arjuns are still with us
Tilling the land in forests and hillocks

Our Farhads still wield axes
Youthful Laila, comely Heer, and charming Sheereen
Still sing lilting tunes
Shakuntalas dance in thicket greens
We, the people of Asia have set and risen
Like the sun
Purified in the fires of sorrow
Our eyes have seen
Dark ages withering
Triumphant flags lowering
Regimes falling
Crowns tumbling
Innumerable chariots have trampled on our hearts
But from the ashes of hunger, death and penury
We have risen again and again
In the resurgent flames of work and worry
Buried like seeds in the womb of mother earth
We have blossomed as buds in spring
In the fresh breeze of morning

This is the land of Asia,
The cradle of civilisation,
The abode of culture,
Her peasant, a wooden plough
In his aged hands;
Her poor workers
With burning, tired eyes;
Ships, sailors, songs, storms,
Potters, blacksmiths,
Milkmaids bathed in milk;

Old story tellers,
Sitting round a fire;
Innocent faces of little children
Safe in their mother's laps;
Fields of ripe crops,
Cows and buffaloes;
Tinkling of glass bangles
In green fields;
Dreary deserts,
Silent and profound like prophets;
Flowing tresses of date palms;
Pomegranate flowers, mango blossoms;
Granaries, heaps of cow-dung cakes;
Dancing virgins of winding pathways.
Long and lovely rivers
Kissing with their waves
The trembling lips of their banks;
Gentle waterfalls
At the slender waists

Of beautiful bridal valleys;
Blue bowls in mountain palms;
Stars reflecting in lake mirrors;

Loving arms
Of the Ganges and Jamuna
Round the neck
Of the Himalayas;
The shawl of blue ice
On the head of mountain storms.

This is Asia,
Young, fresh and fertile,
Whose forever consumed poor, penniless children,
Bite by snakes of hunger;
Whose lips never knew the taste of milk
After leaving their mothers' breasts;
Who never got to taste wheat bread
Whose backs never felt
The touch of clean, white cloth;
Whose fingers never caressed a book;
Whose feet know not
The feel of shoes and slippers;
Whose heads are strangers
To the soft delight of a pillow;

Who have known their hunger
As their food:
These unique lofty people
Will be found only
In the Paradise of Asia;
Still 'animals'
Even after three centuries
Of imperial 'civilisation.'

Where are you,
O torch bearers of 'culture'?
Come and see, in Asia
The showcase of your 'culture.'

Nowhere else will you see
Such faces full of sorrow.
Every corner of Asia
Is filled with
Your regal memorials.
Here, you have reared
An arch of victory,
There, pillars of your arrogance;

Here, you have cast
Horses of bronze,
There, statues of stone:
But nowhere exist the memories of
Your 'culture and civilisation'.
Hark your sculptors and painters,
To adorn your museums
With these brooding faces full of sorrow,
To turn into an eternal memorial your mighty deeds.

Now, in Asia we have
A forest of hands,
Fists of white marble,
Of dark of Lotus buds and cotton blooms granite.
Come, O bride of the dawn of spring,
We are waiting to adorn you with Coconuts and fire bombs
A fistful of twilight's vermilion,
Flowers of moon and stars,
Rouge of red sunbeams.

*Transalation by Prof. Vijayshri
IGNOU, New Delhi*

Mehboob Sada

Christian Study Centre
Rawalpindi, Pakistan

This is the second article in the series by the author.

1.1 POST PARTITION PAKISTANI SOCIETY

After having a very tolerant and harmonious past, All India Muslim League started working for a separate identity of Muslims in India. It was during the British Raj that Hindus and Muslims started considering them a separate nation from each other. Later this demand further developed into a demand of a separate homeland for Muslims. It was their thought that now it is not possible for Muslims to live under Hindu rule, if English are going to give independence to India. This was the beginning of a new era: Two Nation Theory, where religion took a new stance and people started fighting each other. It was only then that religion was used to fight each other, otherwise previously people experienced religion in a different manner, even other's were invited for religious festivals.

Jinnah's Vision for Pakistan

For Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation, the problem of Indian Muslims was not religious but political. In his evidence before the Joint Select Committee on the Government of India Bill, he had declared as early as 1919 that "nothing will please me more when that day comes when all distinctions between Hindus and Muslims would have disappeared".¹ So, when he expressed similar sentiments during his Constituent Assembly speech on August 11, 1947, he was not prompted by the desire to placate any particular group but that was his genuine feeling. While addressing the All-Parties' Conference, he had said: "I have not come to say what Mussalmans want. We have come to sit with you as co-workers. Let us put our heads together, not as Hindus and Mohammedans, but as Indians".²

It was after the failure of the Round-Table Conference that Mr. Jinnah started thinking in terms of Muslims as a separate nation. He removed the dichotomy found in Iqbal's understanding of nation and democracy and accepted the Western concepts of both nation and democracy that are totally secular.

The resolution, which formed the basis of Pakistan movement was moved by Mr. A.K. Fazlul

Haq of Bengal and seconded by Chowdhry Khaliqzaman of U.P. It says: "Resolved that it is the considered view of this session of the All-India Muslim League that no constitutional plan would be workable in this country, or acceptable to the Muslims, unless it is designed on the following basic principles, viz., that geographically contiguous units are demarcated into regions which should be so constituted, with such territorial readjustments as may be necessary, that the areas in which the Muslims are numerically in a majority, as in the North-Western and Eastern zones of India, should be grouped to constitute Independent States in which the constituent units shall be autonomous and sovereign".³

This resolution belies those who claim that Pakistan came into being in the name of Islam. The fact is that the movement for a separate homeland for the Muslims of India was built on the basis of the right of self-determination of nations, which is, as has been again and again pointed out, a purely secular and non-religious political theory and has no place in Islamic jurisprudence.⁴

Mr. Jinnah was of opinion that Pakistan should be a land where peace, harmony, and love would prevail. He was of opinion that religious minorities would get maximum facilities and they will be considered as the full citizens. It is important to note that there were rumors for Pakistan developing into a theocratic state. However, several time assurances were given by the leaders of Pakistan movement that Pakistan would not be a theocratic state, but it will be a land where people from all religions could live according to their faith and practice their religion freely.⁵

Addressing the Muslim Legislator's Conference at Delhi in April, 1946, Mr. Jinnah said: "What are we fighting for? What are we aiming at? It is not for a theocracy, nor for a theocratic State. Religion is there and religion is dear to us. All the worldly goods are nothing to us when we talk of religion but there are other things which are very vital – our social, our economic life".⁶

Mr. Jinnah was more specific in his interview in 1946 to Campbell, Reuter's correspondent in Delhi.

* This paper was presented in University of Melbourne's International Colloquium, Australia, 11-13 February 2004.

“the new State”, he said “would be a modern democratic State with sovereignty resting in the people and the members of the new nation having equal rights of citizenship regardless of their religion, caste or creed”.⁷

As regards education in Pakistan, Jinnah had a progressive vision, who in his message to the first education conference in 1947 categorically said that our education system should be able to produce citizens with global vision and perspectives: **“...the importance of education and the type of education cannot be over-emphasized... there is no doubt that the future of our State will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children, and the way in which we bring them up as future citizen of Pakistan... we should not forget that we have to compete with the world which is moving very fast in this direction”**.⁸

Unfortunately the vision of founding father has been negated, on purpose misinterpreted while formulating the educational curricula, policies and textbooks. History has been selectively interpreted and projected to mould the minds to be obedient to the state ideology. Since its inception both the state and its conservative allies in Pakistan have tried to usurp the citizen’s right to propagate free education. This strategy has killed the culture of free inquiry, free thinking and on occasions, free speech among Pakistani citizens. The state and its ministry of education at federal level have monopolized the development and implementation of curricula to use it for systematic indoctrination. The provincial textbook boards serving as the tentacles of federal education, bureaucracy have served as the instruments to strengthen this approach. The gradual drifts in education policy and oscillations between the imperatives of being a democracy or at a time dictatorship confirm that all this was and is very much a question of power and mindset. Secondly the very term ideology of Pakistan is contested one. A few historians maintain that it is a post independence construct devised by those political forces, which were initially inimical to the creation of Pakistan to sanctify their politics.

The facts conclusively prove that the Pakistan movement, in spite of its religious tone, was essentially secular in its objective; and it was never the intent of Pakistan’s Founding Fathers to establish a theocracy but to build a modern democratic State on the Western pattern. Mr. Jinnah was a committed person. He did not change his mind after becoming the head of the

newly-born State but continued to follow his secular principles. Speaking in Peshawar in February 1948, he said that in any case, Pakistan was not going to be a theocratic State ruled by the Mullahs who claimed a divine mission.

1.1 DEVELOPMENT OF CONFLICT

Despite the assurances by the leaders of Pakistan movement, the country moved towards fundamentalism. The Objectives Resolution was the first official document when it was decided that any law, which does not match Islam would not be implemented in Pakistan. The Objectives Resolution was imposed on the nation in 1949 through a “democratic dictatorship”, and the religious minorities were virtually declared second class citizens. Mian Iftikharuddin was the only member of the Constituent Assembly to oppose it. All the others, the majority in the House, tried to outdo one another in its support. Again, when the Resolution, which converted the minorities into “constitutional scheduled castes”, was made part of the new Constitution in 1956, no voice was raised against the step from among the majority.

Later further advancements were made in this regard and once it happened that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1972 – 1977) while introducing a new constitution in 1973 introduced several Islamic provisions, which brought country towards theocratic state. This is out of question that Mr. Bhutto, the most popular leader in Pakistan in the 70s, was ideally placed to put into practice the objectives of his social democracy and create suitable conditions for the development of secular ideas and institutions. However, this did not happen. He under-estimated the power of orthodoxy. It was defeated in the elections but it had not abandoned its designs. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bhutto himself was instrumental in its rehabilitation. He started appeasing the Mullahs and did not realise that they had neither forgiven him for their defeat nor would they ever trust him. They not only made full use of the shortcomings of the People’s Party governments but managed to build a strong base in the bureaucracy and the army. Mr. Bhutto, and subsequently the country itself, had to pay a very heavy price for his complacency.

In order to save his government he further introduced Islamic laws. This step was not taken because people demanded Islamic law rather it was only Bhutto who wanted to please the Mullahs. Among his other amendments initially he nationalized mission schools, which were serving the nation throughout the country. Later he changed the weekly

holiday from Sunday to Friday, banned liquor for Muslims and non-Muslims were exempted, which again developed a lesser stature for non-Muslims as they use inferior drinks which are prohibited to Muslim alone. Such competition changed the attitude and the concept of 'ours' and 'others' started prevailing in the country. The worse introduction by Bhutto was to make compulsory Islamic education for students of all faiths. This created further confusion among the students.

The Americans, too, did not trust Bhutto. His growing ambition to become the leader of the Muslim world had alarmed them. They considered him too independent to serve their objectives in this region. Since, they do not tolerate any political leader who does not kowtow their line, they too decided to get rid of him. How far they were responsible for provoking the agitation against Mr. Bhutto, no one would know, but knowing, as we do, the subversive role of CIA in the Third World and the pro-American leaning of certain political parties that participated in the anti-Bhutto agitation in 1977, we can say with confidence that the opposition certainly enjoyed the blessings of America. The Martial Law regime's allegiance to the global strategy of American imperialism further confirms the suspicion regarding America's involvement in the overthrow of Mr. Bhutto.⁹

After hanging Bhutto to death, Zia-ul-Haq was the man who not only amended the Constitution of Pakistan according to the wishes of fundamentalist religious groups, but he also provided enough room for them to grow in the country. He 'suspended' the Constitution, declared Martial Law in the country, dissolved the Assemblies and Central and Provincial Governments, and banned the political parties and all political activities in the country. He promised to hold elections within 90 days but did not honor his pledge and ruled with the aid of Martial Law under the cover of a fictitious civil government of his own choosing.

This was the time when religious minorities and women were targeted very badly and they were deprived from their basic rights. This religious apartheid affected the whole nation and later practice created further segregation in every walk of life. This changing stance was portraying the picture of a theocratic state. Pakistan was emerging as a fundamentalist nation.

The Martial Law regime exploited the name of Islam to deprive the people of all that is rational, beautiful and good in life, represented the most oppressive period of our history. In total disregard of the 1940 Resolution of the Muslim League and the

assurances of Mr. Jinnah, that Pakistan would not be a theocratic but a modern democratic State, the Martial Law regime initiated the process of theocratization of the State with vengeance. All possible mean methods were employed to impose on the society an interpretation of Islam that was of the exploiters and not of the exploited among Muslims. The entire media was used to inculcate in the people an urge met to seek truth in the light of Reason, but to cultivate in them the slavish mentality of obedience and submission to Authority. The power of judiciary had been drastically curtailed. The customary law, that everybody is innocent unless proved otherwise, had been reversed, thus putting the burden of proof on the accused. People were savagely whipped, tortured in prison and hanged by military courts from which there was no appeal. And all these measures, these punishments were inflicted for the Islamization of society although the God of Islam is most Merciful and Compassionate and commands forgiveness.¹⁰

The Islamic Concept of Tolerance

The religious concepts were misinterpreted. Emphasizing upon its adherents to treat non-Muslims with sympathy, kindness and justice, Islam has legislated laws with compassion in matters relating to the non-Muslim citizens of an Islamic state. In Islam it is the duty of the state to provide internal and external security and religious freedom to its non-Muslim citizen.

Quran even calls upon Muslims to strictly adhere to the principle of justice and equity while dealing with their opponents: "Should not the hatred of a nation incite you lest you should not maintain justice. Do justice, since it is more akin to God-fearing".¹¹ The Quranic verse asserts in unequivocal term that hatred of a nation should not instigate a person to ignore justice, to desist from protecting their lives, honour, property and deny them their fundamental rights and good social interaction.

Besides, the Traditions of the Prophet (PBUH), are bound with similar injunctions. He has repeatedly commanded his followers to be kind fair with their non-Muslim fellow-citizen and prohibited them from subjecting the non-Muslims to oppression or denying them their basic human rights and freedom. For instance, the Prophet (PBUH), says, "A person who oppresses a non-Muslim subject, I shall be his defender and whosoever I defend, I defend him on the day of Resurrection".¹²

The text of a treaty which the Prophet (PBUH) had signed with the non-Muslims runs as follows:

“The Najran and those living therein are placed under the protection of Allah and the responsibility of Muhammad, the Prophet and Messenger of Allah, so far their lives, their religion, their lands, their property, the individual members both present and absent, their places of worship and their (right of) prayer are concerned. Similarly, neither any priest or monk shall be removed from his position, nor a person making a religious endowment shall be deprived of his bequeathed state. And all that they legally own, small or big shall belong to them, so long it has nothing to do with usury or blood vengeance prevalent during the days of ignorance. And in case a person claims a right from them, it will be settled on the basis of equity and justice and without discrimination to either of the parties...”¹³

Zia also exploited the concept of jihad, primarily to support the American proxy war against Russia in Afghanistan. Although the State announced it, but every religious party took advantage of their position and sent several youngsters for it. This was the point where religious brotherhood lost its place and evangelism (Dawah) took place. The religious hatred was further developed with separating the nation on religion basis through electorate system. This pressure was built to identify for one community Ahmadis, however, the whole nation suffered out of it.

These division and subdivisions torn the entire social fabric in tatters. The non-Muslims of Pakistan had to pass through perilous times, as numerous delicate and sensitive issues erupted out of the process of Islamization to which the country was subjected. The minorities were the easiest targets of the resultant punitive laws of a religious nature thrust on them against their will.

The failure for having a positive contact between different communities was further deepened when education policy was used for this purpose. Religious education was included in every subject and those parts were deliberately included which taught something against other religions or Muslim sects. This situation left non-Muslim alone and they could not do anything against it. Though a very small number of liberal Muslims were supporting the religious minorities, however, very active majority was in favour of all steps taken against religious minorities and women.

There were some word a tempts to put things into right direction; however, the fundamentalist group in Pakistan was so strong that every such attempt was overthrown. After Zia-ul-Haq’s crash, Benazir Bhutto (daughter of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto) and Nawaz

Sharif, the protégé of Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, gained the premiership twice. Both of them could not complete their terms. Benazir tried to revert the social stance and she was not succeeded, whereas Nawaz Sharif also vowed to carry forward the policies of Zia.

1.2 EDUCATION

Muslim majoritarianism has always existed in Pakistan on account of the population being overwhelmingly Muslim. Not surprisingly, therefore, the culture, the idioms and the manners of the majority gained currency in the social outlook as well as educational system. The educational policy of Pakistan assumed religious character initially by a resolution adopted at the All Pakistan Educational Conference held in 1947 and later by the Objectives Resolution of 1949. The Resolution embodies provisions with policy implications for educational system in Pakistan. It envisaged conformity with the principles of Islam and influenced the objectives of education, curriculum and textbooks as the values, ideas and ethical principles enunciated in it were to be infused in the young learners. Nevertheless the resolution maintained that the minorities would be free to profess and practice their religion and develop their own culture and the state would guarantee fundamental rights to all its citizens.

The person who will be well versed in Muslim history alone will be the best citizen of Pakistan was the logic with policy makers during he initial years of Pakistan. Such strand of thinking epitomized the desire to divorce common history and heritage of South Asia soon after the creation of Pakistan. Thus the Islamization of education started shortly after the inception of Pakistan but at a slow speed. The 1956 Constitution included provisions for promotion of Islamic principles among the Muslims through article 25. Teaching of Islamiat received impetus from this article. The said article also provided that the state would ensure facilities so that the Muslims could understand the meaning of life according to the Quran and Sunnah. The religious freedom of minorities was also guaranteed as a fundamental right in article 13 as its clause (1) ensured that “no person attending any educational institution shall be required to receive religious instruction or attend religious worship if such instruction, ceremony or worship relates to a religion other than his own”, The said article also made it clear that “no religious community or denomination shall be prevented from providing religious instruction for pupils of that community or denomination in any educational institution maintained wholly by the

community or the denomination”. These provisions assured religious freedom of the non-Muslim children.¹⁴

The provisions of the Constitution of 1962 on education were almost similar to those of the Constitution of 1956. However going a step further the compulsory teaching of Holy Quran and Islamiat to the Muslim children was emphasized in the principles of policy.

The approach to link history with ideology in the textbooks existed since 1947 and gradually accelerated till the East Pakistan debacle in 1971. However, it was a time when we started desperately discovering our roots somewhere else instead of rich Indus-Ganges civilization and embarked on overemphasizing ‘separate Pakistani identity’ through textbooks. The period after 1971 reflects that heroes of history were divided carefully between India and Pakistan on the basis of faith and the non-Muslim poets and fiction writers and their work also started disappearing from the textbooks.

Post 1971 political leader Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto introduced Pakistan Studies as a full-fledged subject at higher education level and specialized centers for Pakistan studies were established at Quaid-e-Azam University in Islamabad and other universities in 1973 with an area study approach to inculcate sense of Pakistani nationalism. The 1972 education policy of Bhutto made Islamiat compulsory for Muslim students, up to Class X and vowed that steps will be taken to ensure that the curricula and textbooks for all stages do not contain anything repugnant to, or inconsistent with, the cultural and ethical value of Islam. It was also to be ensured that the study of Islamiat does not remain an isolated affair rather the values and the spirit of Islam were to be woven into the entire wrap and woof of educational fabric and cooperation from parent was sought to realize this beside the promise to use radio and television with substantial tie for the recitation of the Holy Quran and its translation.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto also strove to win the support of the religious elements and asked to revise the textbooks to reflect change policies and perspectives. An integrated Pakistan that was one strong Islamic nation, which could overcome separatist movements and prevent another splitting such as the creation of Bangladesh, was Bhutto’s motivation. The textbooks continued to lay even greater stress on the Islamic perspective of historical events. The frequent use of phrase ‘ideology of Pakistan’ became an essential component and a focal point in the objectives of

Bhutto’s Education policy. These objectives were:

1. Ensuring the preservation, promotion and practice of the basic ideology of Pakistan and making it a code of individual and national life.

2. Building up national cohesion by promoting social and cultural harmony compatible with our basic ideology through the conscious use of educational process.

3. Designing curricula relevant to the nation’s changing social and economic needs compatible with our basic ideology and providing a massive shift from general education to more purposeful agro-technical education.

4. Providing academic freedom and due autonomy to educational institutions within the framework of national objectives and requirements.

The Constitution of 1973 guarantees religious freedom in educational institutions. However, it also makes learning of Arabic language besides making teaching of the Holy Quran and Islamiat compulsory. During Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on official policy to rewrite history for school children started to take shape. Not only this. When, in 1970 Bhutto announced nationalization of private education institutions, he arbitrarily took control of the schools and colleges run by the Christian minority (which by all means provided quality education). The nationalization of education institution put minorities at disadvantageous position as their institutions were also brought under homogenous and bureaucratic national net for education (when the Zia regime decided to return these private institutions to their original owners, some of them were not handed back to the minorities; in particular the schools and colleges owned by the Church were not released on one pretext or the other). Interestingly, the religious seminaries were not touched and were left with the Muslim clerics and these seminaries groomed the generation of jihadis (holy warriors) to serve as a fuel during Jihad against the communist intervention in Afghanistan.

Later General Zia ul Haq picked up the thread to weave a web of ideology and used this subject to pullulate his Islamized vision about Pakistan. General Zia ul Haq took Bhutto’s initiative to rewrite history to an extreme. It became one of the numerous initiatives to construct a full-fledged ideology apparatus under the banner of Islamization. During General Zia ul Haq’s full scale ‘so called’ Islamization of the state and society the non-Muslims were stripped of many of their rights and were made to vote in separate electorates. Strict blasphemy laws were often used selectively against non-Muslims. General Zia also

started the Islamization of education. In October 1978 new education policy was announced with five year planning and for the first time the aim of education was defined as stressing Islamic principles of life and deep commitment to the ideology of Pakistan. The policy listed nine national aims of education. The first four clearly highlighted the General Zia's political agenda of Islam:

1. To foster in the hearts and minds of the people of Pakistan in general and the students in particular a deep and abiding loyalty to Islam and Pakistan and a living consciousness of their spiritual and ideological identity thereby strengthening unity of the outlook of the people of Pakistan on the basis of justice and fair play.

2. To create awareness in every student that he as a member of Pakistani nation is also a part of the universal Muslim Ummah and that it is expected of him to make a contribution towards the welfare of fellow Muslim throughout the world on the other

3. To produce citizens who are fully conversant with the Pakistan movement, its ideological foundations, history and culture so that they feel proud of their heritage and display firm faith in the future of the country as an Islamic state.

4. To develop and inculcate in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, the character conduct and motivation expected of a true Muslim.

Thus early 1980s became a time which called for immediate development of interfaith harmony as not only the culture, the idioms and the manners of the majority got reflected in the educational process but the Islamization drive was on its full swing and finding its way into the whole foundations of education. Muslim sensibilities got imposed onto the rest and the disharmony was widened. With the political agenda of Islamization of the state, an organized effort started on the state's part to mould the minds of the young through textbooks. Curricula were redesigned and textbooks were rewritten to create a monolithic image of Pakistan as an Islamic state and Pakistani citizens as Muslims only. The curriculum and textbooks provided fuel for hatred and openly declared that non-Muslims were excluded from the national identity.

One could take this to be a result of the usual insensitivity of a majority towards the needs and aspirations of minority, as would happen anywhere. Such a majoritarianism is not confined to the religious expression alone. It shows up in the national, linguistic and other expressions also. However, since the Muslim majoritarianism was not experienced in the

curricula and textbooks in the pre-Islamization period, it leads to the obvious conclusion that this has been a result of the process of Islamization. The Muslim majoritarianism in Pakistan amounts to creating an environment for non-Muslims in which (1) they become second-class citizens with lesser rights and privileges, (2) their patriotism becomes suspect, and (3) their contribution to the society is ignored. The result is that they can easily cease to have any stake in the society.¹⁵

With an orthodox Islamists approach, national identity can be denied to religious minorities in Pakistan. The educational process in the form of curricula and textbooks reinforces this denial.

The program of study that was designed under Islamization was in keeping with the philosophy of education of particular school of Islamic thought which asserts that the entire source of knowledge is what was revealed by Allah and that the worldly knowledge has to be in the context of the revealed knowledge. It has been argued by Syed Abul A'la Maudoodi of Jam'at-e-Islami that in an Islamic society all that is taught would be in the context of the revealed knowledge, therefore every subject would become Islamiyat. A direct outcome of this philosophy of education has been the following basic principle that recurs repeatedly in the Pakistani curriculum documents:

In the teaching material, no concept of separation between the worldly and the religious be given; rather all the material be presented from the Islamic point of view.

Today, a jumble of educational streams exist in Pakistan including mufassil schools, religious madrissas, modern English medium, separate military run schools and network of state-run schools is the largest and is under the direct control of country's educational bureaucracy. What is taught at these schools continues to pose a pertinent question of link between education system and national identity in Pakistan. Ideally education should function as an agency of cultural transmission as well as change and should reflect the dynamic process of nation building that is continually modified by new conditions. Unfortunately the ground facts are otherwise. Right from the first grade, the state has monopolized the development and implementation of curricula that is used for systematic indoctrination.

The religious extremism and related tendencies could generally be attributed to the officially approved curriculum of compulsory subject of Pakistan Studies, introduced by Zia ul Haq and being taught from

primary to university level with one of its roots laid in notion of ideology of Pakistan as propounded by the religious revivalist parties and groups.

Established through many independent accounts the concept of two-nation theory set out by the leaders of Pakistan movement like Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Sir Syed, Syed Amir Ali and Allama Muhammad Iqbal who primarily struggled for the political, economic, social and cultural rights of Muslims of the sub-continent appears to be in total contrast to the views of traditionalist religious parties.

Within traditionalist religious thoughts there appears to be two different strands. One group belongs to the fundamentalist ulemas (religious clerics) and religious parties based on hatred for all non-Muslims and those Muslims who do not comply with their brand of Islam. The other belongs to the Sufis (mystics) traditions cherished by moderate religious leaders and the political parties based on peaceful co-existence with non-Muslims and pluralism for all sects of Islam. Unfortunately the orthodox category enjoys significant say in the realm of policy and decision making in Pakistan.

Ideally educational decision making in a multi-ethnic plural society like Pakistan should be futuristic and accommodative to various competing factors and forces such as socio-economic and political goals, diverse faiths and values of the people and global aspirations of the nation. Such interplay can yield best dividend for the nation whereas sole ideological base often result in ambiguous and inconsistent educational policies.

The role of the intellectuals and peace builders cannot be ignored who tried their best resist and protest religious bigotry, intolerance, religious hatred and sectarian killings, whose seed was sown by Gen. Zia-ul-Haq. There had been a review of the curricula and textbooks, where the material was reviewed and suggestions for its improvement were forwarded to the ministry of education. This urges that the religious, community leaders have a good hold on society. Now the need is that they come forward and recognize their duties in order to bring the society back to its normal position, where peace, love and harmony prevails and there is enough room for every religious community to grow and share their gifts with other.

2. THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Besides being multi-lingual and multi-ethnic, Pakistan is a multi-religious society. It is noteworthy that the part of world we live in has given birth to three religions –Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism. It has provided a sufficient ground for Islam and Christianity to flourish. Deen-i-Elahi of Akbar the

Great also lived for a while. This portrays a unique sense of religious accommodation in this part of the world. Above all the Sufi (mystic) and folk traditions truly, epitomize pluralism, secularism and tolerance.

Non-Muslims are a sizeable part of the society, many of whom have contributed enormously to its well-being. Names like A. R. Cornerlius, Dorab Patel, Sobho Gianchandani, Cecil Choudry, Bapsi Sidhwa and many others are a source of pride for Pakistan. In view of Jinnah's vision of Pakistan, the centuries old traditions of a pluralistic society and the ever evolving nature of secular and developed world, it is quite reasonable to expect that Pakistan as a nation would do its best to impart a sense of belonging and even-handedness to all of its citizens irrespective of their faith, cast and creed. While demanding contributions from all to its development and prosperity, it cannot afford to deny equal status and rights to some on the basis of their faith. Otherwise, those deprived are bound to develop a sense of alienation from the society.

Ironically, Pakistan has remained the victim of a fixed and static thought pattern and the situation has not been very promising. The religious and community leaders, especially non-Muslims have taken up the question how to save the breaking community fabric and rectifying the communal problem. But the formulation of movements has remained a weaker area in the country's perspective. There have been few such currents those who cherished secular ideals tried to locate themselves somewhere in a culture defined in the western context. They were perhaps unable to appreciate the specifications of indigenous culture. When the rest of the world was getting a whiff of secular left-wing democracy, our left was under-ground and what we heard most of the time was only about the emergence of further factions within its already thin folds. However, there were a few small isolated efforts that generated heat and questioned the rot. To start with, the Progressive Writers 'Association' appears to be the first example. Newspapers of Progressive Papers Limited remain another example. In response to the first, usurpers created the so-called writers Guild to co-opt intellectuals. The second was tamed through the National Press Trust formed in April 1959.¹⁵

When Jinnah's secular vision for Pakistan was denounced through 'Objectives Resolution'¹⁶, there was no movement to resist the move. As discussed earlier, the Resolution laid the foundation of the so-called Islamization (which was celebrated at a cocktail party of the Members of Parliament). It was in the late 1960s when the nation forcefully resisted Jama'at-I-Islami's propaganda and voted for Awami League and the People's Party-parties with a secular

outlook. But it was the People's Party that proved weaker enough to become a tool at the hands of orthodox elements. It served as a basis for General Zia's so-called Islamization.

Nawaz Sharif also lived the dream of one day declaring himself the Amir-ul Momineen while Benazir Bhutto appeared to have no time to deal with serious country issues. The causality of such a process is that ordinary people are ruthlessly killed in mosques, imam bargahs and at places like Shantinagar¹⁷. The fruits are laws like Blasphemy Law 295-C¹⁸. This is a grievous state of affairs and calls for radical solutions. To dream of salvation is the right of every Pakistani, including non-Muslims. This salvation would constitute reformation of the civil society and its reconstruction on liberal and secular lines. Under the present system of election those who enter the assemblies as representatives of the minorities end up as tools of the ruling party, but salvation is not their problem, nor do they feel the need for it. The change has to come about in those who form the potent elements of the civil society like journalists, writers, intellectuals, enlightened political workers, labour leaders and the moving spirits behind NGOs. No doubt, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like, Women Action Forum, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Shirkat Gah, Aurat Foundation and many more are rather vigorously working for the development of a pluralistic and secular society. Secularism implies that the state should not promulgate laws that discriminate against any religion. These civil society initiatives successfully resisted the move of religious coding of national identity cards. Their work against discriminatory laws especially the blasphemy law and violation of human rights remain praise worthy. Internet and satellite communication has also opened doors for secularism.

Though the governance and political scenes present a pessimistic picture the majority of Pakistani people are secular. Despite years of sectarian and ethnic violence, the country's social fabric has not been broken down at the grassroots and it can be saved from further destruction. Keeping in view that Pakistan is a divided society in political context, we would have to decentralize power, enforce a system of checks and balances, initiate an inter-faith dialogue and inter-sect dialogue. For instance if we take into consideration Christian-Muslim relations, they have always existed. The Quran itself contains references of Christians and indications on the way dialogue should be conducted. At different periods and in different places the relationship has been one of co-operation or conflict. There has been much cultural interaction between Christians and Muslims. One

could mention the Christian contributions to the Islamic assimilation of the Greek heritage in Abbassid times and then the transmission of this heritage to Europe. One could mention the cultural developments in Ummayyad Spain and in Sicily under the Normans. One could recall the collaboration of Christians and Muslims during the Nahda, the Arab renaissance. It is not really necessary to go into detail. Yet it is also true that certain factors have rendered relations more difficult. The Islamic world and the western Christian world became two blocs, a division which the Crusades helped to perpetuate. Then the colonial era brought about what could be termed as a "love-hate relationship" with the Christian West. Its technical advances were admired, and desired, but its domination was abhorred. There was also the religious factor. Christians did not really have an adequate theological basis for an open relationship with Muslims. Islam tended to be looked upon as a sort of Christian heresy, and Muslims therefore worthy of condemnation. On the other hand, while Islamic society allowed a place for Christians in its system, as **ahl-al-dhimma**, it had little sympathy for the specific beliefs of Christians.

If one has to live with the burden of history then crusades, massacres and doctrinal differences can provide enough fuel for clash and conflicts but if we have to co-exist, we have to resolve economic-political conflicts and crises. We have to come terms with modernity and above all secularize Pakistan. The problems of our country — drought, disease, poverty, the displacement of people — do not respect any religious divide. People of all religions, including Christians and Muslims, are equally affected. Here there are vast fields here open for Christian-Muslim cooperation. Wherever human beings are in need there is a call for joint efforts to respond to these needs. In such cases trust has to be built up. Yet joint action is important, for it shows that our respective religions are not out for self-aggrandizement at the expense of other's sufferings, that they are not profiting by people's weaknesses, but that they are truly serving their brothers and sisters for the sake of God. If there has not been a secular movement in the past, now the time is ripe. We have to wake up before the Shariah Act is passed for it will push Pakistan back into the medieval ages.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is an intense need to bring changes both in the structure and contents of the parts of education decision making and implementation bureaucracy.
2. New education materials should be developed in partnership with citizen groups and private education providers.

3. A National education Board should be formed, consisted of leading academicians, public and private (NGO and private sector) educationists. This new body would seek to encourage public attention about and improve independent oversight over education planning and provision.

The National Education Board would have as its mandate:

* To encourage fund, coordinate and publish research on the state of education in Pakistan.

* To assess and make annual proposals for improving public education.

* To hold public hearings, investigate complaints and publish recommendations about the provision of education.

* Submit Annual National Report to Parliament.

4. The National Education Board would be charged to oversee leading public and private educationists in primary and secondary education, child psychology, pedagogy and academic experts in respective disciplines etc. in developing a new curriculum for public education.

5. The Board would supervise replacements of all existing textbooks starting next academic year, wherever possible, with best available books on market. It would commission and approve new textbooks to be phased in as they become available.

4. GUIDELINES FOR REFORMING THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM

1. Falsehoods, distortions omissions and

concerning our national history needs to be replaced by accounts of events that are supported by rigorous modern scholarship.

2. Material encouraging or justifying discrimination against women, religious and ethnic minorities, and other nations, needs to be replaced with positive values of social equity, mutual respect and responsibility, justice and peace.

3. Arbitrary concepts, incoherence, inconsistency and other pedagogical problems need to be replaced by a systematic set of modern ideas about history, society and identity based on well established academic disciplines.

A simple example will be offered of what might practically be done regarding putting these principles into practice in the national curriculum. Children are presently taught Pakistan Studies as a replacement for the teaching of history and geography as full-fledged disciplines. In the first 25 years of Pakistan, this was not the case. Children at that time were taught the very early history of south Asia, including pre-historic times. The books described in detail the ancient religious mythology of the region, the early great Hindu and Buddhist kingdom of the Mauriyas and Guptas, the Muslim conquests and establishment of the Muslim Sultanates in North India. This long historical perspective of our region is absent in more recent textbooks. Instead, children are now taught that the history of Pakistan starts from the day the first Muslim set foot in India. It would be useful to return to the teaching of history and geography.

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Globalisation and Media — Its impact on Culture and Composite Heritage

Dilip Upadhayay

*Institute for Social Democracy,
New Delhi, India*

At the outset, it must be clarified that the term *culture* has been used interchangeably in some places in this article since *composite heritage* is only one among many parts of the whole. *Composite heritage*, however, is not related to each and every facet of value-loaded culture in the same way, as for example culture of mass consumption.

Media, we know that refers to the means of communication like newspapers, radio broadcasts and television. The content of *mass media*—entertainment, news, educational programmes, advertising, projection of images of various kinds—has formidable social impact ‘on stabilising or destabilising existing social, political, cultural, economic, legal and moral arrangements’. The question to be probed is what makes the media efficient and what circumstances are responsible for media to have the social impact that it has. The explanation lies in the realm of technological progress and process of globalisation. Although a relationship between both may not be discernible to a superficial observer, they are symbiotic. While growing individually, both *media* and *globalisation* feed on each other and together they are having a greater impact on human existence than ever before. They share an interesting similarity—both are processes that have been in operation since man began to live in social formations. Initially, these processes were very slow and small and were imperceptible. If globalisation is considered as a process of “integration and intermeshing”, isolated tribes have been doing the same since ancient times—tribes meeting together for periodic palavers; mercantile communities traveling far and wide in search of new opportunities for boosting trade; missionaries moving across continents for propagating their religious beliefs; or warring tribes venturing out for conquests are all modes of integrating dissimilar communities. There was, in fact, local to regional and regional to national level which had been burgeoning, subject to the constraints of communication and economic activity. The same integrating disposition can be seen discerned in the national-to-global movement today.

The two poles of social life in this context are: (a) the small communal tribal unit (*‘gemeinschaft’* to use Tonnies term) where there was face-to-face

interaction; and (b) living in a *global village* denoting an integrated globalised existence. This gives impetus to rapid changes and the pace of change engenders a process of churning in society which benefits some and harms others, *i.e.*, some are winners and others are losers. Further, it creates enormous tensions resulting in social conflicts.

The proponents of globalisation have realised that hegemonic colonisation of other nations brings economic advantages only at considerable political costs whereas economic globalisation by the economically strong can be advantageous with only limited political consequences. Globalisation means liberalisation of free movement of goods, services, capital across national boundaries and privatisation of national enterprises. During the last two decades, the revolution in computer and telecommunication technologies has given a tremendous fillip to the integration of world economy. However, these technologies have not catalysed increased productivity. ‘While some aspects of processes of production have become more efficient, there is no corresponding increase in overall productivity. To give an illustration, though reservations can be done instantly at the railway station counters, the trains tend to run as inefficiently as before.’

Since earlier ages, ‘development of communication skills and cultural forms had become the social need that encompassed a complex web of relationships and beliefs, values and motivations which is at the heart of culture (Perez de Cueller, *Our Creative Society*, UNESCO Report)’. Music, poetry, ballads, religious and ethical ideas, painting, drama, sculptures and artifacts are some of man’s cultural creations. However, the media available to transmit these were few—predominantly oral—that could cover only a limited geographical and social arena. An amazing array of cultural diversity prospered—an offshoot of the fact that communities remained isolated due to lack of effective communication. Man’s endeavours to reach out and interact with wider audiences throughout history have been either peaceful or violently confrontational. When people are in interaction—particularly face-to-face interaction—they start sharing common meanings, definitions, values and strengthening of sentimental bonds and

social power. Mass media also enables to bring the audience closer to their groups by sharing of common experiences. However, in doing so, it adopts a *top down vertical communication strategy*, without *face-to-face or horizontal communication*.

In this context, there is a need to examine the notion of ‘culture’. Culture is a complex phenomenon not easily amenable to a singular definition. Some anthropologists have estimated that to date culture, has 164 definitions. By and large, it refers to his ‘capabilities and habits’ (E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*) acquired by man as a member of society. Culture acts as a defence against chaos and conflict. As such, knowledge systems, language, ideas, beliefs, customs, codes, religion, morals, institutions, family, law, works of art and anything and everything by which man lives and regulates his existence—all fall in its ambit. Culture has a contagious quality because direct borrowing of cultural traits is quite common. Since all elements of culture are interrelated, even a minor change in a cultural system has a profound impact on other cultural systems. According to many humanist thinkers like Diderot, Rousseau, Kant, Mathew Arnold, culture can be either natural, organic, creative, genuine; or artificial, mechanical, stereotyped, superficial, servile, mindless, corrupt and alienated. To digress a bit, it is the first set of attributes which allude to the notion of *composite heritage*. Raymond Williams (*Culture and Society 1780-1950*) is of the view that modern meanings of culture appeared in the 18th and 19th centuries since it simply referred to cultivation of soil until then : (1) it came to mean the general state or habit of the mind; (2) it signified the general state of intellectual development in a society as a whole; (3) it denoted the general body of the arts; (4) later in the century, it came to indicate a whole way of life—material, intellectual and spiritual.

Mathew Arnold opined that “in an age of democracy, industrialisation, mechanisation, cultivation of culture is vital to stop society from destroying itself.” Through the example of Cortes, a ruthless Spaniard who almost decimated the Great South American civilization, Tzevetan Toporov (*The Conquest of America*) observes; “Cortes slips into the other’s skin to understand the other’s language and a knowledge of the other’s political organisation.” But in doing so, he has never abandoned his feeling of superiority. Then, during the second phase, in which he is not merely content to reassert his own identity, but proceeds to assimilate the Indians to his own world. “Lessons provided by Cortes’s conquest has been internalised by all colonisers including the media-led cultural imperialism. A new trinity takes over from the old conqueror with the sword which consists of

the scholar, the priest and the merchant. The first collects information about the field to be conquered, second promotes a *spiritual annexation* and the third collects the profits, roughly corresponding to the ‘market researcher’, ‘advertisement man’ and the ‘capitalist’ in today’s context—whether one describes it as ‘*cross-cultural synthesis*’ or modernization, the fact is that they are subtle variations of ‘*cultural imperialism*’. According to an UNESCO report on culture and development : “From Ladakh to Lisbon, from China to Peru; in the east, west, north and south—styles in dress, jeans, hair-dos, T-shirts, jogging, eating habits, musical tunes, attitude to sexuality—have become global. Even crimes related to drugs, abuse and rape of women, embezzlement and corruption transcend the frontiers and have become similar. The underlying ideological basis of globalisation and liberalisation can be traced to ideas like ‘free market’, ‘progress’ and ‘intellectual freedom’ implying a certain kind of cultural environment. Hence, one has to get assimilated into a uniform global culture dominated by a few advanced nations to get the optimum results from globalisation and liberalisation. As a result, it creates tension between national culture and the steady penetration of globalised culture. Not only this, what is worrying is the ability of the media to hegemonise regional sub-cultures controlled by the metropolitan centres. The process of globalisation governed by some basic principles : market knows best (individualism); satisfaction of the individual by supplying ‘what he wants’ including pornography (hedonism). The point is that it leads to homogenisation of diverse cultures thereby making humanity poorer.

Before venturing further, it would be fruitful to outline some of the deleterious features that boost the process of symbiosis between market and media to produce current global culture.

(1) The target audience is unknown to message giver so that the message can be tailored to suit the audience. Therefore, information being passed on has to be encapsulated in general terms bereft of diversity. A typical media presentation of a folk art would emphasise on the general structure without any reference to the nuances prevalent in different parts of the region and a discerning audience would not be able to learn much. This generalised mode, over a period of time will become the standard to be adopted by every practioner. The same holds true for language. It is common knowledge that language is regional and local specific. Therefore, a neutral type of language is fostered on the media to cater to a wider variety of audience and over a period of time one particular usage becomes the universal model.

(2) Given the heterogeneous character of the audience, the message giver is impelled to bring down the level of discourse to the lowest common denominator. According to an eminent journalist, Carl Bernstein, it results in the creation of a “time idiot culture.” As he puts it, for the “first time in history the weird, the stupid and the vulgar are becoming our cultural emblems, even our cultural ideal.” To gain wider audience, media hands out slick, pre-digested, easy to understand capsules. In fact, the universe of the TV screen, tabloids and glossy magazines have blown to bits the possibilities of critical examination and reflection. Over a period of time, the audience hankers after only this kind of exposition of information. The audience is induced to seek simple answers to complex problems and interest in complex and subtle phenomenon diminishes greatly and is replaced by soft disciplines at the cost of interest in studies requiring hard analytical effort among the new generation.

(3) Size and scale determined media usually ignores the tastes and interests of minorities and marginal groups. Local elements cannot effectively compete with the globalised media.

(4) Cultural forms that developed organically during the long course of human history have been altered to suit the very different purposes thanks mainly to novel means of communication made possible by mass media. For instance, religion which developed initially as a mode of communion with the Infinite, has become an instrument of political mobilisation.

(5) All traditional cultures were based on the edifice of ethical behaviour. The media operates in a competitive world where all means can be employed to increase coverage and profits. Information that comes through the media is invariably slanted and certain titillating and bizarre aspects of the event are highlighted thus belying any ethical consideration.

(6) Since the early ages, fiction and legends have become part of the ‘*authentic experience*’ of the people. As a scholar has noted the need of the hour is to develop a technique of reading ‘archive of the present’—not just philosophy, history, politics but an entire body of visual, chanted, painted, imaged and spoken texts which are part of the recent history. However, there is a flip side marked by positive aspects, and that is the emergence of universal values. Societies which are not noted for their concern for environment, or gender sensitivity or human rights, have to face opposition not only from within but from different quarters of the globe as well. Global concern is being expressed, admittedly only by a small section

to launch movements on eradication of poverty and exploitation. Hence, large gatherings of protestors in Seattle or Genoa can not be dismissed off hand as the handiwork of certain misguided people.

Culture, as a way of life is constantly undergoing change. Certain developments in modern times have helped greatly the process of change leading to baneful consequences : (a) reduction in cultural diversity; and (b) increasing the hegemonic control in the name of ‘*free trade*’ and ‘*freedom of communication*’ at all levels including caste, linguistic, regional, religious and other aspects of multiculturalism that people use in their everyday lives to recognise each other’s identity. The implications of this change are varied and there are no indications that they are in any way increasing the social, material or spiritual well-being of humanity. These identities are to be understood on the basis of plurality and multiplicity of Indian society conforming to a broad ‘*social consensus*’. While certain conflicts of identity are inevitable in the process of social change through modernity and challenges to caste norms, construction of meta-identities related to religion turn out to be full of pitfalls. In the Indian context, thinking or theorising about ‘*individual identity*’ is an onerous task given the social primacy of group identities in everyday life.

We will now dwell on some of the baneful effects of globalisation and media which may have disastrous consequences for the future of mankind.

Unable to anchor themselves in the world of standardised and homogenised consumer culture and having no means to gratify their tastes coupled with tenuous linkages with their age-old heritage, the poor youth are being mobilised on the basis of ethnic, religious and national identities. This has given rise to social conflicts on an unprecedented scale. An examination of these conflicts reveals that they emanate from unequal distribution of wealth and power. Massive job losses and unemployment due to global economic restructuring has accentuated economic inequalities and social unrest. These circumstances, in turn, have given rise to an atmosphere where the identities are perceived to be under threat. With the downturn in class-based politics, the innocent youth has become an easy prey for fundamentalist movements in their single minded pursuit. Fundamentalist movements are thriving by mobilizing the losers of globalization process in the above-mentioned configuration of forces. It is no wonder that the social base of fundamentalist movements, by the large, consists of the poor and disadvantaged sections of people who are forced to join such movements to retrieve their lost identity and

economic stability by capturing state power.

Examples galore. The largest Islamic seminary in South Asia at Deoband spawned the *Ji'hadis* (holy crusaders) through a huge network of *madarsas* (schools for imparting religious education) with a uniform curriculum, across the board. This network of 8,934 Deobandi *madarsas* in India and a host of others in Pakistan have helped in disseminating the tenets of fundamentalism. The *Taliban* identified the Deobandi *madarsas* in Pakistan as the breeding ground for recruitment of cadres including themselves. The Deobandi brand of Islam, emphasises going back to the Islamic texts and eliminating every trace of 'syncretism', unlike the Sufis who promote *acculturation*. The Deoband was designed as a traditional institution in the aftermath of 1857 uprising to withstand the assault of Christian missionaries and the spread of western education which the founders thought would undermine their faith.

Ironically, it is a trio of responses to the challenges of imperialism along with the MAO college in Aligarh with its espousal of modern education and the Nadwat-ul-Ulema in Lucknow with its synthesis of the traditional and modern. Since then, the Deobandi *madarsas* have been recruiting the poor and disenchanted Muslim youth. A similar process of recruitment on religious lines marks the Rashtriya Swayam Sangh, its militant outfits, and educational institutions based on Hindu exclusionism. Take the case of strife-torn Kashmir. There is a resurgence of *Sufi* festivals (*Urs*) and spiritual functions which is being seen as a renewed search for roots and a longing for their composite heritage which has permanence unlike the transitoriness of political identities. Even in

the prevailing times of polarisation many people in the near and remote villages are charting their own journey towards healing by falling back on the tenets of universal love nurtured by the age-old Sufi tradition. In such a scenario, Asiya Andrabi—a women—makes her entry. The self-styled moral police under her charge (she is the chief of Dukhtaran-e-Millat) were conducting a 'raid' to enforce their code of conduct, were recently arrested for hooliganism along with six of her associates for physically assaulting a married women who was with her husband at a restaurant. This was happening in the land which has equal respect for Lal Ded, a Hindu Sufi poetess and Nund Rishi, a muslim Rishi.

Over the years, attacks on nation-state by *ethnic* groups are on the increase. Wherever chauvinistic and zingoist agenda has been politicised to capture power, the world has witnessed an unleashing of a reign of terror against other ethnic groups. In many parts of Asia, Africa and Latin

America, fundamentalist movements based on ethnic, religious and linguistic identities are challenging the integrity of existing states in several ways. The demands are varied : some ethnic movements are demanding greater autonomy while others are seeking complete independence. A majority of ethnic conflicts and civil wars are taking place in the poorest regions of the world. More wars have been fought on ethnic rather than on ideological grounds in this decade. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, formation of new states based on ethnicity witnessed a sharp rise as exemplified by formation of 20 new states after the collapse and dissolution of USSR and Yugoslavia. This trend is expected to continue in future as well.

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Friends, we inform you with a heavy heart that Dilip Updhayaya our comrade-in-arms, renowned social scientist and activist in peace movement has passed away. The vacume in the movement caused by his untimely demise will be difficult to fill. This essay was his last piece of work which he wrote for SACH. We salute him for his contributions.

—ISD and its whole Team

Ideology and the Architecture of Performance

Volga, Vasanth Kannabiran, Akkineni Kutumba Rao, Kalapana
Asmita Resource Centre for Women
Secunderabad, India

Introduction

The possibility of using traditional ballet as an instrument of feminist activism and intervention began for Asmita at the IX Indian Association for Women Studies Conference in Hyderabad in January 2000. Four years later, we felt the need to take that initiative further by producing a second ballet that explored at greater depth not just the issue of violence but also the grammar of Kuchipudi. Another year later, in May 2005, we are venturing into Bharatanatyam with the first ballet, attempting to reach different audiences, and experimenting with another dance form. The beginning of the new millennium seemed to awaken the need to experiment with a new medium.

Aware of the significance of culture in gendering society we reflected on the need to penetrate traditional forms and subvert the culture and norms perpetrated by tradition with fresh interpretations and perspectives. The role of religious myths in reinforcing and legitimizing patriarchal norms is critical and has been difficult to contend with. The interpretation of these myths through traditional art forms especially music and dance carries a powerful effect that works at subliminal levels. It is as if classical music and dance are trapped in a patriarchal idiom from which they cannot be liberated. Several attempts have been made to use traditional forms to subvert patriarchal agendas from a women's perspective. Given the fact that the gendering of ordinary citizens and the shaping of their identities is derived largely from social norms strengthened by figures and stories from traditional mythology we felt that the reinterpretation of mythological characters especially women and a radical re-reading of the significance of their actions might be useful.

Conflict, War and Women

Work on conflict in the past two decades has looked at the specific implications of conflict for women. The organization of mother's fronts, specific mobilizations by women to promote peace and resist war, the ways in which family and community locks women into inescapable custody, through non-consensual marriage, widowhood and remarriage practices, the experiences of combatant women within militant movements and resistance struggles, the relationship between the violent masculinity of the

armed forces and women at contested boundaries or on the borders of nations, are all areas that have been explored in depth in feminist writing on conflict, especially on the sub-continent. **Reflecting on this vast literature, we felt it was necessary to search for an effective way of disseminating the ideas thrown up by this writing. The starkness of the violence of war is most powerfully expressed through performative traditions. We then began to think about Kuchipudi dance as a medium.** This decision was relatively easy because of the heavy reliance that Kuchipudi places on the interpretations of mythic traditions especially the two epics – Ramayana and Mahabharata.

Having made the connection almost instinctively between the subject and the form, it was necessary for us to prepare the substance. Prof. Uma Rama Rao is a well-known teacher of Kuchipudi. When we sounded her out on the possibility of producing a ballet on war and women, the first question she asked us was "Aren't women the root cause of wars?" Immediately our script fell into place and *War and Peace* took shape. The question by a sutradhar, "isn't it true that it is women who are responsible for wars? Wasn't Sita the reason for the war between Rama and Ravana? Isn't it believed that without Draupadi there would be no war in the Mahabharata?" leads to the spinning of an entire narrative that begins with the experience of Sita, not "Ramachandra maharaja patni" [consort of Rama] but Sita, daughter of the Earth, dweller of the forest, lover of peace, who says, "Nay, not for me the weight of that crown! Not for me the burden of that identity!"

And what is the weight or the burden that Sita speaks about?

"Sita bereft of peace by Rama's lust for power
Sita of sorrow appropriated by Ravana
Sita consummating my purity in the flames
To prove my virtue to a husband
Swollen with the pride of victory."

Abduction is not unfamiliar to our own realities. The history of Partition especially of the Punjab, as documented by Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin echoes this experience of abduction, recovery and rejection, so that Sita reflects not on the glorious battle but

echoes instead the eerie timelessness of her experience. Abduction is not a story of one side of a border alone, and it is often countered by deceit, appropriation and assault of women from the other side. Surpanaka is a figure that is central to the telling of the story of Rama's exile. Yet it is the telling of the story not of her violation, but of Rama's valour. It is this emphasis that has found expression in traditional classical dance. Narratives of Partition in the subcontinent led us to exploring alternate interpretations of the figure of Surpanaka in the Ramayana, giving her a voice on par with and equal to that of Sita. For those who saw Surpanaka "the dravida maid/celebrat beauty, worshipping nature/.../ Woman of the universe [who] pour[s] forth love/ Transcending barriers of caste and creed/.../ Despised, reviled for desiring love/punished, mutilated for craving love/Surpanaka a flaming torch/Living testimony to untold violation and shame", there was curiosity and sudden realization that a radically different interpretation can indeed be based on a history of the present.

The section of the ballet that spoke of the Ramayana ended with Sita and Surpanaka speaking together, as allies, of the untold violation of women in the war between the Aryas and the Dravidas. The insertion of the critical element in feminist politics, the need for women to build alliances across borders, boundaries and identities, even while acknowledging the fact of diversity, through the figures of Sita and Surpanaka, had dramatic effects on the audience. And in suggesting this, we were in fact drawing on the letter written by Pakistani women to the women of Bangladesh apologizing for the violence perpetrated by the Pakistani army during the Bangladeshi war of Independence.

Draupadi introduces the experience of disrobing, and the public humiliation of women – an experience that women's movements have had to confront time and again.

"I Draupadi, stake for a husband's dice
My royal husbands' gifts
Beginning with a public disrobing
Moving through shame, abduction and humiliation
In this world filled with Kichakas Dusasanas and Saindavas"

While Sita speaks of the lust for power, Draupadi questions the gains of war, a question echoed by the mothers' fronts across the sub continent.

"What were the gains of this war
Save the destruction of brothers, sons, friends?"

The bleeding hearts of
Gandhari, Bhanumathi, Kunti and Subhadra?
The unending grief of bereaved mothers."

For Madhavi, daughter of King Yayati who was gifted, as dana, by her father to the sage Galava, the fulfillment of her father's obligation to the sage meant being left with one king after another in succession to bear sons for them so that the sage could collect the thousand white horses he desired in return. Forced pregnancies, the rape of Bangladeshi women and the experience of ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia forced us to re-examine the "mythic" nature of this myth. Was this myth or was it in fact the story of patriarchy?

"From the beginning of time
Woman's body the battlefield
bearing the clash of patriarchies
war after war in history
Played out on these bodies, of ours.

The abduction of women,
The disrobing of queens
The test of wives' chastity
The loan of maidens' wombs
Gifts of mankind's greed for war
Tragic trappings celebrations of victory

Dividing nations! Dividing races! Dividing women
Limb by limb torn and tossed into the sacrifice
Collective rituals of destruction
Peaking to a crescendo of violence
Religion in arrogant dance of death
Streets soaked in blood
Littered with numberless dead
Women's bodies gashed open
Killed by kinsmen.

To save the chastity of women
Sons cutting off a mother's head
Brothers ending a sister's life
Husbands wiping out a wife
Sharply echoing sounds of grief
Cries of thirst cries of hunger
Cries for clothing to cover the self
The suffering earth spinning in mad despair.

The ballet was written before the US war on Iraq, and before Gujarat 2002. And yet all of this speaks of the violence of those times as well.

At the moment of abduction were we hindu?
Did the moment of conversion turn us muslim?
Are we hindu? Are we muslim?"

Are we muslim? Are we hindu?
Are we hindu muslim or muslim hindu?

Trapped in this deadlock of race and faith
What of the children we bear?
Whose faith do they carry?
What future do they hold?
Citizens governed defined by law?
Illegal creatures invisible to history?
What brittle justice will decide this?

The feminist project has been not just to speak of the impact of war but to underscore the urgency of peace. Bharathi's song "Santhi Nilava Vendum" opens out the song for peace

"Enough! Let us halt these rites of war
Let us open up space for loving and caring
Usher in harmony, peace and friendship
Heralding a spring after a bitter winter

The earth shall shine a brilliant green
The blue sky free to soar in hope
Rivers sparkling pure and clean
Forests swaying in the gentle breeze.

...

A world thrilling to the song of peace
A world lighting to the rays of hope."

War and Peace was taken to every district in Andhra Pradesh and has completed 25 performances in four years, each performance witnessed by an audience of 600 to 1000 people.

Domestic Violence

After four years of taking *War and Peace* around we felt the need to address other issues even while keeping this one alive. The debates around the Domestic Violence Bill were at the peak. The AP state legislature had begun to roll back the gains of the women's movement by making Section 498 A compoundable. The rhetoric within courts and police stations shifted to speaking about the treachery of women in bringing cases against unsuspecting husbands. And yet, women continued to suffer grave assault, often leading to death within the matrimonial home. The year 2004 forced us to address the issue of domestic violence in a more effective and powerful way. On March 8, 2004, Lakshmana Rekha was presented to an audience of **five thousand predominantly rural poor women** from different districts, after a public hearing on violence against women.

The traditional invocation that the dance begins

with celebrates Jotiba and Savithribai Phule, Durgabai Deshmukh, Chityala Ailamma, Suvarthamma of Karamchedu, the women of Chundur and the activists in the anti arrack (alcohol) movement. In replacing goddesses with dalit women and women's rights activists and introducing them through their struggles, the ballet makes a radical shift in re-orienting viewers.

The lakshmana rekha, which divides the public from the private ensuring the protection of women who conform to the codes of the private spaces in patriarchies. And we have on the subcontinent the habit of glorifying the willing renunciation of the pativratas, popular media playing no small role. What, we asked ourselves, would these actions of pativratas, written and unwritten, who have been iconised, look like if they were stripped of the colour of sacrifice. Gandhari, who blindfolded herself on her marriage to the blind King Dhritarashtra has been traditionally seen as the ideal wife and companion. Given the fact of forced, non consensual marriages, and the abuse that women face in these subservient relationships, Gandhari's act becomes one of vengeance:

"This is my vengeance
My raging anguish
My eyes shall not gaze upon a husband I do not choose
No companion will I be
to a man I do not love
No service or shoulder will I offer
To a lord forced upon me."

Urmila, Lakshmana's wife is left behind while Lakshmana follows his duty to be with Rama at all times. She goes into a deep slumber that lasts fourteen years.

"Within my eyes a fathomless ocean
of anger and bitter sorrow
An unvoiced war cry resounds in my heart
Rejecting my wifely duties
Slumber is the weapon of my satyagraha"

For Renuka, wife of sage Jamadagni and mother of Parasurama, a fleeting moment of desire results in death and the gift of life is a gift from father to son.

"What is the price of chastity?
What is the power of motherhood?
Should the heart not falter even for a moment?
This then is the price of chastity
This then is the power of motherhood
For a life restored in charity
Where is left the desire to live

Or the heart to serve?
Chastity is but a pot of sand
Motherhood but a magic deer
What price these thrones empty of authority or
meaning?"

The roots of the subjugation of women go far back in history. Feminist literature has raised the question of origins, and Uma Chakravarti's work in this direction with reference to ancient India is well known. The critique of dominant notions of patriarchy must be accompanied by some suggestion of its material bases:

If woman is nature and man the ruler
and civilization is
but the destruction of nature
The never ending saga of slavery woven around
conquest
the Grihapatni sliding into the mould of pativrata
And the epoch of defeat beginning with the loss of
the mother right
For aeons of time women's lives
Captive, anguished, unfree, violent
Imprisoned in the home, filled with anguish
devoid of freedom, filled with violence
continuously stepping within the bounds of the
lakshmana rekha

The Process of Production and Performance

War and Peace and *Lakshmana Rekha*, our two major productions of 75 minutes duration each with lyrics set to and pre-recorded tune, have made extensive use of contemporary feminist research and texts to draw connections between myth and the violence of war in our day. The specific work that we drew upon were *Borders and Boundaries* to speak about the experiences of women during partition. Sri Lankan women's war poetry, the violence against women of Bangladesh during their war of independence, the reports from the Vienna Tribunal and other writing on ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, drawing parallels between these and the abduction of Sita, the disrobing of Draupadi, the mutilation of Surpanaka and the forced pregnancies in Madhavi's case – none of which are read in this fashion – together and in a manner that foregrounds the use of extreme forms of violence as the way in which patriarchal power has been and continues to be entrenched in our cultures.

Apart from introducing deeply political contemporary themes into traditional, classical dance, the ballets have interrogated in fundamental ways the

construction of gender, ideology and hegemony in the theory of dance itself, and especially the theoretical underpinnings of Kuchipudi. While we cannot at this point engage in an exhaustive analysis of this aspect, it is necessary to dwell briefly on a few critical aspects that will indicate patterns in the encrustation of gendered ideologies in the performative traditions of dance.

The *bhakti* and *srungara rasas* are important not just to representational forms but to an understanding of lived experience as well. To that extent, all *rasas* in a sense bridge the distance between performance and life. However, it is precisely through an unpacking of this connection that one discovers that the theory of *rasas* is trapped in webs of patriarchal ideologies in ways that mirror realities. It is of course a fact that women performers and bhaktins have time and again subverted hegemonic structures and resisted them, and there is work that has explored this dimension both with reference to music and dance in different parts of India. Yet, the performative and material contexts of *rasas* have remained confined within frameworks of dominance notwithstanding shifts within those frameworks. Within that women have largely been confined to expressions of *bhakti* and *srungara*.

The confinement to and prescription of domains of agency and expression are most evident for instance in the language used to describe the nayaka ["ever victorious", "warrior without peer", "glorious emperor", "vanquisher of valourous kings"] and the *nayika* [compliant consort, petulant or pining lover], especially in terms of figures of speech and moods. For the *nayika*, the most appropriate moods are absolute surrender, sorrow, grief, love – depicted through stillness, laughing or smiling. In that context women are the *ashtama bhoga* – subject/objects, not agents/creators/protectors with the power to give or take life. Apart from words, there is a hierarchy of language as well, with men of the upper castes speaking Sanskrit and women and shudras speaking Prakrutam. Gender therefore suffuses the pedagogy of dance in unspoken, unquestioned and pervasive ways.

In this context, both *War and Peace* and *Lakshmana Rekha* peel off different layers of this encrustation in radical ways. The woman is no longer consort, sister, wife, mother. Nor is she willing unquestioning subject, who allows the reification of her subservience. The moment the woman gets transformed into active agent/creator, pathos is replaced by resistance and the static smile by anger.

In representing the questioning of the fundamentals of patriarchal subjugation on stage, the *rasa* travels from performance to lived experience forcing self reflection on the dancer – a point that has been elaborated on in the next section.

Moving from a hegemonic binary portrayal of good and evil – the god/protector and the *rakshasa* to a portrayal of diversity – equally positioned, equally valued, results in learning a different grammar of representation, one that does not exist within the pedagogy of Kuchipudi as it is taught today. Surpanaka need not be portrayed as grotesque, lacking in grace, heavy on her feet, a caricature of unwomanliness. This was something the dancers in *War and Peace* understood gradually. That Surpanaka, like Sita can be portrayed as a graceful woman, and need not be shown in opposition to the norms of human-celestial conduct.

Finally on the point of the tradition of dance, the *Dasavatara* is a very typical presentation in Kuchipudi. The *laya*, the *raga* and the method convey the essence of the dance form. For scholars of Kuchipudi tampering with the *Dasavatara* is unimaginable, and we were advised not to do it. But if one is in fact thinking in terms of incarnations, and of re-inscribing woman's place in the body politic, what better way is there than to present the various incarnations of women? With a minor alteration in metre – purely precautionary – we presented the *Dasavatara* of aspirations as the culmination of *Lakshmana Rekha*, as the only possible resolution to the confinement of the lakshmana rekha:

“I aspire to
cross the frontiers of learning
to excel in games of speed and skill
to soar into space exploring
search and research the
paths of science
to reach unimagined heights
of glory in music and dance
to paint the world richly
sculpt the human form to perfection
to lead struggles to victory”.

The writing of these ballets has been the fulfilment of a dream. The power of the lyrics comes from a firm commitment to feminist politics, and an immersion in the shared history of that politics and writing. Once the lyrics were complete, it had to be set to music. While the music composer was someone with experience and skill, the production team took an active part in the entire process of approving,

modifying and recording the music – suggesting appropriate ragas, beats and speed that would reflect the mood and intent of the lyrics.

Kuchipudi as a dance form was one that excluded women completely in its early history. When women took to the stage, their parts have been largely restricted to playing consensual consorts, or depicting the *srungara rasa*. Kuchipudi has a long tradition of male dancers and the gender lines in performance are very strong where the women rarely use the raw power that men do in the dance, relying much more on abhinaya and soft, yet skilful movements. The fact that this dance form had never used the interpretations we were introducing before meant that the dancers had to draw very differently from their repertoire. Pathos, dependence and sorrow had to be replaced by anger, strength, grief and resistance. This was a crucial intervention. Traditionally female movements, and a concentration on *srungara* would be completely inadequate in bringing out the intensity of women's suffering or the power of their anger and resistance. We then suggested to the women in the troupe that they should use the swing, the vigour and the power of the male dancers in combination with the soft grace of the female dancers in order for the lyrics to come to life and in order for women to be portrayed with strength of character rather than their relapsing into eternal pathos.

In contemporary performance of Kuchipudi collective performance with several dancers of equal stature and experience is practically unknown today, individual skill always being center stage. This requirement of collective performance brought about a radical shift in dynamics between dancers – not always smooth and easy to resolve – and meant that each dancer had to focus not just on her part but on the whole. For us, it also became an attempt to bring notions of collectivity and sharing that we had learnt in feminist praxis into a very different arena – so the production also, it turned out, served a pedagogic purpose.

The Impact of the Performance

The public reaction to *War and Peace* has been characteristic. Viewers relaxing to the melody of traditional music and the graceful movements of traditional dance found that imperceptibly they had entered a world of violence, greed and horror. The reality of that world seldom depicted on stage through this medium has had a startling impact on middle class audiences. The subversion of traditional legends and characters has been radical in its effect.

Initially masked by the safety and sonorousness of the music the lyrics quickly take over in intensity. Similarly the traditional costumes and movements and footwork of the dancers seduces attention and lulls the conservative mind into acceptance and enjoyment. Suddenly the total impact of lyric music and dance, initially so safe and familiar, burst upon the consciousness of the viewer, forcing him/her to think critically of the contradiction inherent in the myth. The violence of shattering long held beliefs and cherished assumptions is matched only by the violence of the reality of women's lives that it strips naked centre stage.

While the audience has generally been mesmerized with the performance, one incident deserves special mention. Draupadi talks of a world peopled with Kichakas, Dusasanas, Saindhavas, pointing to different parts of the audience. In Andhra University in Vizag, men students reacted with catcalls and hooting the moment Draupadi entered the stage. The moment they were done with the catcalls, the lyrics reached "I Draupadi...Moving through shame, abduction and humiliation/in a world filled with Kichakas, Dusasanas and Saindavas", the dancer in very powerful movements, pointed in the direction of the catcalls through the stanza. There was a stunned silence in the auditorium and the sense of shame was palpable.

There has been a powerful impact on the audience with reactions of shock and disbelief often showing. Younger women react even more quickly wanting a "rebellion" or "resolution" on the stage itself. Yet another response has been that the ballets force an almost immediate reflection on the viewer. The noted Kuchipudi exponent, Sobha Naidu was a Chief Guest at one of the performances of Lakshmana Rekha. In her address after the performance, she said the lines

"Who am I?
A human being or image?
A breathing stone?
A wooden doll?
What is the direction of my future?
What is the meaning of my life?
Who am I?"

forced her to engage with these questions herself. Prof. Uma Rama Rao, the first choreographer of War and Peace moved in the course of the performances from wondering whether women were responsible for war, to reflecting on the reasons why women find it so difficult to continue in the performing arts after

marriage, speaking about the constraints and pressures that families and reproductive roles brought to bear on women performers.

The impact of the introduction of Surpanaka into the narrative in this manner came home to us when the ballet was to be telecast on Doordarshan in the national network. The single demand made was that Surpanaka should be left out. This was a difficult issue. Censorship has been an issue that women have had to contend with on a regular basis over a long period. The censorship of women's voices is as old as patriarchy itself. In an act of resistance therefore, should we accept this censorship, or should we bend to it. A difficult and painful question. Yet, we decided to go ahead and accept the demand because we wanted the ballet to reach as many people as possible across the country, and this was a rare opportunity.

In all the live performances however, the "rakshasi" portrayed as a young woman humiliated, mutilated and violated for daring to love across racial barriers shocks the audience as it echoes the horrors of the present.

The moment that we chose to put out the first performance was unforgettable. The National Conference on Women's Studies in Hyderabad organized by the Indian Association of Women's Studies. There were the scholars whose work we had drawn on, people with had shared ideas in common for decades, young scholars committed to feminism and women's studies. While we did not get too much of feedback from the delegates of the conference, we went on to take the ballet across the length and breadth of the state. Writers, poets, artists, common people flocked to our performances. The troupe changed, there were always new dancers ready and able to step in with ease, what mattered was that the performances must not stop. **For us at Asmita, this ballet has become a powerful tool for the dissemination of feminist ideas among people not exposed to them. And a powerful medium to speak about the pervasiveness of violence in women's lives.**

[**Note:** Both the ballets, *War and Peace* and *Lakshmana Rekha* were written by Volga and produced by Asmita Resource Centre for Women. All translations into English are by Vasanth Kannabiran. The primary responsibility for production and coordination was taken by Akkineni Kutumba Rao and Vasanth Kannabiran. Kalpana Kannabiran helped with the research.]

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Introduction

South Asian region as one continent has common cultural moorings, traditions, psychology and pattern of behaviour. The emergence of three countries over a period of time has retained and continue to hold to the commonalities except perhaps at a level of psyche. The music is one area in which we find that the commonalities and compositness are very clearly discernable. With the following description of vocal forms, we hope, we are able to relate to the compositness that unite India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Classical/Semi Classical

Thumri

Thumri is a form of semi classical music. Usually, the text is interwoven around romantic love for Krishna and is written in *Brij Bhasha* spoken in Uttar Pradesh. The compositions are mostly set to *Keherva Rag* (8 beats), *Addha tal* of 16 beats. *Thumri* became popular from 19th century onwards.

Dadra

Dadra is also a semi classical style and shares many similarities with *Thumri*. *Dadra* is composed loosely, which allows more freedom to the artist. Any light *tal* can be used and in some cases it is set to *Keherva* of 8 beats. The *ragas* used are *pilu* or *pahadi*.

Dhrupad

One of the oldest styles of classical music prevalent in north India which touched its peak during the times of Tansen, the legendary singer in Emperor Akbar's Court, the great patron of culture and learning. *Dhrupad* is known for its pure quality and strict adherence to the *tal*. It is sung to the accompaniment of *pakhawaj* (an ancient *mridang*). The themes of *Dhrupad* vary, but usually revolve around the conquests of great kings, mythological stories or devotional songs. *Dhrupad* is composed in a four-part structure (*sthyai*, *antara*, *sanchari* and *aabhog*) and is usually set to *Chautal* of 12 beats, *tivra* of 7 beats, *farodast* of 14 beats. It is one of the most difficult styles in *Hindustani* music. Due to its formal structure and rigidity, ordinary people find it difficult to appreciate and now only a few singers practice this form. *Dhrupad* has also an instrumental form which is an imitation of the vocal form.

Dhamar

Like *dhrupad*, *dhamar* is also a very old style of singing. *Dhamar* has also an instrumental form. Though this style has similarities with *dhrupad*, but it is more romantic in character. The themes revolve around Krishna. *Dhamar* is also called *Hori* (Holi) and is set to 14 beats. *Dhamar* like *dhrupad* has very few practitioners in the present age.

Tarana

Tarana is based on the use of meaningless syllables in a very fast rendition. Legend has it that Amir Khusrau, the versatile poet and musician invented it. It is found all over India. *Tarana* is called *Tillana* in *Carnatic* music and is commonly used in dance performances.

Khayal

Khayal is a Persian word, denoting either 'thought' or 'imagination'. Unlike *dhrupad* which lays emphasis on strict adherence to words, *khayal* has short lyrics since each word is extended and elaborated in various ways according to the felicity of the singer. *Khayal* is based on a two-part structure, *sthyai* and *antara*.

There are two kinds of *khayals*: *Vilambit khayal* (also known as *bada khayal* and *drut khayal* (*chhota khayal*)). *Vilambit khayal* is performed at a slow pace whereas the tenor of *drut khayal* is fast. The *vilambit khayal* was made popular in the 15th century by the king (*sultan*) of Jaunpur, Hussain Sharki. Later they were patronized by court musicians of Emperor Mohammad Shah 'Rangile' like Sadarang and Adarang who composed hundreds of *vilambit khayals*. The *drut khayal* was invented by Hajrat Amir Khusrau around the 14th century.

Tappa

Tappa is mostly sung in Punjabi language where the song is interspersed with small pieces of *tans*. *Tappa* has fewer lyrics and is set to a two-part structure – *sthyai* and *antara*. *Tappa* was invented by Ghulam Nabi Shorie (Shorie Miyan) during the reign of Mohammad Shah. *Tappa*, a form of light classical music is quite popular in Punjab and Varanasi. In Bengal also one can find beautiful *tappas*. *Tappas* are generally sung in *khamaj*, *kafi*, *pilu*, *bhairavi* ragas.

Ghazal

Ghazal is a popular form of music in India and Pakistan. However, when *ghazal* was in its formative stage, it was less musical and more a form of poetic recitation. In the present times, *ghazal* is generally considered a musical composition where primacy is given to the lyrics. Historical sources reveal that *ghazal* was introduced in India during the 12th century and was imported from Persia. Indian artistes adapted the *ghazal* form in accordance with local hues and it enjoys widespread popularity among Indian Muslims.

Though *ghazal* was introduced first in the north, it also found a fertile ground in the south as well when Urdu began to be used for literary purposes, particularly in Golconda and Bijapur.

The process of conversion of this poetic form into a musical form was rather slow. The *ghazal*, in 19th century started becoming associated with the courtesans, known as *tawaifs* who epitomized art, literature, dance, music, etiquette (*tehzib*) and everything that came under the rubric of high culture. The courtesans were widely acclaimed for their musical abilities, especially for their rendering of *ghazal*. However, the decline of feudal society and its ethos in the 19th and early 20th centuries also saw a decline in the *tawaif* tradition. Consequently, the change in culture was also reflected in the performance of *ghazal*. But this change did not deter the *ghazal* performers and they continued to build upon its musical content, and *ghazals* began to be heard and appreciated in concert halls. *Ghazal* as a musical form got a fillip in the 20th century with the development of recording and film industries and *ghazal* became a part of the mass media. However, to appease listeners and viewers, the lyrical content suffered. The poetic structure of a *ghazal* is based on a series of couplets woven together by a precise rhyming structure. The first couplet is the most important and is known as *matla* which delineates the overall form and mood of the entire *ghazal*. Each subsequent couplet is linked to the *matla* in a well defined fashion. The last couplet, which is again quite important is known as *maqta*. It also denotes the pen name (*takhallus*) of the poet. It is usually a personal statement and is different from the rest of

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the *ghazal*. The common themes that are used in *ghazal* range from love (both requited and unrequited), mystical ruminations, revolutionary ideas to social commentaries.

The musical form of the *ghazal*, though variable, is similar to other *Hindustani light* classical forms. The rhythmic form of the modern *ghazal* is usually set to *rupak* (7 beats), *dadra* (6 beats) and *Keherva* (8 beats).

Devotional Music

Qawwali

Found in India and Pakistan, *qawwali* is the traditional form of Islamic song. The word *Qawwali* is derived from the Arabic word which means ‘axiom’ or ‘dictum’. *Qawwali* is primarily devoted to the dictums of prophets and paeans to God. The style is closely linked to the spiritual and artistic life of North India and Pakistan.

Qawwali is an integral part of the great *Sufi* tradition. *Sufism* - a mystical philosophy striving to attain truth and divine love through personal communion with the divine – is a unique tradition in the subcontinent, which emphasizes that it is possible to reach God in our temporal existence through sheer devotion. And as such, it has strong affinities with various streams of *Bhakti* movement, which stress the same principle of reaching the divine “here and now, and in this life”. In contrast to the mainstream Islam, which propounds that God can only be reached after death or the final judgment, *Sufis* believe that human beings can come into touch with God in this life. In Arabic, this stream of mysticism is known as *tasawwuf*.

Bhajan

Bhajans are simple songs eulogizing the thoughts and deeds of God. The truths of life are depicted in the common day-to-day language of the people. *Bhajan* became popular as a part of the Hindu revivalist movement known as *Bhakti* movement during the medieval period. The message of the *Bhakti* movement was simple, that is, any one can attain spiritual salvation if he is engrossed in the pursuit of selfless love of God. *Bhakti* movement in particular, and *bhajans* in general embody a spiritual

empowerment of the common people and are not predicated upon either formalised rituals or knowledge of Sanskrit which were the bastion of educated upper classes and castes. Therefore, working people irrespective of their station and vocation in society could sing *bhajans*. Many of the leading figures of Bhakti movement popularized their devotional songs like Kabir, Ravidas, Surdas though they belonged to lower castes and classes. *Bhajan* cannot be described musically because it is not defined by characteristics, rather by a sense of devotion (*Bhakti*). The spectrum of *bhajans* include musical styles from the simple musical chant (*dhun*) to higher versions of vocal music. The poetic content of *bhajans* encompass a wide array of genres, from quality literature to the lowest poetic form such as *dhun*.

The Music of the *Bauls* of Bengal

Baul means madcap and is derived from *bayu* (in Sanskrit *vayu*) depicting a sense of nerve current. *Baul* has become the appellation of those who do not conform to established societal cannons or customs. They revel only in the gladness of their own welling love. According to them, “in love we rejoice in song and dance with each and all.” When *bauls* are asked about the tenets of their philosophy, they do not respond in words but in songs. They move from place to place singing and dancing. The songs have syncretic themes cutting across religion, caste and class divisions. Many *baul* songs do not even have the signature of the composer. They consider

themselves travelers of the *shahoj path* (easy path). The musical instruments that accompany *baul* songs are usually *khol* (clay drum), *guba*, cymbals, flute and *ektara/dotara*. Originally, *baul* songs were composed in the local Bengali dialects and were passed on generationally through the oral tradition.

Shabad

Shabad means literally the “word”. It represents the verbal discourse by the *gurus* (the teachers) on the nature of God and impact on lived experience of common people in general and Sikhs in particular. *Shabad* also connotes *Gurbani* which is the literal rendition of the “Word of the Teacher”. Both *Shabad* and *Gurbani* come from *Guru Granth Saheb* - the holy book of the Sikhs. Though similar to *bhajans* in style, *shabad* is popular among Sikhs. *Shabad* is integrally a part of spiritual growth for the humankind. It requires intensive study and meditation to comprehend the significance of *Gurbani* since it embraces the infinite qualities of God. Historically, *Shabad* has been performed in traditional musical styles. The *Granth Sahib*, in fact, specifies the austere *ragas* in which various *shabads* are to be rendered. *Shabads* are sung in the classical *ragas* in *tals* like *tintal* and *ektal*. Those who perform the duties of singing *shabad* are known as *raagis* who earlier used to be adept in the study of scriptures, musical training and spiritual development. However, over the years, *shabad* is also being performed in lighter or semi- classical forms.

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In Partnership with :

Asmita Resource Centre for Women

Teacher's Colony, East Marredpally,
Secunderabad 500026,
Andhra Pradesh, India
Phone : 040-27733251, 27733229, Fax : 040-27733745
E-mail : asmitacollective@sancharnet.in

Asr

Asr Resource Centre
96-A, Block-G, Gulberg-III,
Lahore, Pakistan
Phone: 0092-42-5882617-8, Fax : 0092-42-5883991
E-mail : asr@brain.net.pk

Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha (BNPS)

1385, C.D.A. Avenue West, Nasirabad
Chittagong-4000, Bangladesh
E-mail : bnps@bangla.net

Cathe Foundation Pakistan

Daleep Market,
20 KM Ferozpur Road, Youhanabad,
Lahore, Pakistan
Telefax : 042-5273735,
E-mail : peace@cathe.org.pk
website : www.cathe.org

Centre for Social Development (CSD)

Palace Compound (west)
Imphal 795001, Manipur, India
Phone : 0385-2224897
E-mail : secycsd@sancharnet.in

Christian Study Centre (CSC)

126-Muree Road,
Rawalpindi Cantt., Pakistan
Phone : 0092-51-5567412, 5568657
Fax : 0092-51-5586617, 5584594
E-mail : cscpak@isb.comsats.net.pk

Church World Service (CWS)

CWS-PA 42-H, Block 6, P.E.C.H.S.,
Dr. Mahmood Hussain Road
Karachi, Pakistan
Phone : 0092-21-4390541-4,
E-mail : cswpa@cyber.net.pk, Website : www.cwspa.org

Church's Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA)

4th floor, Rachna building 2,
Rajendra Place, Pusa road,
New Delhi-110008, India,
Phone : 91-11-25730611, 612, 25080758
Fax : 011-25752502, 25733763
Email : indrani@casa-india.org

**Christian Commission for
Development in Bangladesh (CCDB)**

88, Senpara, Parbatta,
Mirpur-10, G.P.O., Box 367
Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh
Email : ccdb@bangla.net, ccdbhope@bangla.net
Phone : +88-02-8011970-3

Development of Human Potential (DHP)

Raphei Valley,
Mantripukhri, Imphal 795002
Manipur, India
Phone : 0385-2427437, 2413808
E-mail : imp_dhp@sancharnet.in

EED

Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e.V. (EED)
South and Middle Asia Desk
Ulrich-von-Hassell-Strasse 76,
D-53123 Bonn, Germany
Phone : 49 (0) 228 81 01-0, Fax : 49 (0) 228 81 01 - 160
E-mail : eed@eed.de, <http://www.eed.de>

Hill Tracts NGO Forum (HTNF)

Rajbari Road, Rangamati,
Rangamati Hill district-4500,
Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh.
Tel: +880 351 62842; Fax : +880 351 61109
Email : htnf_cht@hotmail.com, htnf@bttb.net.bd
dipujjal@yahoo.com, Website : www.htnf.org

Human Friends Organisation

B-3/163 Youhanabad Ferozpur Road,
Lahore, Pakistan
Telefax : +92-42-527-3224
E-mail : hforight@yahoo.com, sajranjha@hotmail.com
Website : www.hfo.org.pk

Initiatives Women in Development (IWID)

2107, 13th Main Road, Anna nagar,
Chennai-600040, India
Phone 91-44-26222856, 26220578, E-mail : iwid@vsnl.net

Institute for Social Democracy (ISD)

110, Numberdar House, 62-A, Laxmi Market, Munirka
New Dehli 110067, India
Phone : 91-11-26177904
E-mail : suryanwar@hotmail.com,
notowar@rediffmail.com

Nagorik Udyog

4/1/A, Block-E Lalmatia,
Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh
Phone : 88-02-9141511 (0) -8115868 (0) - 8111156 (0),
E-mail : nu@bdmail.net

Rural Economic Development Society

Nazareth/Zion House, Dewlahlane, Imphal 795001
Manipur, India
E-mail : helam_hkip@yahoo.com

Taangh Wasaib Organisation

House number 43, street 1, Gulshan-e-Bashir
Sargodha, Pakistan
Phone : 0092-451-215042 Fax : 0092-483-215042
Mobile : 0092-300-9602831,
E-mail : twasaib@yahoo.com,
rubinaferoze_bhatti@yahoo.com

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